

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 06/08/2018

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

Lifelong Learning Centre

*Subject(s):*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

BA in Professional Studies  
Modules: LLLC1382; LLLC1395; LLLC1396; LLLC1397; LLLC2257; LLLC2263; LLLC2264;  
LLLC2265; LLLC3964; LLLC3967; LLLC3968

*Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):*

BA

**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.*

1. Students reported on the flexibility of the programme, highlighting its breadth of coverage, the diversity of topics and its contemporary relevance alongside the scope for pursuing specialist interests.
2. Comments from students on module evaluation forms described teaching as 'phenomenal' and 'fun', with some modules such as LLLC1395 and LLLC2265 attaining 100% in terms of students' overall satisfaction. The programme also employs a variety of approaches to learning and teaching, including effective integration of conventional academic sources, video, news, websources and modules LLLC1395 and LLLC3967 seemed particularly strong on this. The students that I spoke to were also keen to stress the relevance of the course to their own lives and experiences.
3. It is clear that students are provided with plenty of opportunities to seek formative feedback on their work in advance of submission. Written feedback is excellent across many modules with students having a clear sense of what they need to do to improve their work and gain higher marks.
4. There is a strong emphasis on skills development and employability throughout the programme
5. LLLC1396, Employability in a Changing World, provides students with very useful sessions on confidence building and public speaking.
6. There is good progression through the three years of the programme in terms of the growing expectations that are placed upon students
7. It is clear that teaching and professional support staff have an excellent relationship with students and comments and observations suggested that all staff members are highly inclusive, engaging and approachable in the manner in which they conduct their work with students, valuing every student in terms of their respective knowledge, experience and capabilities. Given this very supportive environment, it was very pleasing to hear that students have the confidence to voice a range of opinions on different topics. Students also remarked on the high quality of student support in the LLC

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

**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

### For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y / <del>N</del>
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y / <del>N</del>
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y / <del>N</del>

### For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y / <del>N</del>
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y / <del>N</del>
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y / <del>N</del>
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y / <del>N</del>
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y / <del>N</del>

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

The overall programme structure is coherent and appropriate for the level of study. It is also structured in a way that allows the programme aims and learning outcomes to be met, whilst providing students with the freedom to pursue their own specialist interests alongside core modules.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / <del>N</del>
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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 structure of the programme allows students to develop and consolidate their academic and practical understanding of research in a progressive manner that builds on students' previous learning. The dissertations that I looked at showed a good, clear grasp of research principles and methods. In line with the spirit of my further comments outlined below, however, it would be excellent if there were opportunities for students to undertake their dissertations in collaboration with external organisations where students wished to produce work of a more applied, problem-solving nature.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	<del>Y</del> / 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?	Y / 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)?	Y / 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>		
<p>The programme employs a good mix of assessment methods that test a range of knowledge, skills and competencies. There is good evidence of constructive alignment with ILOs. Assessments are also effectively integrated with the development of students' skills over the duration of the programme.</p> <p>There is generally a good range of marks across each module although tutors do seem reluctant to award first-class marks. In marked exception to this trend, the grades for 1396 and 2264 include a high number of firsts and it would be useful to know a little more about the background to this.</p> <p>Tutors' feedback to students is frequently of an excellent standard. On the assessments and scripts that I saw, feedback was very constructive, highlighting clear areas where students could focus their efforts to improve their work and grades.</p>		
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>		
<p>There were some excellent examples of student work, with students demonstrating a developed understanding of complex theories and a carefully considered approach to the structure of their arguments. Students' work generally demonstrated an excellent level of engagement with the respective module and comments from the students that I spoke to very much confirmed this. Levels of student interest, engagement and motivation were all very high and this is credit to the efforts of the teaching staff to enthuse and inspire students and support their learning needs.</p>		
<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 / N
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y / N

22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y / N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y / N
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y / N
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y / N
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y / N
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y / N
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y / N
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y / N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N

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

It did take some time for me to gain access to the Minerva online learning environment but the LLC staff that I liaised with were excellent throughout and provided me with all the documentation and student work that I requested.

