

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17**

QA Team received 17/11/2017

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Education
Subject(s):	<i>Childhood Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	EDUC 5861 M Theorizing Children and Youth EDUC 5862M Research with Children and Young People EDUC 5863M On-screen, Off-screen: Children's Creativity and Culture EDUC 5865M Children, Young People: Citizenship, Participation and Social Justice EDUC 5001M Critical Study Dissertation Child Poverty and Wellbeing Children, Families and Personal Relations
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

**Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**

**Points of innovation and/or good practice**

*Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box.*  
The continuing excellence of the assessment methods.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

*Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.*  
The range of options for students is broader this year.

**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 none

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment**

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y / N
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y / N
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y/N
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y/N

6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y/N
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y/N

*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

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y

*Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.*

Very well structured with a balance between core and optional modules. The former gives students a theoretical and methodological groundings. The latter allows students to specialise. The aims and outcomes are clearly stated in the documentation and there is sufficient evidence from the material read that the tutors follow through here.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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*Please explain how this is achieved (examples might include: curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research)*

This course is taught by experts and leaders in the field of Childhood Studies and there is a very strong commitment to engaging students at all levels with research. Students are very well prepared for undertaking research through the Research with Children and Young People module which is taught in the first semester as a core module. Seminars, workshops and tutorials provide a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of research. I discussed this issue with students on this course, students are encouraged to analysis data and think through the opportunities and challenges of putting together a piece of research. This is crystallised through the assessment for the module, a research proposal. Students in the second semester are expected to develop their research skills further through either a critical study or dissertation.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
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*Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:*

**Yes highly appropriate. As was discussed in 13. there is a thorough grounding in the research principles and practice,**

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
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*Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:*  
n/a

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
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*Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:*  
n/a

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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*Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: 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.*

There is an impressive array of different forms of assessment including essays, critical reviews, biographical analysis, research proposal and dissertation. The work is moderated throughout and I have seen a copy of all moderated work. The work I examined was double marked. The assessment allows students to develop a deeper understanding of theoretical debates and links between theory, research and policy. The dissertation and the methods module gives students a firm grasp of research processes and affords them the opportunity to develop their research skills. The distribution of marks was typical. There were several excellent pieces of work and it was heartening to see tutors congratulate students on this work and encourage them to both publish and apply for further study.

18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y

*Please comment on 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:*

Students here are comparable with others undertaking similar degrees at other universities.

This was a cohort of around 24 students. The marks for the taught modules ranged from 20% through to 78%. The former was marked at 20% due to its very brief length and lack of any engagement with the material. For the dissertations the range was 50%-85%. At the bottom end of marking scale there were a number of flaws, including failure to proof read, lack of structure and insufficient analytic rigour. A few failed because they were later submitting the work. At the top end there were some excellent pieces of work conceptually sophisticated and on top of the material, well structured, written and presented.

In relation to final marks and grades I was pleased to see several MAs with distinction. At the other end of the spectrum there were 4 fails, which is a quarter of all those that finished. This seems quite a high proportion. Looking at their profiles there are a few gaps in marks. Students for whatever reason, are not submitting the required work to get through the course.

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*

The feedback in the whole is very good. It varies in length, but there are some really excellent examples of positive and constructive commentary throughout.

### The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	n/a
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	n/a
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	n/a
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y

33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i> I was not able to attend the June board but did go to the November board.		

**Other comments**

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

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Responder:	
Position*:	Head of School
Faculty / School of:	<i>ESSL, School of Education</i>
Address for communication:	School of Education Hillary Place University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT
Email:	
Telephone:	

\*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

**Completing the School response**

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at [qat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:qat@leeds.ac.uk). External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

**Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice**

I wish to thank you once again for the care and critical assessment you, as External Examiner, have and continue to apply to our MA Childhood Studies Programme. It is a priority of the School to host a Master's in Childhood Studies that is innovative, flexible and of excellence. Your contribution is an important guarantor of this. MACS has now entered its fourth year and we are pleased to receive such strong endorsement of the range of assessment methods that we have developed across the programme, including essays, critical reviews, biographical analysis, research proposal and dissertation.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

We appreciate that the breadth of optional modules offered to students this year is considered appropriate.

**Response to Matters for Urgent Attention**

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

N/A

**Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

The course is based in a structure that during the first semester aims to create a solid theoretical and methodological base to build upon and further develop in the following semesters'. First, when choosing optional modules that allow for greater disciplinary specialisation and/or in-depth empirical study. Secondly, when engaging in developing and carrying out their own research. We greatly appreciate the examiners appreciation of how this is systematically achieved through the balance between core and optional modules; the aims, outcomes and curriculum stated in course and module documentation and that this is also evidenced in material evidencing our teaching practices.

**Standards****Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

The examiner's report highlights the particular high quality of the tutors on the Programme (experts and leaders in the field of Childhood Studies). It is clear that the departure of key tutors this year will constitute a challenge at least in the immediate future. But nevertheless the programme is now so well set-up that it is expected to be robust to the inevitable changes due to generational succession.

The examiner recognises the strong commitment to engaging students in research and how they are prepared to do this, first through the Research with Children and Young People core module and its various types of teaching, such as seminars, practical workshops and tasks and tutorials, which provide a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of research. I am pleased you were able to discuss this issue with the students, who as you note felt encouraged through analysis of data and other tasks to reflect on the challenges of conducting research - as you mention 'crystallised through the assessment (a research proposal) for the module'. In the second semester students are expected to develop their research skills further through their dissertation.

I wish here to highlight that a strong collaboration has been established with Leeds City Council, Children's Services in order to enhance the employability of our students but also to alert all our MA students to the important relationship between research, impact and professional practice. The last two years this collaboration has developed into the contribution of two lectures by members of the LCC central teams to demonstrate how the work of Leeds City Council, Children's Services is underpinned by theory and particular concepts (incl. the UNCRC) and particular methodologies such as for example consultations with young people that allow our students to work with a method that is effective in both research and in practice. The collaboration this academic year consists of four student internships with the LCC, Children's services. Our partner is interested in candidates that understands how Leeds, Children's Services work when they apply for jobs in the City. And our international students benefit from the insight they are provided by highly successful city aiming to work with the voice and agency of children and young people as citizens in the City. We hope you will find that this programme of work, exclusively open to MACS students in the coming years will add to the quality of our Master in Childhood Studies programme. Please note that this year a few of our international students had found this aspect a determining factor in their decision to study at Leeds.

## Assessment and Feedback

### **Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

Please see above about assessment. The teaching team has worked to develop and streamline their assessment practices to strengthen formative feedback and using the whole scale of marks. We will observe the number of fails and plagiarism cases this year to explore in more depth the background to what the external examiner notes as a significant number of fails (4).

## The Progression and Awards Process

### **Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

Please see above.

## Other comments

### **Response to items included in the 'Other Comments' section of the report**

Once again I wish to thank you for the critical contribution you are making to enhance the quality of our teaching.