

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

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

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Faculty/School of: Medicine and Health/Medicine
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Systemic Practice
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	PGCert in Systemic Practice/FAMT5310M- Foundation Course in Systemic Practice; FAMT5320M- Intermediate Course in Systemic Practice
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	PGCert

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

Throughout my time as External examiner to this Post Graduate Certificate Course, I have experienced it as having been delivered in a rigorous and well-designed manner. It has achieved its aims and intended learning outcomes in a way that is commensurate with the award in terms of academic quality and in terms of the Association of Family Therapy Criteria.

I continue to be impressed by the thought, time and planning that has gone into the delivery of this course and the high standard of teaching, marking and feedback that it offers. It continues to be structured and taught in a way that allows for development and progression. The course begins by introducing participants to the basic concepts and techniques of family therapy, then over the following two years it uses a variety of learning techniques and experiences to develop and build on these concepts and techniques so that at the end of the two years the student should be more than ready and prepared to move onto the MSc level course if they so wish.

## **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 course teaching staff continually attend to feedback from students and from myself and micro developments and enhancements are made to the course are being made in response. I mention in the next section about the developments made as a response to feedback from myself and students regarding the written exam. Also, the course has, over the past few years, paid particular attention to the development of self and relational reflexivity. This has also been in response to external examiner feedback.

Alongside these continuing micro developments the course teaching team have been progressing some significant module changes for the 2018-9 courses, to reflect the changes to the AFT Blue Book. Course staff have proposed amendments to the Foundation and Intermediate Modules. These proposals have reviewed by an external reviewer .

### **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*

There has been an anticipated a dilemma for September 2018 in that while students who will join the Intermediate level course at that time will be able to do the revised module which (includes the new requirement to submit a sample of recorded practice from their 60 hours and confirm supervision arrangements amongst other more minor changes), students who are already on this year's 2017 – 18 PGCert will be doing the current module without this requirement. The course leaders will be approaching the University to ascertain if they can teach the new module to all Intermediate Students in September 2018. This is likely to be supported as an 'Ad Hoc variation'. As the current External Examiner for this course I am in support of bringing this forward as an 'Ad Hoc variation'.

### **For Examiners in the first year of appointment**

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

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y
	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y
	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*

During my time as external examiner, the programme leader and staff group designed, introduced and developed a written exam as a way of assessing students' understanding of systemic theory. The exam continues to be monitored closely, with tutors being attentive to and respectful of feedback they have received from students regarding the exam. This feedback has enabled tutors to think about how they might better prepare students for the exam; one idea being to introduce preparatory example questions as the year progresses on a topic by topic basis in preparation for the final exam.

From looking at the overall marks gained, it appears that once again this format was successful in the way it has provided both the incentive and opportunity for students to be fully grounded in systemic theory and has proved to be an effective tool for encouraging students to build a rigorous knowledge base.

Also during my time as external examiner, I have had discussions with staff about developing methods of teaching that might extend a student's ability, to understand better their use of self within their work and their ability to work in more self and relationally reflexive ways. I have been very encouraged to observe the students offering evidence within their written work and that they have been developing their abilities in these areas, which reflects the course tutors' ability to respond positively to feedback from the external examiner and reflects the high standard of teaching on this course.

**Standards**

	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
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	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
	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>As with previous years, in my professional opinion, course aims and ILOs continue to be comparable with other similar programmes and competency frameworks for Systemic Psychotherapy. I remain impressed by the rigour and high academic and clinical standard of this course. I particularly appreciate the attention given to the balance of teaching methods in terms of theory and practice. Vocational courses with a clinical emphasis can often neglect a rigorous foundation in theory and approach, concentrating more on technique and practice. This is not the case with this course. This PG Certificate provides a thorough grounding in the teaching and assessment of theoretical knowledge. This has been further embedded in the sat theory paper offered in the second year.</p>		
	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>As a result of the different teaching, learning and assessment methods on offer within this course all aspects of the teaching, learning and assessment invite students to pay attention to evidence-based practice and research and encourage them to reflect on the place and impact of research on their clinical practice and theoretical understanding. Students were provided with many and varied ways in which to demonstrate their learning and development and overall the standard has been high across the course.</p>		
	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> <p>N/A</p>		
	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y

*Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:*

The teaching, learning and assessment methods within this PG Certificate course are varied, of a high standard, well thought out and well constructed. They include group presentations, essays, a written time limited exam, evidence of 60 hours of clinical practice in the student's own agency in the second year and an accompanying reflexive learning journal that enables students to consider recursive theory practice links. These learning and assessment opportunities are coherent with a course that is working with adult learners who have different learning styles which also encourages the development of recursive links between theory and practice.

