

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):	<i>Special Educational needs</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Special Educational Needs PGCert Provision for Children with Developmental Disorders
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA/PGCert

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.
I would wish to highlight two aspects of the programme. In relation to good practice, I would wish to commend the programme team on the high standard of knowledge and expertise available to students in the taught modules e.g. dyslexia, autism. I think this is of enormous benefit to students wishing to study at this level.
I would also like to highlight, the adaptability of the staff when faced with the challenge of some students requiring to complete an extra number of credits prior to programme completion. The programme team created an innovative and yet robust assessment exercise comprising a presentation which met the needs of the students whilst retaining the integrity of the programme. I can confirm that this assessment brief was shared with me prior to its implementation.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.
This is my first year as External Examiner at University of Leeds and therefore I cannot, as yet, comment on enhancements to the programme from 2015/16.

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
It is my opinion that there are no matters requiring urgent attention prior to the programme being offered again.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

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
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>My overall impression of the programme is that it well designed to meet the ILOs. The taught modules build the knowledge and understanding of various key elements of SEN which then supports the students as they complete their thesis focusing on a specific element of SEN which is of interest to them.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>The teaching and learning within the course is clearly informed by the main SEN academic literature; both classic literature of the past and more recent literature which ensures that the students are informed of changes in the understanding of SEN.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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 programme design facilitates a clear alignment between ILOs and the assessment methods. The assessment marks achieved by students are comparable with other institutions offering these programmes and courses and I was pleased to note that the full range of marks were awarded by all markers when appropriate.</p> <p>I would wish to comment on a number of specific aspects of practice across the team; the consistently high standard of feedback by all the programme team to students, the quality but diversity of the questions set at modular level to account for the individual interests of the students and the opportunity for students to receive formative feedback prior to final submission of assessments.</p>		
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:

The cohort includes a significant number of international students and when submitting their first assignments, it was apparent that some of them were facing significant linguistic challenges to meet the standards required for academic writing at this level of study in English. However, following what I suspect was extensive individual support, on resubmission the standard of English by all students in this category had improved to an acceptable standard.

There are also a number of students who have produced thesis of exceptional quality and it may be worth exploring options for publication of their work.

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

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?	Y
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
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

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:

The Progressions and Awards Board was conducted in a most professional manner on both occasions I attended.

Other comments

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

In response at the June Board, all External Examiners expressed concern regarding the provision of research methods training within TPG programmes at University of Leeds. These concerns were addressed by [redacted] and [redacted] at the November Board. I note that the programme team for SEN have put in place measures to supplement the generic '5060' research methods course and I look forward to future discussions as to their implementation.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

	Associate Professor, Programme Lead for MA Special Educational Needs and PGCert Provision for Children with Developmental Disorders
	<i>School of Education</i>
	Hilary Place University of Leeds LS2 9JT

*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

We are pleased that our commitment to high quality teaching informed by staff expertise has been recognised. We have a strong team whose knowledge and research activity influences the content of our programmes; we plan to continue to develop these links between research and teaching in the future.

We also thank you for highlighting the hard work that went into providing an additional module at short notice to ensure that the MA SEN would meet the criteria for accreditation set by the Greek government. We feel that the new module is a useful addition to the MA SEN programme and that the method of assessment worked well.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

n/a

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:

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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:

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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:

We are pleased that the quality of our feedback has been noted as this is something that we continually work hard on. We have increased opportunities for formative feedback this year and have begun to make better use of the virtual learning environment for formative work and peer feedback. We continue to provide a diverse set of quite broad assignment titles and we support students to develop a response which is relevant to their professional expertise and contexts.

We continue to provide a high level of support (along with the library and language centre) for students for whom English is not their first language. The increased opportunities of formative assessment mean that we can now pick up on any issues earlier in the programme and provide more timely and targeted help.

We are delighted that the high quality of some of our students work has been recognised and we are very proud of their achievements. We agree that it is important to explore opportunities for publishing the best quality work; we shall identify appropriate peer reviewed journals and also look at publishing students' work in our in-house journal 'Hilary Place Papers'.

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

We have been running a programme of research methods support this year and so far it appears to have been quite successful. Attendance at research methods sessions has been variable, but those who have accessed them and the associated materials report finding them valuable. We will be reviewing the approach and looking to further embed this support into the MA SEN programme next year.