

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Education, Social Sciences and Law
Subject(s):	Sociology and Social Policy
Programme(s) / Module(s):	X7 Modules X6 UG Dissertations The modules were: - Debates in Childhood and Youth - Education, Culture and Society - Research Methods - Contemporary Child, Young People and Families - Postcolonialism and Critical Muslim Studies - Ethnicity and Popular Culture - Protest and Social Movements
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**Matters for Urgent Attention**

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

N/A

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

N/A

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

N/A

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

Programme Aims and ILOs were commensurate with the level of award (e.g. BA and BA Hons.)
The structure and content of the Sociology, Social Policy programmes are appropriate and certainly comparable to other Universities. The same applies to standards.

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Yes, the Aims and ILOS meet expectations of National Subject Benchmarks (though I would note here that these Benchmarks in Sociology and Social Policy are now very dated - 2007 - and require updating by QAA). The quality of the programme at Leeds compares very favourably to other comparable HE institutions (including UWS where I work and <>University where I also currently act as external examiner).

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

The assessment methods match-up with ILOs in a consistent and transparent manner. A range of assessment methods are employed, ranging from 'seen' exams to extended essays to project work. Student performance is generally very high, indicated by the number of 1st and 2:1 grades awarded. In short, the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment methods is impressive at Leeds. Staff may want to consider more assessed presentations, small group work and/or posters (vis-à-vis transferrable skills).

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

By and large the students at Leeds are working very hard indeed and achieving really impressive grades. The vast majority of students are grading at 1st or 2:1 level in their assessments (for example, in the course "Protest and Social Movements", out of x30 students in total, x14 graded at First and x15 graded at 2:1). This was not particularly unusual. With regard to dissertations, a few students did show a relative weakness in terms of research methods. These chapters were often very brief (4-5 pages) and lacked detail/substance. As mentioned elsewhere, the writing abilities of students at Leeds is really good. Staff could say more in the 'suggestions for improvements' box on the marking sheets and perhaps use the marking scale more widely (both at the lower end and at the higher end).

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N/A

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

The shift to the VLE for research methods delivery has been a key development since last year and one I would applaud. The quality of the methods training is excellent. It would be useful if more modules could be developed for VLE delivery and using Gradebook for marking. For 'seen' exams, the quality of submissions is generally high and it is clear students work hard for these submissions. On occasion, a weak 3rd question lets students down though. The ratio of lectures to seminars/tutorials is impressive and the small group work seems to be paying dividends given the very few 2:2, 3rd and fail marks awarded.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

This is most notable at 3rd year, and in the undergraduate dissertations, but research-led teaching is evident across the Degree programmes. The 7 modules I looked at all had evidence of being influenced by up-to-date research and included recent staff publications etc. In a very small number of cases handbooks were rather 'thin' in terms of detail and could be developed and updated in terms of references and additional guidance.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

N/A

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

Yes.

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

Yes I did - cover letters from module leaders were very helpful where they were provided.

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes and yes. The questions were all appropriate in terms of nature/level.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes, I had enough scripts to look through. It was good to see some of these available via the VLE for the first time (Research Methods). Scripts were mostly clearly marked and annotated although some staff handwriting was hard to fathom. Typed up comments are much preferred. Staff should perhaps use the 'suggestions for improvement' box more consistently on the marking sheets. Second marker comments were often very brief indeed.

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Yes, I looked at 6 dissertations this year and the subjects were all appropriate. Some projects were very ambitious and used both theory and research methods well. There was a mix of desk-based projects and empirical projects. The quality of the writing was, in most cases, very high. The method and standard of assessment were appropriate. Sometimes second marker comments were quite brief. It was sometimes hard to tell how agreed marks had been arrived at (in cases where 10%-15% differences were noted). Staff should use tick boxes consistently and always note how improvements could be made.

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

Yes, arrangements in advance of the Board were excellent - thanks to <> - and I attended the Board itself on June 25th. The recommendations of the Board were satisfactory and all in order.

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

Yes.

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

N/A

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13th July 2015

Dear <>,

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2014/15 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School of Sociology and Social Policy.

The School is encouraged by your positive comments, particularly in relation to the high standard of the students' work, particularly the quality of their writing. It was also pleasing to see recognition of the research led nature of our curriculum and the commitment of the staff. Following on from last year, the teaching team has worked hard to improve our research methods training consolidating this through the VLE. It is very reassuring to note that this development has been successful and has enhanced our delivery in this essential part of the syllabus. I also note with interest your thoughts on the use of online marking and its efficacy.

