

**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:	LICAMM, School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health
Subject(s):	<i>Epidemiology and Biostatistics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Epidemiology and Biostatistics EPIB3036 – Introduction to Clinical Trials EPIB5001M – Research Project EPIB5022M – Core Epidemiology EPIB5023M – Introduction to Modelling EPIB5024M – Statistical Inference EPIB5025M – Multilevel and Latent Variable Modelling EPIB5030M – Professional Spine EPIB5032M – Introduction to Genetic Epidemiology EPIB5035M – Non-Communicable Disease Epidemiology EPIB5036M – Independent Learning Skills in Epidemiology and Biostatistics EPIB5037M – Advanced Modelling Strategies EPIB5038M – Advanced Epidemiological Techniques PHLT5110M – Communicable Disease Control and Non-infectious Epidemiology PHLT5125M – Population Health Principles and Practices
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

**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 a well-organised programme delivered by an enthusiastic team. The programme is strong, interesting and innovative, and equips students with up to date modern methods that will stand them in good stead in their future careers.  
The range of assessment methods is very good and provides students with different ways in which to express their learning.

**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 programme has been enhanced by more structured report writing in general at masters level, by ensuring all aims and objectives for the dissertation paper in the research project module appear in the main text and not the appendix, and by adding an initiative mark to this component of the research project module.

**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*  
N/A

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

I have been very pleased over the four year period with my experience of the programme and the progressive changes made to enhance the teaching and learning. The administration support has been excellent from Andrew Shearer. A good system for provision of materials to myself as EE has been set up with access to the VLE if needed. It has been very helpful to be provided with marks sheets and feedback sheets and exam script marking so I can easily see the breakdown of each separate assessment component.

This is an excellent programme and everyone that contributes to it should be very pleased to be a part of its delivery and success. It is innovative, adopts modern up to date methods of statistical analysis using a variety of interesting teaching and assessment styles. I have been satisfied that all processes have been conducted in an fair and appropriate manner and that the marks reflect the range of student abilities.

**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.*

The programme is a well-designed masters level course. The Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes are commensurate with the level of the award and the structure and content of the programme. The standards set are appropriate for the qualification of Master's degree. The Aims and ILOs meet the subject benchmark for similar programmes including Masters in Public Health, and are comparable to, or better than, other programmes with which I am familiar.

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)*

This is an excellent programme using a range of modern techniques within a research-led curriculum framework. The majority of assessments included some components that were influenced by research. In particular the dissertations included high level research-led material which was linked to tutors research interests and covered a wide variety of topics that encouraged students to select projects that enhanced their own research interests. This made the programme particularly strong and allowed students to demonstrate their individual strengths and capabilities.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Not as far as I am aware
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*Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:*

The programme is very appropriate and relevant as training for a quantitative PhD in the subject.

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
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<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)?	Not as far as I am aware
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i> <b>N/A</b>		

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods is of a high standard. The programme uses a range of assessment methods including coursework, examination, projects, exercises, essays, critical appraisal and self-reflection logs, which allow students to engage with their learning in a variety of formats as well as encouraging some creativity of expression. The assessment methods clearly align with the learning outcomes. The arrangements for marking and moderation were fair and the classification of awards carefully considered at the Exam Board, particularly for borderline cases and fails. The students' performance clearly indicated the quality of teaching which allowed the strong students to excel and demonstrate their ability.</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
<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>The academic standards demonstrated by the students were appropriate for the Masters degree programme and their performance comparable to other schemes. The mixed abilities of the student cohort were reflected in the coursework marks. The range of assessment methods helped weaker students in some respects to demonstrate their skills whilst challenging stronger students to perform well in less familiar modes of assessment eg. through oral or poster presentations, protocol development or critical appraisal. Some students have struggled with interpretation of results and did not give enough explanatory detail in their write up. The introduction of a standard reporting style for certain more statistical modules and more explicit detail may help in this respect in future.</p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i> <b>N/A</b>		

### 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?	Not always
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>  Exam scripts did not always have individual marks annotated on them. I brought this up as an improvement that could be made. Where this was done the scripts were clearly annotated with marks awarded for each separate part of questions and the total marks clearly displayed on the front of the script.</p>		

#### Other comments

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

This is an excellent and well-organised programme. The professional approach of the team provides students with the skills they need for increased employability within the workplace. It is particularly encouraging to see the range of modern methods that the students cover, the innovative assessment methods and the research-led environment from within which the students are taught. The whole process was well organised. I am grateful to \_\_\_\_\_ for the time and effort they put into providing everything I needed in advance or on the day of the Exam Boards I attended over the four year period.

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Director of Postgraduate Studies *on behalf of* the Director of Student Education

Faculty of Medicine and Health School of Medicine

\*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](mailto: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**

We thank \_\_\_\_\_ for highlighting how diverse and well organised the programme is in its current format, and how it helps to provide students with cutting edge 21<sup>st</sup> century data analytical and research skills.

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

We thank \_\_\_\_\_ for highlighting the examples of increased use of structured report writing and inclusion of a marking component for initiative within the research project module to enhance the programme which have been successfully introduced in the 2016/17 academic year.

**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:

Clear improvements were noted by the external examiner as well as evidence that the School has reacted appropriately to previous recommendations.

**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 note the positive comments on the course structure, appropriate aims and ILOs as well as relevant standards set for a Master's degree.

## 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 note the high levels of delivery of teaching material and assessments in operation within the programme remarked upon by the external examiner and diverse range of assessment methods, aligning well with learning outcomes. Marks and classification of awards appeared to be satisfactory and were commensurate with a Master's degree. We note the additional feedback on introducing more structured report writing to support those students who may struggle with interpretation of results, which will be carefully considered within the programme management team.

## 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:*

We thank \_\_\_\_\_ for alerting us exam scripts which lacked clear annotated marks and which has been addressed for the 2017/18 session.

## Other comments

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

We appreciate the positive feedback about the content and management of the programme.