

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:	Education
Subject(s):	<i>Modern Languages</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Secondary PGCE MFL
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCE

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.

Trainees praise the MFL course leader's supportive and caring approach - they are able to contact him when needed and he is always responsive

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

There was a gap in this provision. I managed to get a copy of the previous examiner's report - but not the university's response to it, although I requested both.

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

MFL trainees, 3 of whom were extremely able trainees, reported being unhappy with the leadership of the overarching programme - they perceive the programme leader to be unsupportive, and the wider elements of the course to be badly managed. Three out of four would not recommend the programme for these reasons, in spite of their appreciation for the MFL course. Issues around communication emerged at all levels, students reported an inconsistency in communication to different subjects from the programme leadership and conflicting advice and information across a range of issues between the programme leadership and the subject tutors. The MFL course leader also found this to be an issue and would have preferred more regular meetings of tutors to be held. This would seem a helpful way forward for future provision.

I was unable to attend and contribute to discussions and the internal board on the morning of the 14th June because I did not know about them until the afternoon of the 13th when I received an email in response to my request for the programme arrangements for the exam board on the afternoon of the 14th. The venue and postcode were absent. This required further requests late evening. Being unable to attend the morning of the 14th June unfortunately prevented me from carrying out my full duties.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

I observed four students teaching in school, three of whom taught to a high standard and the fourth met the required standards and was making excellent progress in addition to reviewing a full range of assignments. All of the students I spoke to felt that the MFL course and school placements had prepared them well for their teaching career in spite of the issues they raised about the leadership of the overall programme, (which represents a change from reports about overall programme elements under the previous programme leader). The University of Leeds MFL programme supports the high calibre of trainee it attracts well. I met with 3 mentors in schools, all of whom were committed to supporting the trainees and offered high quality support and feedback. The high quality of trainees' teaching in the classroom at the end of the programme demonstrated the ability of the programme to meet the intended learning outcomes, measured against the teaching standards. The quality of support from the MFL course leader and the Spanish tutor were excellent - they deserve great credit for their responsiveness to their trainees and the provision they offer.

In contrast the MFL training, students reported variability in the usefulness and quality of EPS lectures. Use of the electronic portfolio was inconsistent.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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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)

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:

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:

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

I observed four students teaching in school, three of whom taught to a high standard and the fourth met the required standards and was making excellent progress; I also reviewed a full range of assignments. All of the students had been well-prepared for their teaching career. The University of Leeds MFL programme supports the high calibre of trainee it attracts well. I met with 3

mentors in schools, all of whom were committed to supporting the trainees and offered high quality support and feedback. Therefore, the MFL elements and school -based elements of the programme meet Ofsted requirements well.

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>I received assignments representing a full range of academic standards for each of the three tasks- the best demonstrated an unusually high degree of synthesis between theory and practice. At the other end, a lack of structured focus on the task requirements and topic selected impacted negatively on performance. The second assignment required the planning and evaluation of a series of lessons. The task is well conceived and supported trainees in extending planning to a series of lessons and in developing their reflection and evaluation skills. This development was almost tangible in the best examples. At the other end of the range, a minority of trainees struggled to plan a series of connected lessons. Students I met would have appreciated more guidance on how to approach the research project required for the final task - and this is reflected in their performance. The assignment around behaviour and policy, if it is kept in the future SCITT provision, may need adapting to enable students to reflect on both theory and practice.</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
<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>Standards are comparable with those in other higher education institutions. Students have very high expectations of themselves and strive for excellence. The four I observed teach were all committed to and had the potential to excel in the teaching profession. One had exceptionally well developed behaviour management skills commensurate with an established teacher. The MFL course, and its leader are very highly regarded by students and mentors.</p> <p>There was a full range of academic standards in the written assignments - the best demonstrated an unusual synthesis between theory and practice.</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>Marking of assignments was positive. I agreed with the grades awarded to students at the first internal exam board. However the published grading criteria grid was in some cases inconsistently applied by different markers because the criteria in the tasks in the handbook required students to include all elements of the task whereas the generic grading criteria grid did not. Where moderation has taken place and grades changed, it is not clear how final grades have been arrived at. It would be helpful to instigate, publish and follow an agreed process.</p> <p>I was asked to review an additional assignment 20107822: EDUC5501M. The award of 60% was in my view a little harsh. The student reviewed and referred to a wide range of literature, and although the task was flawed and the student did not manage to fully isolate the focus on the worked example from other elements of her teaching, compared to others in the sample for example, one at 55%, I felt it should have received a higher mark in this band. I brought these comments to the board but it was not possible to change the grade. It is unfortunate that I was not given a date by which my judgment was needed, nor a request for it to enable the possibility of the award of a higher mark.</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?	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? I had to request a range of items, sometimes more than once before receiving the basic documentation	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? N/A	N/A
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?	N
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:

