

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: | Food, Science and Nutrition |
| Subject(s): | |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | Programmes: Food Science and Nutrition; Nutrition Modules: FOOD5174M Diet and CV Health; FOOD5045M01 Microbiological and Chemical Food Safety; FOOD5280M Functional Foods; FOOD5405M Professional Development for Employment and Research; FOOD5196M Impacts of Food Processing on Nutritional Quality; FOOD5340M Food and Cancer; FOOD5410M Nutrition Policy and Practice; FOOD5425M Personalised Nutrition; FOOD5510M Applied Nutritional Epidemiology; FOOD5515M Nutrition through the life cycle/life course; FOOD5071 Research Project |
| 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.

FOOD5405M Professional Development for Employment and Research is a particularly good unit, and appears very forward thinking. This is well-placed in semester 1 as it will help international students whose first language is not English. This was a very high scoring unit and whilst the students performed well. There appeared to be quite a bit of assessment for it.

From discussions with some of the students good practice was highlighted with the use of video capture. This meant that one student who – through unforeseen circumstances – was able to maintain pace with peers. Similarly other students identified that the recording allowed them to go home and listen to the material again.

The course rep for Nutrition informed me that the journal club style activity as part of the unit FOOD5425M Personalised Nutrition was received well and was useful. Students felt that something similar – which included elements of critical appraisal – would be helpful at the very beginning of their studies in order to prepare for coursework and exams

Overall, the students were very pleased with the programme, and I felt gave an honest overview of matters from their perspective. There are elements that the team should look at action as a means of not only improving student satisfaction, but also improving the achievement and attainment of the students. Some of this good practice is already being implemented in units so it is just a case of sharing it with other members of staff

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Example mark schemes have been provided since the first modules which have greatly improved the ability to assess the quality of the student work

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 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? | Y |

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 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

I am not able to comment on the organisation of the programme over the previous years as this is my first year of appointment. However, so far I am happy with the organisation of the programme, although there have been a few instances where the turnaround time for looking at work has been quite tight

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.

Both programmes have a good, robust design and structure. It is evident that there is progressive learning through the course which culminates in some students completing excellent pieces of research that may be of use to develop into doctoral projects

The units studied are rigorous and very relevant to the field of nutrition, nutritional and food science.

| | | |
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| 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)

It is evident from the modules that I examined that inclusion of current research into the teaching and assessment is apparent. Equally, some questions in coursework focus on asking students to critically appraise literature which is a fundamental skill at this level.

| | | |
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| The large number of research-active staff make the course material accessible and I have no doubt that such members of staff incorporate elements of their own work into the taught material. | | |
| 14. | 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><i>There is a strong emphasis on developing the core skills needed to complete a PhD. This includes development of academic writing and critical appraisal, but also the refinement of laboratory report writing, experiment design and ultimately completion of an original piece of research. These skills are fundamental to embarking on a PhD and I am confident that high-achieving graduates of these programmes would make excellent PhD candidates</i></p> | | |
| 15. | Does the programme include clinical practice components? | N/A |
| <p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p> | | |
| 16. | Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)? | Y / N |
| <p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p> <p>Both programmes are accredited by the relevant PSRB (AfN and IFST, Nutrition and Food Science and Nutrition, respectively). It is clear from the types of assessment used, learning outcomes and module content that both programmes continue to align with the PSRB requirements.</p> | | |

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>Yes. Learning outcomes map well with assessment methods but also with the PSRB requirements. There are a range of methods of assessment used, including traditional essays to more novel presentations and laboratory reports. These methods of assessment clearly help students develop culminating in what is - in general – a very high calibre graduate.</p> <p>In general the marking is been very and rigorous and I am pleased that the students are able to rise to the level needed to score good marks. I feel particularly strongly about academic standards in nutrition courses and it is reassuring to see them being maintained on these programmes.</p> <p>From discussions with the actual students it is clear that the quality of teaching is highly valued, in addition to the diversity of assessment methods.</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><i>Overall the academic standards displayed by the students are high. Students display a good level of aptitude for the subject and it is clear that those students who scored well in assignments/exams have done a good deal of additional reading. I suspect that the standards demonstrated by these students are higher than others in the sector of food science.</i></p> <p><i>It is noteworthy to draw attention to the poor performance of students within FOOD5340M Food and Cancer. This module should be examined more closely to address reasons for the poor performance of the students. This is an important module and as such I do not think removing it is an option. Rather, the team may wish to look at adding in a CSWK component to help students display their knowledge and understanding.</i></p> | | |

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

The assessments that I have looked through are very vigorous and challenge the students. I particularly like the range of assessments used, and this gives the students ample opportunities to do well.

