

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Sociology & Social Policy
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Disability Studies Disability and Global Development Disability and Social Policy Disability and Special Education Gender Studies Gender, Sexuality and the Body International Social Transformation Social Research Social and Political Thought Social and Public Policy
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA, PGCert, PGDip.

**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.

N/A

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

N/A

**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

None

**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 a 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?	N/A
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	N/A
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	N/A

7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	N/A
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*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*

I was very impressed with the programme as a whole. The modules were all well thought out and well designed. There was a good balance of theoretical and methods oriented modules. Methods modules were of very high quality enabling students to undertake serious empirical work. Feedback given was detailed and appropriate. As this is my first year as External Examiner I cannot comment on what the programme looked like in previous years. The module handbooks were extremely good and provided detailed information about all the courses and assessments.

## Standards

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

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)*

Students benefit from staff expertise and current research projects. They are offered a wide range of research training, and have a number of opportunities to pursue empirically-based projects. There was significant preparation and explanation of independent research based assessment from suitable research active staff.

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

The MA in social research conforms to the ESRC standards as good preparation for a PhD. I assume that this is part of a 1+3 programme where ESRC funded students undertake this MA before going on to the PhD proper. The training that the students receive on this is exemplary and should provide them with adequate knowledge to progress quickly during their time doing PhD research.

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
<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>Assessment methods are appropriate and assessment criteria are consistently applied. Students benefit from imaginative and rigorous assessment and detailed and informative feedback. As much detailed feedback is given generally to exceptional students as to those who need more support and guidance. The assessment handbooks are very well done and include more than enough information for students to complete their tasks to a high standard. ILOs are commensurate with similar programmes at other institutions and meet national benchmarking.</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>Some of the work, especially the dissertations, was of a very high standard (some of the assignments were almost of a publishable standard). This applied to both more theoretical pieces as well as more empirical work. The methods modules in particular are very well designed and thought out and provide students with high level skills in undertaking social scientific enquiry.</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>Feedback was very detailed and exemplary in almost all cases.</p>		

### 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?	N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	N/A
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?	N

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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>I was appointed late so did not see drafts of the assessment questions. There were no examinations.</p>		

#### Other comments

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

It appeared that lower grades were often the result of poor English by foreign students. Perhaps more ELT support could be provided for these students. I also noted that this seemed to have improved in semester 2 modules so perhaps catching this issue earlier might help.

I also noted that sometimes detailed feedback was given by moderators/second markers, but as I understand it this feedback is not given to the students. It might help to try and amalgamate these comments.

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

DSE

SSP, ESSL

SSP

\*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**

We are pleased that \_\_\_\_\_ comments so positively on our programmes and teaching and the quality of student work, including especially dissertation work.

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

No specific comments

**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:

No matters arising

**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:

We are pleased that \_\_\_\_\_ is so positive about the grounding on which we enable students to undertake excellent empirical research projects, and about the resources we provide to our students more generally.

**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:

is correct that the MA Social Research has provided an ESRC recognised route to PhD study.

**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:

## 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:*

Regarding language difficulties, we encourage students to draw on wider university language resources and are currently reviewing our support and practices in light of increasing international student numbers and more extensive issues regarding language, teaching and learning. Joint comments on feedback are generally amalgamated where this is deemed helpful to students, and we will request that colleagues ensure this happens consistently.

## Other comments

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

No other issues.

On behalf of the school, \_\_\_\_\_, I would like to thank you very much for joining us as external examiner, for your hard work and for your very positive and constructive input. I am most grateful.

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of Sociology and Social Policy
Subject(s):	<i>MA Disability Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
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**

Feedback to the students is not just accurate but also of a very high level and students are always well informed not just as to why they have achieved the mark they have but are also given good clear guidance on how to improve their work. This applies even to those students who achieve a high grade and this is particularly commendable.

It is also good to see the broad range of topics attempted in essays and dissertations and the diversity of approaches adopted by the students.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

*I was particularly pleased to see the introduction of new approaches to disability and a gradual shift in the curriculum that acknowledges some of the newer, emerging ideas from critical disability studies. The introduction of these topics was evidenced by the use of these theorists on the assessed work*

**Matters for Urgent Attention**

There are some concerns about what appears to be a relatively large number of students either on suspension of studies or with extensions. Perhaps the School should look at why this is happening and if there is anything it can do to help resolve this.

