

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 Healthcare
Subject(s):	<i>Social Work</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	HECS 1115, HECS 1114, HECS 2208, HECS 2212, HECS 3254, HECS 3153, HECS 3211 and HECS 3029
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons.) Social Work, MA Social Work

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

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?

Yes. When I started as an EE I received copies of the External Examiners' module reports.

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

NA

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 assessment methods continue to be robust and test students' achievements of the learning outcomes using a variety of methods. The programme is structured to meet the professional criteria for the social work role. The internal examiners provided consistently detailed and constructive feedback to the students, and the level of the marks was generally appropriate and consistent. It was easily apparent from the feedback to see where students had lost marks. The marking is clearly mapped against the ILO's for each module.

The distribution of marks between modules appears consistent and the overall assessment process appears to have been administered fairly and appropriately.

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 sample of assignments I read are broadly comparable to those produced by social workers undertaking graduate programmes elsewhere in the UK. The evidence produced by the students in support of their professional competence is reflected in the social work benchmark requirements set down by the QAA.

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 number of modules have more than one assessment task, which gives greater opportunity to test students knowledge base. The assessment procedures have been carried out in accordance with the module ILOs and the schools regulations. Internal moderation has been completed appropriately.

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 level of performance of the cohort of students I have sampled has shown on average a good level of performance and this compares very well with other HEI's in which I have acted as External Examiner. Most of the assessed work I have looked at has been at the middle to high achievement level, with very few fails. The strengths of the student group is their ability to research their subject material and critically explore the issues under investigation.

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

I have seen a range of practice documents (portfolios) which demonstrate how the students are meeting the aims of the placement and the ILOs. I will be attend the assessment board in Dec. 2016 and will meet with students, giving me the opportunities to explore the placement documentation and support of students in greater detail.

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.

This is the second year I have acted as an External Examiner for this programme and the nature of the teaching and the assignment work is similar to that of the previous year. I have not noted any significant enhancements to the programme and the modules from the previous year.

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.

As already comment on, the use of research, legislation and policy is clearly evidenced in each module I have sampled. There is good evidence of practice being informed by research and there was examples in the module work some excellent critical reflective writing using a large range of research material- with the outcome that many of the students gaining very high marks .

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

NA

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

NA

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

I have received up to date information (EE handbook) from the School of Health Care regarding the role and responsibilities of the External Examiner.

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 ExternalExaminers and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

No. I have requested a hard copy of the BA and MA social work 2016-17 handbooks, but this has not materialized.

Each year a new schedule of module leads and the EE who will be reviewing these modules is produced, but I have not received a copy of this document.

There has been changes in the management structure and lead responsibilities for the BA and MA social work programme, but I have had no written confirmation of these changes.

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 am not aware of any new examination/ assessment work which has taken place on the modules I have reviewed.

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?

Most of the assessment work has been available for me to review, but on a few occasions I have been unable to access the computer system and this has taken, in some case, a number of weeks to resolve. From the work sent to me to review which scripts the module leader wished me to look at , and this was based on a sample of the whole module cohort.

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

Yes.

- 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?**

The organization of the Board, which I attended, was satisfactory.

When attending the last Exam Board, I had to chase the arrangements for my over night stay.

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

I understand that there are clear criteria to consider 'mit circs' and this includes a process to review the evidence presented by students.

Other comments

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

School of Healthcare

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct line: 0113

E-mail:
headofschool@healthcare.leeds.ac.uk

13 February 2017

Dear

Re: External Examiner's Report –2015/2016 - MA Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work

I should like, on behalf of the social work team, to thank you for your complimentary annual External Examiner's report for the aforementioned programmes.

I am pleased to note your positive comments on the quality of the assessment methods and feedback, the quality of the work that the students are producing both academic assignments and practice documentation.

I am pleased to learn that your relationships with both administrative staff and programme leaders are good. The team has sent you a copy of the assessment schedule and programme handbook. I am also pleased to advise you that we have just appointed Iain Moody to the role of Professional Lead. I am sorry to hear that you occasionally had difficulty in accessing the IT system. Should you experience any problems in the future, please do not hesitate to contact the School's Information Management team at healthcareim@leeds.ac.uk.

The programme team greatly appreciates your involvement with the programmes, your ability to compare and contrast this programme with others that provides a real sense of how the programme sits within a broader picture. Thank you also for your efficient turnaround of documentation.

The team looks forward to a continued productive relationship in the current session.

Yours sincerely,

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 Healthcare
Subject(s):	<i>Social Work</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Social Work MA Social Work
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA and MA

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

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?

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.*

Both the BA and MA programmes meet external requirements for a programme leading to a social work qualification and professional registration. The team have worked hard to maintain, further develop and implement an imaginative and stretching curriculum relevant to attaining these.

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.*

Aims and ILOs are prepared against external benchmarks and the standards achieved by students, as I have seen them so far, are, at least, on a par or better than those I see or have seen on other undergraduate and postgraduate social work qualifying programmes.

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.*

From the evidence of assessed assignments which I have reviewed, the quality of University teaching appears to be strong. The variety of assessment mechanisms, which provide learning opportunities in their own right, appears to be replicated in the range of teaching and learning approaches deployed.