Some general comments that the team may wish to discuss include a standardised approach to feedback. During my moderation it was evident that some staff members used Turnitin/Grademark whilst others used hand written comments. It may be advisable to agree a preferred method to reduce students making complaints about the level of feedback provided by different members of staff

Some unit-specific comments are as follows

Unit: FOOD5174M Diet and CV Health

Apparent that there are a greater number of fails in this unit in students who are enrolled on Food Science and Nutrition (17) as opposed to Nutrition (6). The team may want to investigate the reasons for this and look to see if there are elements that the FS&N students are studying that give an advantage in this exam. There was some inconsistency in the level of comments provided in papers. Ranges from ticks/numbers to specific comments. If students are allowed to request feedback on the exam then it may be advantageous for markers to provide more comments. The comments on the coursework were hand written and constructive.

During my discussions with the MSc students it was noted that they felt that the coursework assessment component for FOOD5174M Diet and CV Health was rather heavy and the % weighting of this assessment component did not reflect the level of input needed. The team may wish to look at this.

Unit: FOOD5045M01 Microbiological and Chemical Food Safety

Some comments on scripts. Lots of ticks although not always clear for the student how they would improve.

Unit: FOOD5280M Functional Foods

Noted 2 fails. Both food science and nutrition. Few students (n=4) attempted question 3 (microflora and host health). Most answered 1, 4 and 6. No students answered question 5 (legal). Students seems confused by the terms functional food and food-based strategies and did not recognise that many of the components in functional foods also have a food-based element. Some issues raised over wording.

Unit: FOOD5405M Professional Development for Employment and Research.

Very high-scoring unit

Noted lots of assessment. Team may want to consider reducing assessment burden for all involved.

Workbook: comments via Turnitin. Positive comments to reinforce good elements would be beneficial especially given when this unit runs.

Lab report: Lots of comments on scripts scoring poorly. There are some points where the marker could provide additional comments such as correcting issues such as where figure legends go. Whilst I appreciate this is a lot of extra work for the marker, I do feel that it would help with students as they progress.

Unit: FOOD5196M Impacts of Food Processing on Nutritional Quality

Some poor marks on CSWK. The CSWK provided displayed variability in how the reports were structured, including table and figure legends. Comments on formatting tables etc would be useful and help with cohesion between units.

EXAM

Summary of exam script very helpful.

Comments on scripts are present although there should be more on the fails.

Q1 very straightforward but concerned with some students re the lack of ability to understand quite simple concepts. At this stage this should be a question that all students should do well on. Noted a general lack of students to summarise the papers findings. This was surprising given that summarising papers was covered in 5405M.

Q2 – noted answers were quite superficial. Potential issues with wording.

Q3 very small SD – most students around the 13-14 mark.

Exam marks prior to moderation are fair. There are some excellent answers to questions. However there are also some extremely poor marks. This does not seem to relate to particular questions but more to particular students – ie students are relatively consistent in scoring poorly in all questions in the exam.

Unit: FOOD5340M Food and Cancer

When assessing the specific modules taken by students over the last year there was a noticeable poor performance in the module FOOD5340M Food and Cancer. It seems that students struggled with this topic and inclusion of coursework may allow students to demonstrate their understanding in this area better.

Noted in minutes dated 8/2/2017 that concerns were raised that the unit was not suitable

Unit: FOOD5410M Nutrition Policy and Practice

There seems to be quite a lot of assessment in this module. It is noted that students cover the critique of a scientific paper here, too, so should be comfortable with this in an exam.

CSWK

Marks very high and small SDs. Comments on CSWK are sparse and are not helpful to students. In text comments would be better, rather than just at the end. One report scored 52 despite what seems a high similarity score, and inappropriate referencing style (the latter not commented on by the author).

Unit: FOOD5425M Personalised Nutrition

CSWK assessment is good. I particularly like the peer assessment and it is always amusing to see that generally students are more harsh markers than academics. Noted that some students did miss the classroom discussions

EXAM

Marked fairly. However, there were some poor answers for part C which means that students have not sufficiently demonstrated an ability to reformulate diets according to recommendations

Some more specific comments on the exam scripts would be useful, especially to the student who has failed and may be looking for support in ways to improve

Unit: FOOD5510M Applied Nutritional Epidemiology

Report

Some students appear to lay their work out in the form of a journal article/report. *Is there guidance for the students on how to structure their work?*

As with the stats, there are comments at the end of the reports, but few going through.

The marks are fair and there is a clear difference in the quality of the reports submitted scoring highly and those with low marks.

Unit: FOOD5515M Nutrition through the life cycle/life course

Overall positive module and relevant. I like the use of different methods of assessment. This provides students a varied learning environment and should allow them all to achieve well

EXAM

Questions are relevant although perhaps are a little weighted towards foetal/infant nutrition. 1 question is on complementary feeding, one on breastfeeding and one on foetal nutrition.

