

**The University of Leeds****EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

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

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Leeds Institute of Health Science
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Family Therapy/Systemic Practice
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	<b>Foundation Course in Systemic Practice (FAMT5310M) 2014/15 Intermediate Course in Systemic Practice 2014/15</b>
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	Post Graduate Certificate

**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](mailto: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*

***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?*

***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*

## 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.*

As was the case last year, this Post Graduate Certificate Course is rigorous and has been well designed, achieving its aims and intended learning outcomes in a way that is commensurate with the award, in terms of academic quality and in terms of the Association of Family Therapy Criteria. The course introduces participants to concepts and techniques of family therapy and then develops and builds on these concepts and techniques across the two years. The curriculum and assignments on the course continue to enable participants to familiarise themselves with theory and practice, and gives participants the opportunity to develop recursive theory practice links that have relevance and are applicable to clinical practice. The course also introduces the participants to second order ideas and then continues to embed this way of working as it progresses. This helps participants to build recursive connections between self and the system and between personal and professional contexts. The course uses a wide range of teaching methods including formal written assignments, a written exam and training through experiential and role-play methods in order to achieve the above.

### 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.*

In my professional opinion, course aims and ILOs continue to be comparable with other similar programmes and competency frameworks for Systemic Psychotherapy. I remain impressed by the rigour and high academic and clinical standard of this course when compared with other similar programs in Systemic Psychotherapy and Practice in the United Kingdom. I particularly appreciate the attention given to the balance of teaching methods in terms of theory and practice. Vocational courses with a clinical emphasis can often neglect a rigorous foundation in theory and approach, concentrating more on technique and practice. This is not the case with this course. This PG Certificate provides a thorough grounding in the teaching and assessment of theoretical knowledge. This has been further embedded in the sat theory paper offered in the second year (see section below).

The course is balanced in the way it makes ample provision throughout to use this knowledge recursively and in a lived way in relation to technique and clinical practice.

**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 quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods within this PG Certificate course are varied, well thought out and constructed. They are coherent with a course that is working with adult learners who have different learning styles and also encourages the development of recursive links between theory and practice.

I continue to be impressed by the overall quality of feedback to all students. The quality of feedback given is of a very high standard and a rich resource to each student.

I was particularly impressed with the time given to failing students in terms of positive critique and suggestions about how to approach their re-submissions. Giving feedback and support to failing students is time consuming and challenging but if the student is able to embrace that feedback, the time and energy invested can be very rewarding. I think this is evidenced in the growth and development of students across the two years.

I have also been impressed by the ways the course leaders have managed more challenging issues such as plagiarism and late submission of work by failing students. They rigorously attend to student need and support them whilst also offering clarity by following set procedures in order to find a way forward.

Some discussion took place in the exam board meeting around the need for tutors to be more focussed on checking that students were attaining their practice hours over the course of the year . It was agreed that attainment of practice hours would be more closely monitored at regular intervals throughout the course.

**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.*

As a result of the different teaching, learning and assessment methods on offer within this course, students were provided with many and varied ways in which to demonstrate their learning and development and the standard has overall been high across the course.

Some of my more specific feedback to course tutors has been around the possibility of developing a greater awareness in the students' work around distinguishing self- and relational reflexivity and use of self within the system. In response to this feedback, tutors provided a specific workshop on these topics. The benefit of this teaching was clearly in evidence in the second assignment in the foundation year, and some essays submitted were of an outstanding standard.

Both tutors and students have managed to create a course-learning context, which has enabled a safe space from which to explore personal and professional links, and has greatly enhanced students' learning and the quality of the work produced.

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

This is an academic course but includes a clear practice component. Assessment has to demonstrate that students have reached a certain academic standard alongside the ability to make recursive theory-practice links. A particular strength of the course this year has been the attention given to demonstration of the "distance travelled" by the students in their attempts to grapple with and engage with the learning in an authentic and connected way. (For me the most interesting and encouraging pieces of work are ones that narrate and reflect on the process of their learning).

**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 major change to the programme this year has been the introduction of a written exam for the theory module at intermediate level. I enjoyed reading the exam responses, (although at times reading scanned written scripts was quite challenging). From reading the sample papers sent to me, and looking at the overall marks gained, it appears that this format was indeed successful in the way it has enabled students to gain a comprehension of core systemic theory. This format provided both the incentive and opportunity for students to be fully grounded in systemic theory and proved to be an effective tool for encouraging students to build a rigorous knowledge base.

