

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:	Food Science and Nutrition
Subject(s):	BSc Nutrition, BSc Food Science and Nutrition
Programme(s) / Module(s):	FOOD2201, FOOD2215, FOOD2260, FOOD3381, FOOD3390, FOOD2135, FOOD2150, FOOD2160, FOOD2165, FOOD2175, FOOD3050, FOOD3071, FOOD3340, FOOD3371
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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

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?

Yes.

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.

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes were fully met. The range and the standard of the assessments were appropriate at each level, although the number of pieces of assessed work required at level 2 seems onerous.

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 BSc Nutrition degree is accredited by the Association for Nutrition (UKVRN). Both programmes are comparable with the aims and learning outcomes for similar undergraduate degree courses at other UK universities.

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 assessment types ranged from written examination papers, practical reports, literature review, essays, case studies, posters, portfolios, reflective logs, oral presentations and reports with some peer assessment used. The marked assessments indicate that the teaching on all modules is up to date and allows students to reach their potential through the development of critical thinking, IT, teamwork and research skills to match the ILOs. The assessments were often applied in nature and provided students with full and exciting opportunities to perform well in meeting the outcomes, and therefore to receive the appropriate high marks as a reward. For example, this is shown in FOOD3371 featuring teamwork for the Food Product Development Project, and in the great use of contemporary material for coursework (presentation/portfolio/report) for the FOOD3381 Nutrition Policy and Public Health module.

There were no major issues regarding feedback to students; students reported they generally had timely responses to their submissions, and that they were encouraged to see their lecturers to obtain more detailed feedback. The quality of the feedback I saw on marked written work was appropriate.

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 demonstrated by the student cohort are on a par with similar programmes elsewhere.

The students in the two cohorts examined here have responded well to the challenges set in their assessments and they have mostly performed very well, but I would question whether the overall number of items of assessment at Level 2 limits the potential to stretch the most able students since they seem over-assessed compared with second year students at other institutions I am familiar with. Evidence to suggest this may be worth further investigation comes from: i) comments by individual academic staff about overall performance on their own modules at the Exam Board, ii.) from comments made by the Level 3 students I met during my February visit who were enjoying final year study more, commenting that they had found Level 2 'tougher' to manage in terms of the volume of work and workload management ("Level 2 is very work-intensive" and "better balance in the final year"), and iii.) module marks across Level 2 compared to Level 3.

Assessment takes the form of written examinations for a number of modules, worth 100% of the module marks (FOOD2135, FOOD2150, FOOD2165, FOOD3071, FOOD3340 and although most of these are only 10 credit modules, I wonder if further consideration might be given to alternative arrangements for assessment, perhaps with greater use of online tests, for example. Students I met on my February visit commented that their programmes seemed 'exam-heavy', especially where 3 hour examinations are used.

I met a number of final year students who had taken a placement year and they were unanimous in their appreciation of the value of the experience for their career opportunities and skill development. They reported enthusiastically on their placements as they acknowledged that taking these opportunities had made them "more independent and able to take on responsibilities for their work". I noted that the students commented that on reflection, they would have preferred to have two visits, rather just one, from their placement tutors.

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.

On reading the report for 2014-15 from the previous examiner, I can confirm that the teaching staff have addressed her comments and the team put in place a number of changes to help the assessment process (e.g. providing external examiners with easy access to all marked work, and to a pre-selected sample). Further attention should be given to the balance of assessment between modules for each programme: do all modules require a roughly equivalent amount of work for the designated weighting? An exercise evaluating the assessed work required for each of the 10 credit and 20 credit modules might be worthwhile. In some cases the assessments for a 10 credit module seemed onerous/numerous, reaching that required for 20 credit modules, e.g., FOOD2215 and FOOD3390. I wonder if there could be a check against a standard tariff, taking the number of credits gained for passing each module into account to address any anomalies.

