

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Education, Social Sciences & Law
Subject(s):	<i>Sociology/social policy</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Sociology/social policy programmes I looked at material for the following modules: Dissertation Welfare and crime Emotions, power & contemporary society Critical mixed race studies
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

No

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?

I was provided with previous reports (though not the School's responses)

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

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 are fully commensurate with the level of award. The structure and content of the Sociology/ Social Policy programmes are appropriate and comparable to similar programmes offered elsewhere that I am familiar with. All standards are appropriate for the awards under consideration.

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 programme meets the expectations and requirements of the 2007 QAA benchmarks for both Sociology and Social Policy. The Sociology benchmarks were updated in July 2016 and in my view pose no issues of concern to the ongoing quality of the programmes delivered at Leeds.

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 range of assignment methods are used on the modules I reviewed, though exams and essays appear to dominate, perhaps at the expense of alternative methods (some of which may enhance students' employability skills): It would be interesting to know if alternative assessment formats are available on other modules that I did not assess.

I looked at materials, marks and feedback from across the marking spectrum. It is clear that the students are able to demonstrate the full extent of their learning and understanding, including in exams and essays where questions appear to have been designed to enable students to perform to the best of their abilities. It was good to see the full range of marks and marking criteria being applied. The weaker pieces received good feedback on how they could have been improved. In a very small number of cases students receiving very good or excellent feedback received what could be constructed as rather critical feedback relative to the mark awarded, but this is a minor issue rather than a cause for concern.

Assessment methods are appropriate to the ILOS. In my view the School offers a good quality teaching and learning experience for students.

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. Several students submitted excellent work and at the exam board many first and upper second degrees were awarded at the summer Exam Board that is testament to both the quality of the students, and the teaching, on the programme.

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.

n/a – first year in role

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 evident in the Dissertation module where some students produced excellent work. The weaker dissertations suffered from over- rather than under- ambition. It was good to see staff provided detailed feedback tailored to students' individual submissions. On the other modules it is clear that staff are actively involved in research on the topic, evident in the breadth and depth of issues covered and the abilities of the better-performing students to present a solid understanding of frequently complex issues. The modules I looked over were interesting and current.

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

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.

I received this material with my contract at the beginning of the tenure. Administrative staff in the School have been a particularly valuable source of advice.

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 this information along with samples of the students' work to assess. The module handbooks I received appeared to be well put together and on the whole comprehensive. The handbook for the Dissertation was particularly good and detailed an excellent range of surgeries, workshops and materials to support students. I was sent all material in good time and it is clear that while staff are under some pressure to meet tight deadlines for providing feedback and reporting of marks, standards remain high.

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?

n/a

I assumed the role midway through the year when (presumably) questions had already been set. I have already received assessment materials for consideration for the academic year 2016-2017

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. All scripts were clearly marked and annotated, with good feedback presented that justifies the mark awarded and offers useful advice to students on how to improve their work.

All scripts had been reviewed by a second marker, though it is not always clear how work was selected for second marking. Where disagreements occurred (with final marks of both markers differing by a larger margin) there was evidence of the work being considered by a third marker.

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

Both very appropriate. See response to section 7.

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 were clear and I was well supported by staff in the School. I attended the summer (July) exam Board and was satisfied with all the recommendations of the Board. The Board was well attended and run efficiently. It is clear that all those present were interested in the progress and success of the students. Administrative arrangements in the School have 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

18 November 2016

Dear

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2015/16 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School of Sociology and Social Policy. We are most grateful. I apologise for being rather late with this letter, but have new oversight of these matters as incoming DSE.

We are very encouraged by your positive comments, particularly as these relate to our academic standards, support to students and marking and feedback. You note that some very high performing students received excellent feedback but that this was also a little critical relative to the mark awarded. We do seek to offer students direction on scope for improvement even at the upper end, but in line with your advice we will keep watch for clarity to students here regarding marks awarded.

It is gratifying that you commended some excellent dissertation work, along with our extensive programme of dissertation support workshops and resources, an area where we have expanded our range of support to students over recent years.

In respect of your question about how work is selected for second marking, we typically invite second markers to review a sample across the classification range (and within classes), and include all fails. We also second mark anything that raises particular issues or questions for the first marker. It would be good to know if you ask this question for clarification only, or if you had any concerns here? You raised an interesting question about the range of assessment types we have in place: this is a matter we are currently reviewing.

On behalf of the School thank you again for your work for us over the last year and for your support and positive contribution. We look forward to working with you this academic session.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Student Education,
on behalf of the Head of School

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

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

Faculty / School of:	School of Sociology and Social Policy
Subject(s):	Sociology and Social Policy
Programme(s) / Module(s):	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.
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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

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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

- 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.*

Yes (please see comments below)
- 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

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 (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.

Broadly I am more than satisfied with the examples and the accompanying curriculum materials that I have been sent: 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 overall volume, weighting and variety of assessments were in my view appropriate and balanced.

The feedback on candidate scripts ranged from good to excellent - both formative and summative responses were offered. There was clear and explicit reference to the marking criteria justify grading, and continued improvement in use of the full marking range.

On the 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).

Overall however I am very happy to report that the delivery of the programs and their assessment remain at a high standard.

<<>>

<<>> University

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

18 November 2016

Dear

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2015/16 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School of Sociology and Social Policy. We are most grateful. I apologise for being rather late with this letter, but have new oversight of these matters as incoming DSE.

The School remains very encouraged by your positive comments particularly as they relate to our standards, marking and feedback, and type of assessment. We are pleased too that you commended some excellent dissertation work by our students.