There were two opportunities offered to sit this paper and a lot of thought went into producing a second paper that was of a similar level of complexity and standard to the first paper. I appreciated the way the tutors approached the marking of this paper, second marking on a question-by-question basis, second marking a sample of questions and gaining an overview of a sample of full papers.

Overall I think this development has been very successful.

**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.*

I think all aspects of the teaching learning and assessment on this course invite students to pay attention to evidenced based practice and research and encourage them to reflect on the place and impact of research on their clinical practice and theoretical understanding

**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.*

Good online access to guidance and very helpful course administrator.

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.*

I received documentation setting out the course as a whole, the individual modules and specifications and the marking criteria, which enabled me to undertake my role.

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

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?

I received a range of assessed work, which enabled assessment of course standards. Scripts were clearly annotated and feedback was clear.

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

N/A

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?

Administration has been excellent

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

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

12 November 2015

Dear

**External Examiner's report for Systemic Practice 2014-15**

As the School of Medicine's Director of Postgraduate Studies, I receive all the External Examiners' reports for the twenty five subjects offered at Master's level in 2014-15. First, let me thank you for assembling the 2014-15 report for the programmes in Systemic Practice. This is your second report.

I note that there were no urgent matters for attention. You comment that the academic standards and are appropriate for the level of award and that the learning in the Postgraduate Certificate matched the criteria of the Association of Family Therapy.

**Programme Leader's response**

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by \_\_\_\_\_, Programme Leader.

**Good practice**

You note how the programme team has responded to comments you made on self- and relational reflexivity and how the standard of work in students' assessments has improved. You comment on the introduction of a written examination for the theory module at intermediate level. I was glad to learn of the success of this development.

**Administration**

I appreciate the comment on the excellent administration of assessments. \_\_\_\_\_ is an outstanding and approachable administrator.

Thank you so much for your report as External Examiner. Your contributions to the Systemic Practice programmes are much valued.

Yours sincerely

Enc: 2 November 2015

**Director of Postgraduate Studies**





Quality Assurance Team  
Received 21/04/2016

02 November 2015

Dear

**Re: External Examiner's report on  
Foundation Course in Systemic Practice (FAMT5310M) 2014/15  
Intermediate Course in Systemic Practice 2014/15  
Post Graduate Certificate in Systemic Practice 2014/15**

We were very pleased to receive this report, the second from [redacted] as External Examiner to the courses named above in addition to [redacted] thoughtful and detailed review of our work, reflections on the course and the student's progress throughout the year.

We have sought to create consistency and stepwise progression of theoretical material across the different levels of training by having a lecturer be responsible for particular topics. We have been attending to balancing theoretical teaching in terms of offering appropriate sophistication of concepts while retaining accessibility, as well as offering a historical perspective alongside contemporary approaches to systemic practice.

We are conscious that our students have a variety of academic and professional backgrounds and seek to ensure the course content is inclusive and relevant. This includes drawing case examples from a range of treatment settings, and in Year 2, having students meet in their professional groupings to discuss issues specific to their professional contexts. The course attracts a diverse range of students from professionals who are less academic disciplines embarking on a first postgraduate level study to very senior health professionals accomplished at doctoral level study. The challenge to provide all with a satisfying developmental learning experience is significant but student feedback show that we achieve this well. Action points for this year include the inclusion of theoretical extension materials for the most able students to further progress their understanding.

We noted your review of the inaugural written examination process and outcome as providing students with 'incentive and opportunity' for to be fully grounded in systemic theory and for encouraging students to build a rigorous knowledge base. We thank you for your careful review of the examination questions and detailed responses to the marking of this paper including the handwritten scripts.

We were pleased to note that the commitment to early identification and support of students who are at risk of failing, was recognised. Where possible these students are given every support to succeed. The quality of developmental feedback was also noted as well as the plan for this year to follow up the clinical practice hours logs early in the year to ensure that students are not falling behind in accruing the required hours over the year.

We were grateful for the feedback about the need to distinguish self- and relational reflexivity for Year 1 students, and pleased that our subsequent teaching on this topic made a positive impact on the students' knowledge, as evidenced in

their second assignments. We will continue to offer this teaching session in the present academic year and also the follow up this aspect of learning and professional development across the second year of the course.

We look forward to your work with the course in the coming year.

Sincerely yours

Programme Leader of PG Cert in Systemic Practice