Most students chose to answer questions 2, 4 and 5, which are clearly all related (see above point). It is obvious that students have revised infant and maternal nutrition. *?question picking*. Students who answered Q1 (bone mass) scored poorly.

Clear difference in the quality of answer between those scoring highly and those scoring poorly. Those scoring poorly also seemed to show issues with language and communication

CSWK

For the report, good level of feedback within each document

Clear differentiation between posters scoring highly and those not

FOOD5071 Research Project

I was very impressed with this unit. The students scoring highly clearly displayed excellent research skills and had undertake and very detailed and thorough scientific project. I would appreciate it if the lowest marked piece of work could be sent to me to look through. The sample I received for this was quite narrow in terms of the range of marks to look at.

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? | 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 |
| 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 |

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:

Q24. Initially mark schemes we not provided. However once requested these were made available.

Q28. Whilst on the whole a good range of marks were provided for assessment, for the dissertation module I was provided with a relatively narrow range of marks. It was apparent that there were some students who achieved low marks that I would have liked to examine. In future it would be helpful if I could see the lowest and highest marked piece of work.

Other comments

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

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| Head of School | |
| <i>MAPS/School of Food Science and Nutrition</i> | |
| School of Food Science and Nutrition University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT | |
| | |
| | |

*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. 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

FOOD5405M was designed to develop academic skills not only for International students but also Home/EU students whose first degrees may not have concentrated on particular skills. We have been able to stream the laboratory portion so that students are assigned exercises that build on their present abilities.

Lecture capture is University policy and the School is pleased that the majority of School staff record lectures – and this has proved very popular with all students.

The inclusion of a journal club style activity in FOOD5245M is a relatively new development and the School will ask the module leader to share this best practice with all School lecturers.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

The School has made and is still making efforts to ensure that all exam papers have accompanying guide answers at the time of paper setting, and so it is hoped that this will improve further.

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:

Apologies that you were not sent copies of previous External Examiners' reports and School response – the assessment lead had stated that these would be supplied, but this was overlooked due to circumstances in the School. The student education services (SES) will now maintain copies of all reports and replies and will send these to External Examiners along with other materials at the time of appointment.

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:

It is University policy that all taught material should have elements of research based teaching and it is pleasing that you have noted the research themes in the programmes. The School has made particular effort to ensure that MSc students are research ready, not only as an aim for PhD training, but also because the skills and abilities acquired in this manner are also the skills and abilities that make our graduates highly employable.

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 School is active in mapping learning outcomes and assessment, and regularly reviews assessment and assessment type to ensure that all assessment leads to the meeting of our learning outcomes. Many of the modules include a piece of compulsory extra reading which has an associated exam question to encourage extra reading by all of the students.

The School is aware of the problems with the performance of MSc Nutrition students on FOOD5340M, and a new module manager is intending to make changes and is considering including some form of coursework. There is a difference in the level of feedback given in different modules and that some use turnitin/grademark and others do not. There is a move ((and at University level) to having more electronic submissions and having more marking carried out using gradebook. However, the School does feel that it is appropriate to have some smaller pieces of work (i.e. laboratory reports) to have hand written comments, particularly when many comments are included as a training exercise in scientific writing.

The comments that you have made on specific modules will be handed to the module leaders so that the module teams can implement some of your advice. With respect to FOOD5147M, this is the first year that FS&N students have had more fails than Nutrition students. We will monitor the performance on this module to see if there is a pattern in numbers of programme specific fails emerging. With respect to variability in comments on examination answers, staff will be asked to ensure that there are enough comments on the scripts to both help the External Examiner in deliberations, and for tutors to give exam feedback to students.

You have noted that the summary of the exam script provided with FOOD5196M was helpful. It is the intention that all module leaders will provide a summary of the exam script in the future.

In a number of places you have commented on the amount of assessment or the weighting of assessment in some of the modules. The School is considering the levels of assessment in a number of modules with an aim to reducing the amount of assessment (without compromising learning outcomes) to allow students to have more for reading. Normally all of the reports are available at the time of the External Examiner visit in addition to a selection sent out before the visit. Unfortunately you were unable to make the meeting this year and you were provided with the range of papers that had been returned with both comments and marks from supervisor and assessor – we did not have the full range available at the time we needed to send you examples. The other External Examiner did look at the lowest as well as the highest marked projects.

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:

In future mark schemes will provided along with the draft exam papers.

In future further examples of research projects will be posted to you to better cover the range of marks, and all projects will be available on the day of the External Examiners visit.

Other comments

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

N/A