#### Other comments

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

1. It would be helpful to be provided with summaries of final marks for each module showing the number of students taking the module, the distribution of marks, the average mark and the no. of fails.
2. Module tutors should be encouraged to use the full spread of marks and seek clarification should they be unclear as to what constitutes a first-class mark.
3. I also felt that there was considerable scope for involving external speakers in various parts of the programme (eg in 1396 employability) in order to constantly remind students of the professional dimension of the programme and its real-world relevance. The Programme Leader and module staff might also give some consideration to the further development of relationships with prospective employers through applied projects and placements.
4. Related to the point above, there is also considerable scope for site visits, short professional placements, fieldtrips, engaged or inquiry-based learning and using the city as a 'classroom'. Students who have been out of employment for some time might also benefit from working with a client organisation. In recommending these more active and engaged forms of learning I do recognise, however, that doing such work well can require commensurate levels of time and staff resources.

5. In terms of employability, the students that I spoke to would also like to see the degree gaining a higher profile and increased levels of contact with prospective employers could help to achieve this. Consider Recognition /HEAR for student volunteering.
6. There is also scope to find greater space in the programme to incorporate new theory and practice in relation to the co-production and delivery public and third sector services. Given the rapidity of change in public service delivery and management, I was unclear as to how these shifts in thinking and practice are included in the programme, ie to what extent is the entire programme subject to regular review and updating?
7. The Programme leader should be alert to the potential for overlap between some modules (eg LLLC1396 and 2264 in terms of the changing context of work). Various modules include, for example, an assessment that is based on reflection and I wondered whether some of the guidance and instruction on this could be drawn together.
8. Indicative student effort hours were included in only one of the module handbooks that I saw. Based on experience from my own institution it might help students if they are given further information and guidance about roughly how much time they should spend on the different elements of each module, ie contact hours, independent study and the approximate time that should be dedicated to different assessment components.
9. Some modules (such as 3967) seem particularly demanding in terms of the assessment and the associated volume of work that students are expected to complete. Comparing with experience and practice at my own institution, I got the impression that a small number of other 20-credit modules (1396 and 1397, for example) were also potentially 'over-assessing' and it might be useful for the programme leader to conduct a brief review of the consistency of assessment across the programme as in terms of the number of assessment tasks that students were expected to complete and the commensurate demands placed upon students. As per point 8 above, further guidance to students on expected 'effort hours' might help in this respect. This is pure speculation but a slightly smaller number of assessment tasks might help students to find the necessary time – and focus - to complete selected pieces of work to a first-class standard. Currently, the final dissertation is perhaps the only assessment that permits such focused work and there might be scope to see this opportunity replicated in at least one module in each of the preceding years, ie where students have just one assessment where they can focus their interests and knowledge. Conversely, however, I fully appreciate how the breadth and diversity of assessments helps those students with challenging personal and domestic circumstances who form a significant proportion of the LLC's student intake.

As at other institutions, the UCU industrial action that took place in the Spring of 2018 had the potential to create significant disruption for student learning and assessment. The student module evaluation forms included several comments relating to the impact of the industrial action. It was clear, however, that staff at the LLC did everything they could have been expected to do to minimise the impact on their students and this reflects the broader commitment to students that was readily evident in my visit and in my conversations with staff and students.

### **Comments on specific modules**

#### **LLLC1382 Research project 1**

There were 38 students on this module and marks ranged from 26% to 72% for those students that had completed all their work at the time of the Exam Board (17 students had extenuating circumstances and still had outstanding pieces of work to submit). The average mark was 57%. General levels of student satisfaction for this module were 86% and comments suggested that the students found some aspects of the course to be a little repetitive. That said, the module handbook was good and provided students with

clear instructions for each week on tasks and reading for workshops and seminars. Feedback to students was also very helpful and constructive.