This is an academic course and therefore assessment has to demonstrate that students have reached a certain academic standard. The course includes a clear practice component. Students are invited to reflect on live case material and dilemmas from their agency context and to understand and reflect on this material/ dilemma by consideration of recursive theory-practice links through written papers, group exercises, discussion and tutorials.

The curriculum and assignments on the course enable participants to familiarise themselves with theory and practice, and are designed in such a way that participants are given the opportunity to develop recursive theory practice links that have relevance and are applicable to clinical practice.

The course introduces the participants to second order ideas and then continues to embed this way of working as it progresses, helping participants to build recursive connections between self and the system and between personal and professional contexts.

The above methods are reviewed and feedback taken from students, staff and myself as external examiner as to their ongoing effectiveness and consideration of any changes needed.

	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:*

This program is accredited and regularly reviewed by the Association of Family Therapy. The accreditation criteria of AFT are woven into the design and structure on the course in line with accreditation requirements at every level of the course. The course teaching team have been progressing module changes for the 2018-9 courses to reflect the changes to the AFT Blue Book and have proposed amendments to the Foundation and Intermediate Modules.

The significant change is at Intermediate Level to change the examination to a portfolio to assess the new AFT learning outcomes. We have proposed the following in the form of a portfolio (which is also specified in the Blue Book) to include:

- Brief (approximately 150 words per session) anonymised notes of clinical practice hours (9000 words in note form)
- Brief (approximately 150 words per session) anonymised notes of supervision hours (1500 words in note form)
- Transcript of a (min 45 minutes) recorded clinical interview from clinical practice
- A letter of confirmation of the use of clinical supervision from the Supervisor
- A reflective learning journal commenting on the application of theory to practice and personal and professional development (minimum of eight entries of approximately 250 words each 2,000 words in note form). Portfolio length approximately 12,500 words in journal / note form completed through the year.

These changes will enable PGCert students to benefit from the increased input to and review of their clinical work as per the new Blue Book and will bring equivalence re detailed review of practice as per colleagues who undertake the CYPIAPT training.

## Assessment and Feedback

	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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*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.*

The teaching, learning and assessment methods within this PG Certificate course are varied, of a high standard, well thought out and well constructed. They are coherent with a course that is working with adult learners who have different learning styles which also encourages the development of recursive links between theory and practice.

All work is double-marked and on occasion where there is a significant difference in marks given, a third marker is invited to help negotiate a final mark. I am also contacted in areas of concern or discrepancy for my views.

I continue to be impressed by the overall quality of feedback to all students. The quality of feedback given is of a high standard and a rich resource to each student.

As in previous years, I have been impressed with the time given to failing students in terms of positive critique and suggestions about how to approach their re-submissions. Giving feedback and support to failing students is time-consuming and challenging but if the student is able to embrace that feedback, the time and energy invested can be very rewarding. I think this is evidenced in the growth and development of students across the two years.

As a result of the different teaching, learning and assessment methods on offer within this course, students were provided with many and varied ways in which to demonstrate their learning and development and overall the standard has been high across the course.

Both tutors and students have managed to create a course-learning context which has enabled a safe space from which to explore personal and professional links and has greatly enhanced students' learning and the quality of the work produced.

	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
	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 academic standards demonstrated by the students on this course continue to be very high, when compared with other students on similar courses. I feel the introduction of the written theory exam has been of huge benefit to students in helping them to develop a rich understanding and relationship with theory, which has then enabled them to tie theory more rigorously to their practice. As mentioned above, I think the course is particularly strong in helping students to situate themselves within their work in self and relationally reflexive ways, thus enabling them to develop their systemic thinking and practice thinking in ways that are often quite advanced for this level of systemic training, preparing these students well for progression to MSc level training and beyond.

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

A particular strength of this course is in its attention to issues of diversity and difference. There is designated space to address these issues via a specific piece of written work, but the course has also managed to create an overall learning environment/ context in which students are given the opportunity to explore their culturally determined beliefs, values and attitudes in relation to their clinical work.

