

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

School of Sociology and Social Policy

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

T +44 (0) 113
F +44 (0) 113
T (Direct Line) +44 (0) 113



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
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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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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

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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.

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Excellent, please see comments below.

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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)

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Yes (please see comments below)

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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

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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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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