During my June visit I met with the programme leaders and noted that the academic team are working hard in recognising areas to improve upon in enhancing their already high quality programmes, e.g., for FOOD3390 where the team are exploring ways to help students develop good data analysis skills, allowing the most able students to shine and bring in learning from other modules in high quality answers in their assessments. The teaching staff are clearly dedicated and enthusiastic about enhancing the programmes they deliver.

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.

From discussion with the programme leaders I can see that the academic team are conscious of the need to maintain the overall coherence of the programmes and incorporate the expertise of new staff involved in the delivery. This is being achieved through appropriate, approved module changes that allow students to become involved in research work and undertake appropriate assessments. This activity will be further scrutinised when the programme leader leads the work for the Association for Nutrition re-accreditation that is now due. Examples included use of journal articles in seen examinations and the pleasing range of topical research projects that are of value as contributions to the body of knowledge for health and food professionals.

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.

I had access to sufficient material about the modules and programmes. Copies of the external examiner reports for the previous two years, with the responses from the Head of School were provided. I was also sent a copy of the current External Examiner Handbook. The administrative staff were able to help me by answering questions I had as they arose during the year.

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.

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. The nature and level of examination papers and the assessments tasks were appropriate.

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. During my visit I was able to access all of the marked work and it was useful that a suitable sample of the work for each module was pre-selected from across the range of marks for me to scrutinise. I was able to see the marks awarded, justification for marks and feedback to students. The marking was accurate and fair.

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

Yes. There was an interesting range of topics studied from across the disciplines of nutrition and food science, these were relevant to contemporary research interests in food production and manufacture, in nutrition and health. The method and the standard of assessment was appropriate.

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. The administrative arrangements were excellent. I was invited to visit the school on 9 February to meet a group of current students, to familiarise myself with the programmes and to meet with the other external examiner for Food Science and Nutrition. This visit provided a good opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the programmes, the assessments, and the experiences and aspirations of students on the programmes. During my second visit, 23-24 June, I was able to meet the programme leader and a number of staff teaching on the modules to discuss the modules and the assessments. The staff were very well prepared and attentive during both of my visits, ensuring my queries were answered and that I had access to all of the information I requested. On the second day of my summer visit the Board of Examiners meeting was held and this was chaired well and efficiently. The administration of the Board was excellent. Staff were well-organised, clearly aware of the procedures and pertinent regulations, and each student award was considered with care and attention. I was satisfied with the outcomes of the discussions and the recommendations of the Board.

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

N/A

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Dear

Thank you for your first external examiner's report. The School Taught Student Education Committee and colleagues were encouraged by the positive comments and observations made in the report.

In the report you have pointed out that there is over assessment in a number of modules and particularly in the second year, with this also being reported to you by those students that you met. You further noted that some students considered their programme exam-heavy and particularly through the use of 3 hour examinations. There has been much debate within the School and within the University considering assessment. In the School, there is a group of colleagues taking part in a School Teaching Enhancement Scheme (TES) who are reviewing all aspects of assessment in all programmes. There have been initial reports from the group that there is a need to reduce the amount of assessment in all programmes, and a number of initial suggestions have been made. The group has not yet completed the full review, but action has already started to reduce assessment, and to standardise the weighting of examination and coursework in modules. This has been a major topic in the School's AAMs (Annual Academic Meetings). Alongside this activity, the School has recently appointed quite a few new members of academic staff and the School has just completed a redistribution of teaching, with instructions to refresh modules and to examine amount and type of assessment in modules.

It was pleasing to note that those placement students that you met were appreciative of the value of the placement and the training and development they experienced whilst on placement. With respect to the number of visits, this is sometimes restricted by the nature of the placement and needs of the employer, but wherever a second visit is deemed to be necessary or is requested, then a second visit does take place.

Once again I thank you on behalf of the School for your observations and advice both during your visits and in the report, and particularly for the positive comments about the programmes and the staff in the School. I look forward to meeting you in the meeting in February,