

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:	Leeds Institute of Health Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in Health Management, Planning and Policy
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

. None

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.*

The Intended Learning Outcomes are fully appropriate for the level of award.

In the reconsideration of the designation of the award (from MA to MSc or MPH) the programme team should consider whether the balance between compulsory and optional elements ensure that students will necessarily achieve coverage of all relevant subject areas.

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.*

The award is very comparable with UK-based and international courses covering similar subjects (which are few in number).

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.*

A variety of assessment methods are used, which is to be commended and is appropriate to the ILOs. Arrangements for marking modules and classification of awards are suitable. The nature of the continuous assessment, which begins at a very early stage in the course, does mean that students who have difficulty early on (possibly as a consequence of weaker language skills) may be unable to achieve a high overall grade notwithstanding much improved performance in the latter parts of 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.*

Generally, and notwithstanding the observation made above, students were able to demonstrate performance adequately. There is a strong tendency to mark towards a narrow mark range (viz. <80). This can result in stronger students struggling to achieve distinction-level marks. In one case, this year, I did argue for an up-grading.

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.

It was good to see that the Health Management Information Systems module ran this year. It is a difficult subject to teach as it can invite students to address general issues only. The assessment should be reconsidered to ensure sufficient depth can be demonstrated.

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.

Staff are regularly engaged in international consultancy work (as well as research) which is essential to ensure that they keep up-to-date with current issues and developments.

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

I have mentored a new EE for the parallel Hospital Management course. I received sufficient information on this course and was able to offer what little guidance was needed.

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.

I enjoy a sufficiently close relationship with the programme management team that I was given or requested (and was given) all of the information that I required.

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.

Not all modules do produce module handbooks. Those that I received I found to be extremely helpful (as I suspect the students themselves would have done). I would encourage the production of module handbooks as routine practice.

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?

I did not see (or request) assessments prior to their being given to students. I am perfectly happy with this arrangement. The course is sufficiently mature that I am confident with the proficiency of staff to set appropriate assessments and to develop these in accordance with lessons that they (and I) may learn for future years.

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. Given the small student cohort I requested (and received) a high proportion of scripts. Scripts were accompanied by marking sheets which generally provided good feedback to the students. For some modules students were only given an overall mark, rather than a sectional breakdown; and I have recommended standardising to a sectional breakdown of marks.

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

Choice of subjects was appropriate and in some cases most interesting. I was very happy with both the method and standard of assessment.

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?

Arrangements were very satisfactory. For the first time this year the Examiners Meetings were scheduled so that I was able to attend the MPH (International) Committee of Examiners (and Hospital Management). I found this most helpful given the large overlap in modules offered (particularly as options) to the three sets of students.

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

Yes. All cases where discretion and/or mitigation were options were considered very carefully.

Other comments

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

The students themselves raised a number of points with me when I met with them in March of this year. They were concerned at the early timing of the first assessments and the overall number of assignments that they were faced with. As I have indicated above I have sympathy with this view and share concerns over its implications for both final performance and for students ability to 'read round' core subject material. Students made the additional salient observation that they could only establish the expectation on them from the feedback that they received on earlier assignments. I have some sympathy for this view and feel that any course redesign might consider the use of more formative assignments at an early stage. Given the small number of students and the strong optional nature of the overall course, it is important that extra effort be given to ensure their identity as a cohesive and coherent group. The very important 'philosophy' of student mutual learning has always (and most appropriately) been seen as a core approach within this course. As indicated above, I would encourage the team to guard against compression in their use of marks and to ensure that work that is genuinely "excellent" is accorded sufficient credit (and differentiation from the work of very good students).

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

14 December 2015

Dear

External Examiner's report for Health Management, Planning and Policy 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. Thank you for assembling your report for the programmes in Health Management, Planning and Policy.

I note that there were no urgent matters for attention. You comment that the academic standards and content of student work are appropriate for the level of award.

Good practice

You report that you were impressed by the range of assessment methods employed. You met the students and discussed assessment strategies with them. I was pleased to note that you have mentored the the newly appointed External Examiner for International Hospital Management.

Concern

The Nuffield team is considering a reconfiguration of the programmes offered to international students. You express concern that the students in future should form a cohesive and coherent group which encourages mutual learning. I am meeting the Nuffield team in January and I will ensure that this point is discussed.

continues



Programme Leader's response

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by Programme Leader.
comments on the need for students to receive early feedback on written work.

Thank you so much for your report as External Examiner. Your contributions to the programmes in Health Management, Planning and Policy are much valued.

Yours sincerely

Enc: 10 December 2015

**Nuffield Centre for International
Health and Development**
Leeds Institute of Health Sciences



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

10 December 2015

Dear _____,

I have recently received the External Examiner's Report for 2014-15 for the Health Management, Planning and Policy programme and I have been asked to respond to report.

The report was positive and contained encouraging remarks about the quality of the Health Management, Planning and Policy programme. The external examiner felt that the award is very comparable with UK-based and international courses (which are few in number) covering similar subjects.

The programme team is very pleased to note that _____ commended on the work of Nuffield academics who are keeping their teaching up-to-date with the changes taking place internationally in their subject areas, which they are drawing from their international consultancy and research work.

However, _____ pointed out that 'the nature of the continuous assessment, which begins at a very early stage in the course, does mean that students who have difficulty early on (possibly as a consequence of weaker language skills) may be unable to achieve a high overall grade notwithstanding much improved performance in the latter parts of the course'. This issue was clarified during the exam board meeting. It is due to the weight (30 credits) of the first module, which require that type of weight. Nevertheless, the issue will be considered again during the process of the overall programme review that will start soon.

_____ pointed out that the dissertation topics were very relevant for the Masters students and commended the methods and standards of assessment, including high quality feedback to accompany the recommended grade. Nevertheless, _____ commented that there "there is a strong tendency to mark towards a narrow mark range (viz. <80). This can result in stronger students struggling to achieve distinction-level marks". This issue is already included in the QME Action Plan for 2015-16, and will be discussed with module leaders and markers to consider using the whole of marking grid for the assignments.

Other issues raised by _____ in _____ report will be taken forward and included in the agenda of teachers' meeting for this academic year. These include:

- a) Production of module handbooks for all modules.

- b) Standardising marks to a sectional breakdown of marks in the assessments, instead of giving an overall mark for the module.

As the programme is going to be reviewed, including the designation of the award from MA to MPH, the programme team will consider the suggestions made by _____ regarding the balance between compulsory and optional elements to ensure appropriate coverage of all relevant subject areas.

Finally, appreciation should be expressed to _____ for _____ work this past year as the External Examiner for the Health Management Planning and Policy programme.

Best Regards,

Programme Leader, Health Management, Planning and Policy
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