One area for consideration re the development of the course might be the use of patchwork learning techniques to extent collaborative, reflexive and adult ways of connecting to knowledge and learning.

## The Progression and Awards Process

	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiners role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y

	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y
	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y
	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y / N
	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y / N
	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y
	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
	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>		

## Other comments

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

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to act as External Examiner for this excellent course. Continuing in the tradition of adult learning, I have learned and received from this course over and above anything I have contributed to it. There have been some brilliant essays during my time with the course, which reflected standards far beyond post graduate diploma level, demonstrating the curiosity, creativity and commitment of the students and the high standard of teaching from the staff. I wish the course well in its future.

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

<i>Title and Name of Responder:</i>	
<i>Position*:</i>	Director of Postgraduate Studies <i>on behalf of the</i> Director of Student Education
<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Faculty of Medicine and Health School of Medicine
<i>Address for communication:</i>	
<i>Email:</i>	
<i>Telephone:</i>	

*\*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**

The Programme Leader commented that \_\_\_\_\_ provided useful and timely responses to the coursework from her experienced and well-informed outside perspective. \_\_\_\_\_ also supported the team by providing useful feedback on an individual student issue in order to help ensure we found a balance between offering reasonable adjustments for a student to have access to an assessment and maintaining fairness across the group as a whole. Barber was well supported by the excellent administration of the course by the SESO and \_\_\_\_\_ visited the course and attended the Examiner's meeting in July 2017.

The course team appreciated \_\_\_\_\_'s positive assessment of the degree to which the course is rigorously designed and delivered in order to support students to achieve the learning outcomes. They were pleased that the marking and feedback is evaluated as being of a high standard, and will be keen to maintain this standard during the forthcoming year when they update their processes to allow all marking to take place online within Minerva/VLE as part of the University's commitment to sustainability.

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

The report notes that the course teaching staff continually attended to feedback from both students and herself in order to inform ongoing micro-developments and enhancements.

commented that this responsiveness is a reflection not only of the course team's professionalism and wish to provide an excellent student experience, but also speaks to a core feature of the subject of systemic practice: while teaching students how to be responsive to feedback from clients and families within their clinical work, the team seeks to demonstrate this responsiveness reflexivity through their interactions with students and colleagues in order to create a course culture which embodies the good professional and therapeutic standards expected of students.

### **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:*

As noted by \_\_\_\_\_, approval has been gained for some significant module changes which will come into effect for the 2018-19 cohort, in order to ensure we meet the requirements for the new training standards set by the professional body, the Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice. As a matter for urgent attention, these changes will affect a small number of students who are already studying on the Postgraduate Certificate and who would not have been aware of the new requirements during Year Two of the course at the time they had applied for the course. The team are grateful for \_\_\_\_\_'s support for them to teach the new module to all students in September 2018 as an Ad Hoc Variation. Those individual students concerned have been informed about the changes with no concerns raised.

### **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 Programme Leader noted \_\_\_\_\_'s positive assessment of the second year examination as an assessment method which promotes developments in students' theoretical knowledge. Since the updated professional guidelines have directed the team to remove the examination and to introduce a written portfolio from 2018-19 onwards, \_\_\_\_\_'s report will inform planning for those module changes in order to ensure that students' learning about systemic theory continues to be well supported within the new modules and in the absence of the examination.

## **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:*

Although significant module changes are planned for the subsequent cohort, the course team will maintain a commitment to ensuring that the 2017-18 course and modules will continue to receive the same level of rigour and high standards as had been present during the previous year.

## 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 Course team were grateful for the positive comments about the overall quality of feedback and investment of time and resources in supporting failing students. The report invites the course staff to consider the use of a patchwork learning technique to extend collaborative, reflexive and adult ways of connecting to knowledge and learning. The Programme Leader and the team will indeed give this consideration, commenting that the incoming written portfolio could be a well suited method to support such a development.

## 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:*

No concerns were raised.

## Other comments

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

On behalf of the course team, the Programme Leader extends his gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_ as outgoing External Examiner. \_\_\_\_\_ commented that \_\_\_\_\_'s work during the last four years has been hugely appreciated and has certainly made a significant contribution to improving the quality of the course. This has been to the benefit of our students and, by extension, to the clients and families with whom they work.