Arrangements for external examiners were minimal. Communication was also minimal. We were required to attend two full days with an overnight stay. There was no programme provided for this period or meeting organised to enable the externals to meet and speak with each other and with the programme leader. A brief itinerary came the day before travel, from the subject leader, but only after several requests and emails had been made. It made making travel and personal arrangements difficult. It is normal practice for a programme to be sent to externals in advance with an opportunity to meet together during such a 2-day period of subject visits where specific dates are required. The Programme Leader sent an email when I had already arrived at the hotel to explain that he was too busy to meet with us. '... I offer the poor excuse of pressure of work. I am sorry we might not get to meet during this visit'. We were booked into a noisy hotel in the city centre flanked by the railway station and busy roads not conducive to working or sleeping and at a distance to the university preventing the opportunity to meet the programme leader. I know this to be in stark contrast to the usual hospitality afforded by the previous programme leader and norm for the sector. Minimal organisation, planning and communication reflected findings from the consensus of the ML trainees with whom I spoke. It is a pity that the reputation of excellent management of the PGCE programme at Leeds was not maintained in this final year of the programme.

Other comments

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

I reviewed a range of assignments for each task and visited four modern language trainees in school, where I observed their teaching, talked with them and in three cases was able to meet their mentor. I would like to thank the MFL course leader for his hospitality and good humour in chauffeuring me around the partnership, the schools for their warm welcome and the trainees and mentors for their generosity in setting aside time to speak with me openly.

The MFL course and its leader are very highly regarded by students and mentors. All of the students I spoke to felt that the MFL course and school placements had prepared them well for their teaching career. The University of Leeds MFL programme supports the high calibre of trainee it attracts well. I met with 3 mentors in schools, all of whom were committed to supporting the trainees and offered high quality support and feedback. Schools greatly regret the decision by the University of Leeds to close their secondary ITE programme. It is indeed a sad day for ITE provision in the country.

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

Title and Name of Responder:	
Position*:	Head of School of Education
Faculty / School of:	School of Education
Address for communication:	School of Education 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 gat@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 am very pleased to read your comments:

Trainees praise the MFL course leader's supportive and caring approach - they are able to contact him when needed and he is always responsive

(and under Q12: The quality of support from the MFL course leader and the Spanish tutor were excellent - they deserve great credit for their responsiveness to their trainees and the provision they offer.)

Despite the challenges of knowing this would be the last year of the programme my colleagues continued to provide the high levels of support seen in previous years. Your comments will be much appreciated by them.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

I apologise for the difficulty in getting hold of the previous report and that you did not receive the response to it. The systems in place to ensure continuity of provision of such information when key staff change roles need to be reviewed. Unfortunately there is no scope to act on this feedback as far as PGCE is concerned, because the course is not continuing. However, this is an aspect of our procedures we will look at with regards to our other courses.

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:

I am very disappointed to read that some of the MFL students...

...reported being unhappy with the leadership of the overarching programme - they perceive the programme leader to be unsupportive, and the wider elements of the course to be badly managed. Three out of four would not recommend the programme for these reasons, in spite of their appreciation for the MFL course.

It is not clear how many MFL trainees made these comments, but they stand in stark contrast to feedback from other sources about the programme, such as the tutor team's experience of this year's students and their

comments about the programme, feedback from individual tutors to me, and the absence of any equivalent comments in student module feedback or from the other External Examiners. Throughout my career as an educator I have been constantly aware of the need to reflect on and improve my practice, and how I interact with others, and I have always welcomed constructive feedback. When students (or colleagues) have an experience they perceive, rightly or wrongly, as unsatisfactory this causes me some anguish and I always want to understand what might have happened, and how reasonable those unsatisfactory perceptions are. Specific comments on why certain MFL students found me as programme leader unsupportive, and how reasonable and appropriate their expectations were, would have been helpful, so I am unable to respond meaningfully.