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 is always the case, the standard of student performance is variable. The most highly rated assessments reveal very strong abilities to achieve understanding and the capacity to evaluate and critique. The lower marked assignments revealed gaps in required knowledge, were poor in analysis and structure and often exposed weaknesses in basic literacy skills. It was apparent that the course team were aware of such learning issues, remedial facilities are available and possible underlying issues are addressed.

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

I have reviewed a sample of practice portfolios and assignments within which practice placement drawn upon. In the light of this evidence, I am confident that the practice components of the programmes are developing the requisite knowledge, understanding, skills and values to meet registration requirements and produce effective newly qualified practitioners.

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.

Changes made to the programmes, as I have been made aware of them, are appropriate responses to a constantly changing practice environment.

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.

Students reveal in their assignments an appropriate knowledge of relevant research and undertake practice related research as a component in their assessment. They learn the importance of, and the skills to evaluate, research based evidence as a key underpinning for practice. Hopefully, in some cases, an interest has been stimulated which may lead in due course to an academic career.

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.

Necessary material is provided in documentary form. In addition, I found attendance at a Practice Assessment Panel in my previous year and an opportunity to meet members of the programme team informally on the Exam Board day very helpful and instructive in understanding the philosophy, culture and administrative processes of the programmes.

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 receive requisite documentation

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 received some drafts for comment; others were already in place and, I assume had received approval from previous or my colleague external. As indicated already, the range and nature of assessments are appropriate for meeting programme objectives, the stages of students' learning and particular subject areas under assessment.

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 or was pointed towards an appropriate sample for each assignment. The majority were viewed on-line via Turnitin and had detailed in-text and overall comments. Using Turnitin, although a sample was suggested, I had access to the whole cohort and used this facility on occasions.

I provide specific feedback on each item of assessed work as they are marked throughout the year. I have received responses to my feedback, where I have raised issues on assignments, in the course of the session. A practice which I particularly value is that of markers providing a review in the MAB proforma of overall performance in an assessment. In my view, this is exemplary practice which I now recommend to other programmes.

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

The nature of the assignments which focus on researching a topic, appraising the material gathered and then applying it critically to practice, is entirely appropriate for latter phase the BA and MA programmes and the students' stage of learning. It was apparent that students – through their teaching and research – had covered or had, at least, been exposed to, much essential and relevant material and at a depth to be expected at the point of qualification and for the qualification (BA or MA). The good marks demonstrated the capacity to investigate a topic and then, grounded in appropriate literature, to structure and present a cogent, critical and reflective exposition of the topic.

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?

As noted above, I attended one Examination Board this year. It was conducted efficiently and with due process.

I have felt on occasions that turn-around times for my reviewing, so that assessed work can be presented to the periodic MABs, are unreasonably tight.

Also, in the course of the year, I receive numerous spread-sheets for signing apart from those immediately connected to pieces of work to be reviewed. I have to accept on trust the veracity of these additional spread-sheets – I feel slightly uncomfortable about this but am anxious not to disrupt the administration. However, I do think provision should be made

for these admin 'catch-ups' to be dealt with internally. I have not kept count this year but, as matter of record, between July 2014 and March 2015, I faxed 52 spread-sheets to the admin team.

Administrative colleagues are unfailingly helpful.

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

As I understand and have observed the processes, mitigating circumstances are well covered both within the submission processes for individual assignments and at the various Boards

Other comments

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

Areas of particular strength in the programmes:

- The strong support for student learning among the University staff team reflected, for the most part, in the quality of feedback. Most feedback is comprehensive and should be helpful to the recipients, highlighting the key issues in academic content, construction and/or presentational aspects of individual submissions.
- An appropriately focussed and well organised curriculum.
- The variety of approaches deployed in both teaching and assessment which are both rigorous and developmental.
- The opportunity provided to myself as External Examiner to discuss issues with the course team when I attended the Exam Board and the Practice Assessment Panel.
- As noted above, a practice which I particularly value is that of markers providing a review in the MAB proforma of overall performance in an assessment. In my view, this is exemplary practice which I now recommend to other programmes.

As noted in section 15 above, I do question appropriateness of the requirement for an external's signature on the multiplicity of 'catch-up' spreadsheets.

School of Healthcare

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct line: 0113

E-mail:
headofschool@healthcare.leeds.ac.uk

8 February 2017

Dear

Re: External Examiner's Report –2015/2016 - MA Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work

I should like, on behalf of the social work team, to thank you for your complimentary annual External Examiner's report for the aforementioned programmes.

The team is pleased that you have acknowledged the overall strength and imaginative nature of the curricula, that you consider our assessment processes to be robust, and that the constructive feedback supports student development. It was also pleasing to see that you felt that the students' good marks reflected the quality of the teaching and research on the courses.

It is reassuring that you have found the practical arrangements around the exam board and the practice assessment panel useful and that in particular you acknowledge that the MAB proforma provides a very useful overview of the assessment results.

Your concerns about the turnaround times and the number of forms that have to be signed have been noted and passed to the relevant people.

The team looks forward to a continued productive relationship with you in the current session and greatly appreciates your support for the programmes.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School of Healthcare



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