The staff could make better use of the distribution of marks within the grades, particularly in the A category, most of which were in the low 70's. Could staff be encouraged to place them squarely in the category and make more use of the marks available. This will increase the number of merits, but this should not be seen as a negative, many of the students are top performing and come onto the degree with a honours degree at 2.1 or above and high marks should be expected.

**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
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y

It has been a genuine pleasure to be examiner on what has a reputation for being the top Disability Studies course in the country, a reputation that I think is very well deserved. This owes much to the dedication of the staff, both academic and, importantly, the administrative staff who have made the job of external examiner a pleasure. All work arrives on time and the supporting information given is very detailed.

The content of the course has gradually changed over the years to reflect changes and theoretical developments in the the study of disability and the curriculum has kept abreast of and in touch with modern approaches to the subject. It has also taken account of policy changes. This is perhaps not surprising given the quality of the academic staff teaching on the course but it is a reflection of the vibrancy of the programme.

I still think there is a need to look at the actual role of the examination board. Over the years more and more decisions have been taken at earlier meeting and as it stands the exam board is little mmore than a rubber stamping exercise. There needs to be some discussion as to whether the externals are needed and if they are what their actual role is.

## 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.*

Work is of a very high standard and the courses all have well defined and appropriate ILOs. The students are provided with access to a breadth of courses and are introduced to a variety of topica and approaches to the study of disability.

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)*

The importance of research to the curriculum is made in the course handouts and the quality of the assessed work is testament to the fact students understand the role of research. This is particularly evident in the dissertation, which are often of a very high standard.

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
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<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>		
Assesment is, in the main appropriate and is related to the ILO's.		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y / N
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y / N
<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>		
Students are made aware not just of how their mark was obtained but also, importantly how they could improve their work. The students on the course are of a high quality and the work they produce is often very strong, particularly the dissertations and is comparable to work elsewhere. The quality of the dissertations demonstrates how the students performance improves over the course and the trajectory of their learning.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

### 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
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27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y

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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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>The university should look at the role of the exam board. All decisions are taken prior to the board and there is little or no discussion during the procedure and it has become little more than a rubber stamping exercise.</p>		

#### Other comments

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

Over the years I have read some excellent dissertations on range of topics including architecture and design, inclusive sport, education, work, social care and social support and disability and development and disability in a middle income country. Given the originality of a lot of these dissertations and their quality I have some concerns about what happens to these. Are the students encouraged to publish and if so what support are they given? This I know is really difficult given that the majority of students are off as soon as the thesis is submitted but we owe it both to our students, and to the research participants who have given time to help these students, to try and ensure that they are disseminated. Disability and Society for example have a student perspective section and I would think that with relatively minor changes many of the better dissertations could have been used as a source for suitable publications. An alternative might be to put all of the As onto the disability archive on the website.

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

DSE	
SSP, ESSL	
SSP	

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

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

We are pleased that comments so positively on the currency of the curriculum

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

No particular issues arising

**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:

raises a concern about the number of students on suspension or an extension. We have reviewed this pattern and it is not out of line with our year on year picture, reflecting the complex circumstances of many of the students who are attracted to the Disability programmes. It is an important matter and one we will keep under review.

also raises the matter of bolder use of the marking scale at the top end, we will look at this issue and keep this under review, drawing comparison across Disability and our other programmes.

**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 matter arising here relates to the role of the exam board. Quality Assurance have written to ensure he is abreast of the University policy here and aware that SSP Exam Board operates in line with that policy. We are pleased about the very positive comments made on the nature of the programmes and quality of teaching and learning.

**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:

Again we are pleased that highlights very positively how we run research through teaching and learning and the related high quality of dissertations.

## 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:*

No issues arising

## 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:*

See above – (re role of exam board)

## Other comments

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

We are very grateful to \_\_\_\_\_ for these ideas regarding the value and quality of dissertations and possibilities for disseminating work here, which we will review with enthusiasm.

May I take the opportunity, \_\_\_\_\_, to thank you very much on behalf of the School. We are most grateful for your hard work, support and constructive input over the years you have been an external examiner with us. Thank you!