We have redesigned our feedback forms this year and staff are getting used to the new mode of presentation, we will, however, take on board your comments as regards the 'suggestions for improvements' box and hope to use this more constructively over coming years. In addition, we will look at the audit trail between first and second marking and work on trying to make this clearer.

Based on developments over the previous year, The School will continue offer marking training for all staff and we will continue to work with Faculty VLE support to extend the use of on-line marking beyond Level 1. We will also discuss your recommendations regarding typed up marking comments.

Once again may I thank you on behalf of the School for your supportive comments and suggestions for future development. Also many thanks for agreeing to travel to Leeds on an additional day to undertake your role. If you are interested we would like to combine this with the opportunity for you to present at a School seminar series or another similar event. It has been a real pleasure to work with you over the past year and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

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School of Sociology & Social Policy

The University of Leeds
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ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	School of Sociology and Social Policy
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Sociology and Social Policy
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	Programmes: BA Sociology; Social Policy; Social Policy & Crime; Social Policy and Sociology; Geography & Sociology; Politics & Sociology; Politics & Social Policy; Sociology & International Relations. Modules: Dissertations; SLSP2953 Urban Disorders & Social Control; SLSP2131 Welfare & Crime; SLSP3500 Gender, Tech and Body.
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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Standards

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- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
 - *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

Yes (please see comments below)

2. **Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?**
- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Yes (please see comments below)

3. **Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs**
- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
 - *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

Excellent (please see comments below)

4. **Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?**
- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
 - *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

Yes (please see comments below)

5. **For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum**

n/a

6. **Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year**

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

Excellent, please see comments below.

7. **Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching**
- This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.*

Excellent, please see comments below.

8. **Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

n/a

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9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

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Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

Yes (please see comments below)

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

Yes (please see comments below)

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes (please see comments below)

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes (please see comments below)

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Yes (please see comments below)

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

Yes (please see comments below)

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

Yes (please see comments below)

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

I am very happy to confirm that all relevant documentation on the curriculum, regulations, and procedures were provided in a timely way by <>, and that this included full sample and range of student work for:

SLSP Dissertations 2014-2015
SLSP2953 Urban Disorders and Soc Control
SLSP2131 Welfare and Crime
SLSP3500 Gender, Tech and Body (online)

I am satisfied with the examples and the accompanying curriculum materials that I have been sent. Specifically, the standards set for the awards are appropriate for qualifications at this level across the modules. The marking was in the main internally consistent and clearly justified across the board.

The feedback on candidate scripts ranged from good to excellent - both formative and summative responses were offered. There was consistent and explicit reference to the marking criteria across most of the feed-back provided, so as to clearly justify grading, and also a good use of the full marking range.

Dissertations

There are some really excellent submissions here, and the sample indicates that they would compare favourably with dissertations I have examined elsewhere (including <>, <>, <>, <> and <> Universities respectively). On consulting the marking criteria I felt that colleagues might easily have moved both 200642006 and 200605092 up to 60 and 68 respectively, and that this indicates there is some room to elevate dissertation scores.

One stand out feature of the dissertations I read (and from the titles I consulted of the other dissertations) was the tendency to focus on the media. To further equip students with a broad base of analytical skills in media analysis, there may be scope for a dissertation primer introducing students to different techniques in the social scientific study of press, broadcast, electronic and perhaps also social media.

I would also suggest that all student materials (including the dissertations) should be anonymised for the second marker (obviously the first marker is often the supervisor).

SLSP2953 Urban Disorders and Soc Control

An impressive grasp of theoretical discussion across the submissions, plus a good level of feedback that is consistent with the course outline.

SLSP2131 Welfare and Crime

Across the sample the level and consistency of feedback is very impressive. Certainly a solid range of marks here.

SLSP3500 Gender, Tech and Body (online)

An innovative module and assessment - some excellent work here from the students.

Overall then I am very happy to report that the delivery of the programs and their assessment are of high standard, their breadth and depth are impressive and the standard of delivery and assessment is certainly sufficient to be confirmed by the board.

<>

<> University

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13th July 2015

Dear <<>>

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2014/15 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School of Sociology and Social Policy. I am also very pleased to welcome you to the role of External Examiner within the School and also to note that you have enjoyed your first year with us.

The School is very encouraged by your positive comments, particularly in relation to the excellent standards of our dissertations and the feedback on candidate scripts. We work hard to ensure consistency here and that the advice we provide for students is informative so this was pleasing to see.

We take your comments on board in terms of ensuring that students are better prepared to conduct analyses of the media in their dissertations and are in the process of adding a Media module to the curriculum at Level 2.

May I once more thank you on behalf of the School for your supportive comments and suggestions for future development. It has been a real pleasure to work with you over the past year and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

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Head of School

School of Sociology and Social Policy