Your comments about communication are useful. The PGCE is a complicated programme. I placed great emphasis on communication within the team this year, including scheduling more meetings of the tutor team than happened in previous years. There were a few instances of unclear communication or miscommunication from certain tutors and from me, which I take responsibility for. This is an aspect of management of the course I would want to scrutinise more closely if it was running this year.

The difficulties you experienced with timely information about the location of the informal discussions and meeting with student groups in the morning of the Exam Board day were indeed unfortunate and should not have happened. To clarify, the Internal School Award Board that you did not receive information about is an internal meeting for University of Leeds staff only which is held in the morning prior to the External School Award Board in the afternoon, during which we discuss recommendations for awards, students presenting with mitigating circumstances that may affect their awards and to ensure that all paperwork is in order.

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:

As mentioned above, we will look at procedures for ensuring previous external examiners reports are passed on in a timely manner.

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 EPS programme has been an aspect of the course we have constantly sought to develop in the light of feedback and there is further work we could do in this area (and with the electronic portfolio). There is a tension between drawing trainees' attention to key educational issues that apply in all school settings (the purpose of EPS) and doing so in a way that all trainees experience as directly useful in their particular settings. Unfortunately development of the EPS programme and electronic portfolio is not possible now that the course has closed.

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:

These comments are very helpful and will form part of our continued development of our work with SCITT partners.

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:

I am surprised about your comment that "no programme was provided" for the two days of school visits when I know that a programme was sent to you, although I am sorry about the inconvenience you experienced with the programme inexplicably arriving from the subject team so close to your arrival. There was a programme prepared by the MFL subject team, which I was copied into in advance of your arrival, and I was informed that the

programme had been communicated to you in advance of your visit. I am sorry that I was unable to meet the examiners as a group during the two days of visits. Although desirable and useful (for me as programme leader as well – I want to be able to discuss and compare experiences with External Examiners) the primary purpose of the two-day school visits programme is to examine the subject course and meet the subject team, which is what took place as planned. I had responsibilities across other programmes to attend to, as well as various challenging student-related issues to address at that time, which meant I was not able to join the examining team for dinner. This was frustrating for me and could not be helped. I ensured that all of the External Examiners had each other's email addresses and I know an arrangement was made by those Examiners who were staying in Leeds to meet that evening. I had no doubt that you would be looked after very well by the MFL subject team, and

in particular went to considerable efforts during those two days. I will pass on your comments about the hotel to the University team as I did not select the hotel. I know from colleagues that the Queens Hotel has been used on many occasions to accommodate visitors to the university and your feedback may be useful for future visitors. It is unfortunate and unwarranted that your experience of some aspects of the organisation of the examining visits, coupled with unspecified comments from a minority of MFL trainees, has led you to conclude that the reputation for excellent management of the whole PGCE programme, by implication across all subjects, was "not maintained" during this final year. I am often well aware of when I could have made better decisions, or interacted differently and more sensitively with colleagues, and I do not doubt that my leadership and management practices have scope for development. However, most of the feedback we received from students and from across our school partnership about the programme in this final year was overwhelmingly positive, with many of our partner schools making it clear that they would wish to continue in partnership with us, and I note that over 50% of our trainees were graded 'outstanding'. This feedback and outcome is not consistent with suggestions that the whole programme suffered from minimal organisation, and are consistent with the previous year of the programme under a different programme leader.

Other comments

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

Thank you for your External Examiner report for the Secondary MFL PGCE programme (2016-17). Your efforts in examining our programme and the feedback you have provided are appreciated. I have passed on your comment "*I would like to thank the MFL course leader for his hospitality and good humour in chauffeuring me around the partnership, the schools for their warm welcome and the trainees and mentors for their generosity in setting aside time to speak with me openly*", which was much appreciated.

I only wish the University planned to continue the PGCE programme so that we could act on the feedback we have received from all our examiners, and I completely agree with your comment:

Schools greatly regret the decision by the University of Leeds to close their secondary ITE programme. It is indeed a sad day for ITE provision in the country.

However, your feedback will inform our practice as we develop our BA Education programme, and other aspects of our work.