On behalf of the School thank you for your work for us over the last year and for your support and positive contribution. We look forward to working with you again this academic session.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Student Education,
on behalf of the Head of School

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	School of Sociology and Social Policy
Subject(s):	<i>Sociology</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	SLSP2060 SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS SLSP3982 SEX WORKS; THEORY POLICY AND POLITICS SLSP2031, DRUGS SOCIETY POLITICS AND POLICY SLSP2020 CRIME LAW AND REGULATION SLSP3041/3051/3200 (40 CREDITS) DISSERTATION SLSP3042/3052 (20 CREDITS) DISSERTATION SLSP2084 RACISM AND ETHNICITY STUDIES SLSP3211 STATE CRIME AND IMMORALITY SLSP3220 CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SLSP2050 SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Completed report

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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

There are no matters of urgent attention. The Programme is clearly well run; assessments are appropriate for level and module learning outcomes. The Programme offers a wide range of contemporary modules, appropriate for the discipline and in line with subject benchmarks. The Programme is comparable to similar programmes of sociology and social policy found across the University sector.

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

Overall, my experience of external examining at Leeds has been very good. The administrative staff have been excellent; sending materials on time and regularly updating and communicating with me. They are to be commended. The materials sent to me have always been detailed and it is always clear what I am reviewing and why. I have always been impressed with the willingness of the academic team to reflect and respond to my feedback. I note particularly an improvement in relation to marking; clearer evidence of moderation, a greater willingness to award marks across the full marks range, improvement in quality of feedback to students and improvement in the wording of essay questions. This is all to be commended as it was in response to comments I raised. The exam board procedures particularly in relation to students with exceptional factors/mitigating circumstances has improved with the adoption of anonymisation and consideration of such factors in a separate administrative context.

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 overall Programme aims and specific module aims were appropriate for level of award; the aims were in line with national subject benchmarks. The ILOs were similarly appropriate for level of award and module content. The ILOs were clearly mapped to assessment criteria and type.

The standards of the Programme are appropriate for the award and are comparable to similar Programmes across the HE sector.

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 Aims and ILOs of both the Programme overall and specific modules meet and indeed exceed the expectations of the national subject benchmarks for Sociology. The Aims and ILOs are comparable to Programmes of Sociology across the UK HE sector.

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.*

Overall, the assessments were well designed and clearly mapped to module ILOs. Assessment types were appropriate for level but it should be noted that the Programme is over-reliant on traditional methods of assessment, ie, essays and exams. Very few modules offer other assessment types, e.g. case study reports and when they do the students' work is often more creative and innovative. The Programme should consider a greater diversity of assessment types. The quality of the work that I reviewed demonstrates the fact that the assessments that are set both challenge students yet offer them many opportunities to demonstrate the depth of their learning. The standard of marking was overall very high; the use of first and second marker templates is to be commended as good practice, as is the use of exam marker templates. The majority of modules demonstrate clear evidence of moderation. The majority of feedback to students is detailed, positive and focused on showing students how to improve further; again, this is evidence of good practice. The marking and moderation is consistent within module teams and across the Programme.

The students generally perform to a high standard, with some excellent work. This clearly demonstrates the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment methods.

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.*

The academic standards of the cohort is comparable to Sociology students on similar Programmes in similar institutions.

The majority attain 'good honours' degree marks and a sizeable number achieve very high marks. There is a smaller number of underachievers than might be expected which is testament to the Programme team, but it may be worth exploring why these students underperform. The cohort's strengths lie in theoretical application, analysis, application of literature and general quality of expression. The lack of diversity of assessments makes it harder to gauge the cohort's weaknesses as their current assessment types plays to their strengths.

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.

There are no enhancements to the Programme/modules since the previous year. That said, the Programme's ability to maintain its high level of quality consistently every year is an achievement to be lauded.

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.

It is quite clear that academic research underpins the Programme; each module is clearly linked to the academic research of the module leader(s). Core research skills such as critical reading, evaluation of evidence, and analysis are evident in all the modules that I reviewed.

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.

The material sent to me was sufficient and highly useful.

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 did receive all necessary documentation; indeed, I would commend the Programme for the well-organised bundles that I received, which included handbooks, assessment information, marked work, assessment sheets, and so forth.

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, I was. The level and nature of the questions set were appropriate and clearly linked to module ILOs. Module leaders readily responded to my feedback on draft questions.

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 high quality samples of assessed work for each module that I reviewed, with sufficient examples of the full marks range within the module. Scripts were clearly marked with all the relevant feedback sheets attached.

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

The dissertations that I reviewed featured diverse topics and a good mixture of theoretical and empirical work. The dissertations should be commended for their high level of student creativity. The assessment of the dissertations was extremely good.

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?

I did not attend the Board as it was rearranged to a new date at late notice. However, I can commend the administrative arrangements prior to the Board.

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

I did not attend this Board this year, but I presume similar practice as last year was used and this was appropriate.

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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18 November 2016

Dear

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2015/16 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School of Sociology and Social Policy over your term as our external. We are most grateful. I apologise for being rather late with this letter, but have new oversight of these matters as incoming DSE.

We remain very encouraged by your positive comments, particularly in relation to the quality and academic rigour of our programmes, the importance of our research led learning and the positive and focused feedback we offer students in supporting their further academic development. We acknowledge your advocacy of greater diversity of assessment types and this remains part of our ongoing review of undergraduate programmes and modules. We will continue to pursue this through our level 3 review group and our School Taught Student Education Committee as we look at new module proposals and amendments. We will also reflect further on your question regarding the small number of students who may under-achieve as part of our programme review work.

On behalf of the School thank you again for all your work for us over the years, for your support and your constructive suggestions for future development.

Yours sincerely

Director of Student Education
on behalf of the Head of School