

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

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

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| Faculty / School of: | Faculty of Medicine and Health (Leeds Institute of Health Sciences) |
| Subject(s): | Post Graduate Courses in Health Research |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | |
| Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc): | PG Cert / PGDip / MSc |

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**Points of innovation and/or good practice**

Programme staff have undergone another year of change including: a change in leadership (, Lead; , Deputy Lead); substantial changes (reductions) to WTE; and face-to-face teaching of Certificate and Diploma modules returned to the Worsley building; additions in module delivery (e.g. HE). The impact of these changes has not impacted in the quality of the Programmes as evidence in student feedback and outcomes; this is to the credit of a dedicated core team of staff.

Alongside these changes, innovation continues to be a feature of the Programme; staff seek efficient and effective ways of delivering high quality teaching and support for learning; their use of problem based learning in the use of workbooks, learning resources, and adequate tutoring in the PBL sessions for group sizes of 40 or more is evidence of this and has implications for others in education.

Enhancements made from the previous year

The programme's content and delivery are reviewed by core staff proactively in response to student feedback and the context of applied health research. Alongside other changes, an example of change this year, is the Health Economics module (originally managed by the MSc in Public Health); this year it was run as a Postgraduate Programmes in Health Research module. Student feedback is very positive.

Matters for Urgent Attention

A case for an additional 0.4FTE Health Research Lecturer was submitted by programme staff in the 2015/2016 academic year to support existing and additional work required by the team; this is still ongoing. This was highlighted in the external examiners report last year.

It remains a credit to the team that they continue to provide high quality teaching and support across the programmes, though this is unlikely to be sustainable going forward; the additional FTE should be considered as a matter of urgency. The situation is not sustainable and threatens the viability of the MSc Health Research project module and MEDR5200M.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment - NA

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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 / N |
| 12. | Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions? | Y / N |

The course structure, content and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are clearly specified. Course and module standards appear entirely appropriate to the levels of award. There is currently no national subject benchmark for programmes of this nature. Course content at Certificate, Diploma and Masters levels provides students with opportunities to develop critical knowledge and skills to appropriately inform their understanding of applied health service research, as well as to begin to apply this in the development of proposals. The course structure enables a natural progression from certificate to diploma, and MSc studies for students depending on their needs.

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| 13. | Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear? | Y / N |
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The course demonstrates the value of research led-teaching; engagement from research active staff is of clear benefit. The expertise of the staff and their ability to draw from their own experience is a clear benefit to the students. This enables delivery of up-to-date content and contemporary focus on issues that are relevant and important to the research community. Course content and materials are revised to reflect the changing nature and national priorities and structures of applied research. The practical nature of many of the modules and assessments means that students are well placed to develop research proposals at the end of their studies.

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| 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:

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| 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)? | Y / N |
| There is no national subject benchmark for programmes of this nature, thus the programme is not accredited. | | |

Assessment and Feedback

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| 17. | Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment? | Y |
| The methods of assessment are entirely appropriate to the content of the taught material. Overall the performance of the students was very good, and the methods of assessment appropriately reflect their achievements. | | |
| 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 |
| The team reviews, in a proactive way, the alignment between the requirements of submitted work and assessments to ensure these remain appropriate. Programme staff continue to review student outcomes; this is not restricted to performance within modules but includes looking across modules to enable insight into any patterns of success or challenges in the types and timing of modules. Module assessment remains a particular strength of the programme and worthy of wider dissemination. | | |
| <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

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| 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 |

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| 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 |
| <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

Alongside another challenging year, programme staff remain committed to increased quality; to their credit the programme has a strong reputation in this important area. Changes within the team and Programme have brought substantial additional workload for staff; in spite of this, feedback from students rated sessions as highly as previous cohorts and remains excellent. The matter of needing additional academic staff has been raised a number of times in previous reports and prior to my appointment as External Examiner; there is a need to prioritise this to reduce the threat of reduced quality in delivery of this highly successful programme. As stated previously, the current small, dedicated, complement of staff requires additional support as a matter of urgency.