

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	School of Education
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	International Educational Management
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.

This is my first year as external examiner for this programme. I have been very impressed by the quality of the programme and by the levels of learning reached by students. Clear objectives are set out for each module, supported by appropriate teaching schedules and assessment. Students demonstrated an impressive depth and breadth of understanding. The standards demonstrated in assessed work are certainly in line with other universities and, in many cases, are significantly higher. I have also been very impressed by the administrative procedures supporting the examination process.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.

As far as I can tell, suggestions made by previous examiners have been properly considered and acted upon.

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

As stated above, I have no concerns about the programme, including content and teaching arrangements, and academic standards are high. However, I do wish to signal some possible concerns for the future. It is not strictly the role of an external examiner to comment on resource matters. However, it did seem to me that a recent staff departure has left the programme hugely dependent upon the input of one member of staff. This is an academic matter, as well as a resource issue. Talking with students on the programme, they were acutely aware of possible difficulties – “ is so helpful; but we try not to bother him because there is nobody else”. **The problems of programmes that become over-dependent on a single member of staff are well known, but I do worry that the programme faces potential problems of this kind. From an academic perspective, it is important that students experience a range of inputs and experiences. From a resource and management perspective, over-dependence on a single member of staff is a very vulnerable position to face.**

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiners Handbook?	Yes
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?	Yes

3.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Mentor?	No
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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 a 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?	Yes
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Yes
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Yes
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Yes
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Yes

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

First impressions are very favourable. The aims and planned outcomes are clear and meet a real need in the student market. The programme is, at least, comparable with similar programmes.

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

This is an area that I plan to explore further in my second year. **There is certainly evidence of the use of current research, but there could be ways in which this is extended further. For example, I wonder whether analysis of some in-depth case studies would enrich the programme.** Of course, the task also depends acutely on the resources available and the range of staff involved with the programme.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	No
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	No
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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	No
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Yes
<p><i>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.</i></p> <p>The assignments effectively test a range of knowledge and skills as required. Whilst the model of assignments and a longer project is totally appropriate, I wonder whether some alternative tasks might be developed to test particular skills eg writing a short critique of a research paper.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Yes
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Yes
<p><i>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:</i></p> <p>Academic standards are high and certainly comparable with other courses. I was impressed by the desire of students to explore new aspects of the subject eg looking at issues, and sources, beyond their immediate or familiar experience. Having said that, most assignments followed a very similar structure; I wonder whether there are ways to encourage and reward more imaginative approaches.</p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>The quality of feedback is very high, and much appreciated by the students.</p>		

The Progression and Awards Process

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

32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	No
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

Other comments

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

I would like to thank all concerned with the programme for the helpful and efficient support I have received.

A point raised with me by the students was the balance in the curriculum and teaching between management as applied within compulsory and school education and within higher education. Some students felt that the emphasis was too much on the former. My own feeling was that the balance seemed about right and that individual students could choose to emphasise their preferred area of study within assignments and further reading. However, it is important that this is kept under review and that a balance is maintained eg in case studies and group discussion.

A second point raised by students related to the availability of options delivered by other schools/departments. It was put to me that some options had been advertised, but had not been available in practice, often because they were core modules in other programmes and were consequently "full up". Such issues are not uncommon, but should clearly be avoided if at all possible by effective liaison. The School may also need to check on the wording of promotional materials to ensure that no false expectations are raised.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School	

*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. 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

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Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

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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:

An additional member of staff, _____, has since been appointed as a part-time teaching fellow to assist with the teaching of the MA (IELP) programme. _____ has already made a much valued contribution, providing additional learning resources and expertise in African education leadership and policy. Collaboration in planning, e.g. for some joint sessions (team teaching) and in the development of the programme will also enhance teaching quality and enrich the student experience, as well as help guarantee the sustainability of the MA course.

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:

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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:

We already make use of case study in the programme by way of: (a) an annual school visit; (b) reference to official reports that include case studies; (d) group discussions in which students relate their own experiences and case institutions to various global policy and institutional leadership challenges; (e) the invitation of PhD students to give presentations on their research (invariably case study); and (f) additional sessions on research methodology including the case study method because of its suitability to empirically-based MA dissertations. However, the suggestion for making more use of published case studies is helpful, especially as set reading of exemplars for

discussion to enhance students' research skills in the preparation of their own dissertations. However, as noted, there are limitations on the availability of published case-study material, especially in some non-Western contexts.

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:

1. The suggestion that students be set the task of writing a journal paper review will be considered, initially as formative assessment, as we already have a varied formal, summative assessment procedure in place for each of the two core modules. At the moment, we set a number of papers for prior reading and critical discussion in class, rather than as a piece of formal writing because of the work pressure associated with the preparation of the formal assignments.
2. The statement that assignments follow a 'similar structure' requires clarification. This is not my perception for the following reasons: (a) the initial core module (EDUC 5042M) is based on an assignment in two parts: a PowerPoint presentation and a short accompanying written commentary of no more than 3,000 words; (b) for the semester 2 module (EDUC 5043M) a conventional essay of 6,000 words to hone students' writing skills in preparation for the 12,000 word dissertation. Moreover, students must also select 60 credits from other modules offered in the School of Education and/or POLIS, which use a variety of assessment procedures. Overall it is therefore difficult to see how the students encounter a 'similar structure' in the range of assignments provided. This, of course, will vary according to individual module choices beyond the two core modules. The rationale for the new assessment structure for MA (IELP) was approved by various committees when the new programme was being set up, and marks a significant departure from the reliance solely on traditional 6,000 word essays.

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:

Other comments

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

1. The issue of some optional modules being full up, along with an interim solution, was explained to the External Examiner. The problem arose in the case of POLIS because, unknown to me, POLIS students were able to register for their choice of modules at an earlier date than students in the School of Education, so some modules were already full before they were asked to make a choice. In the academic year 2016-17, the matter was addressed through negotiation with POLIS staff who agreed to make additional places available. The matter was resolved permanently, with effect from September 2017, by enabling Education students to register for POLIS modules at the same time as POLIS students. As a consequence, there have been no problems reported to me in the current academic year, 2017-18.
2. The issue of 'balance' between the coverage of school-related versus higher education related topics seems to have been misunderstanding. When this matter was discussed with the students, they said that they were happy with the balance offered in the core modules of the MA (IEM/IELP) programme, thus confirming the External Examiner's own view that the balance was just about right. What the students told me was that higher education issues were not well covered in optional modules offered by other programmes in the School of Education, where the emphasis tends to be on school-related research. This is an issue beyond my control.