### **LLLC 1395 Exploring Diversity**

Thirty-five students took this module. Two students failed the module, two students attained first-class marks and the average mark was 58%. This module made particularly good use of engaging reading materials and visual material. The module employs a combination of lectures, seminars and workshops and a good mix of assessments and an entire session of the course was devoted to the newspaper-related assessment. Student work showed good levels of knowledge and understanding and the feedback to students was excellent. Students' feedback on the module was also very positive, with the course receiving 100% ratings across the key module evaluation criteria, with comments indicating that students found the module to be stimulating, well-explained and inclusive.

### **LLLC1396 Employability in a changing world**

There were 37 students on this module. The average mark was 66% and 13 students gained a first-class overall mark, which was significantly higher than the proportion of students gaining firsts in other modules. The assessments for this module include a 15-minute group presentation, a 2,000 word reflective essay and an action plan. The group presentation assessment is imaginative and engaging and the session on confidence-building and public speaking provided evidence of good practice; the module leader also offers support for reflective writing through three formative reflections. This again is helpful, as students can sometimes find this style of writing rather difficult. Student feedback indicated that students found the Careers Fair trip to be particularly instructive and 'eye-opening' in terms of the insights it provided. It would be good if subsequent cohorts of students could also attend similar sessions in future years.

### **LLLC1397 Health and Society**

There were 35 students for this module. Five students failed the module, two attained first-class marks and the average mark was 57%. The module includes an essay (25%), a health promotion poster (50%), and a seen exam (25%). I was able to look at a sample of eight exam scripts that had been marked and moderated and these included good, constructive feedback from module staff, alerting students to the areas of weakness where they might improve their work. Unfortunately, I did not have time to look at the students' posters. In terms of student effort hours, module staff might give some consideration to the time that students spend on each assessment and consider whether the weightings for each assessment component provide a good, fair reflection of students' efforts. Levels of student satisfaction for this module were excellent, with the teaching described as 'phenomenal'.

### **LLLC2257 Research Project 2**

This research-based module builds on the work completed in Year 1 and includes an ethics and research design evaluation (2,000 words, 40%) and an individual research proposal presentation (60%) that involves peer evaluation of students' presentations. Most of the 29 students on this module attained a 2.1 mark: the average mark for this module was 61 and there was 1 fail and four firsts. The sample of work that I inspected showed a good level of knowledge and understanding along with some very thoughtful and insightful remarks from students.

### **LLLC2263 Global perspectives**

Students' comments on this module were very positive, with levels of satisfaction for assessment and feedback scored at 100%. Students valued the course leaders' enthusiasm for the topics covered and

found the classes to be inclusive and engaging and there was good use of guest lecturers too in terms of bringing additional perspectives and insights to the course. Assessments for this module included a reflective 2000-word blog (25%) and a 3000-word essay. Four students failed the module and one student gained a first-class mark.

### **LLLC2264 Creativity, work and change**

There were 27 students on this module, with marks ranging from 26 to 78. 10 students received first-class marks and one student failed the module. The guidance for the portfolio assessment provided useful advice on the suggested structure and this also appeared to be covered in some depth in class. The weaker assessments were annotated in detail though I felt that the comments could have been better summarised in the accompanying section on advice for future assignments, such that students might be clearer about how they might gain better marks in their future work.. The strongest essays demonstrated excellent levels of knowledge and analysis. Students seemed very happy with this course, finding it 'fun' and 'engaging' and remarking upon the course tutor's passion and enthusiasm

### **LLLC2265 Exploring Contemporary Issues**

Despite dealing with some very complex and challenging concepts and theories, students appeared to find this course very intellectually stimulating and rewarding. This module seems to 'stretch' students and there were very high overall levels of student satisfaction (100%) and students were also very positive about teaching and feedback, although levels of satisfaction with relevant library resources was relatively low. The group seminar leading task (40%) was particularly innovative and students found this assessment to be both demanding yet rewarding. The other assessment was a seen exam (60%) and the exam provided students with the scope to demonstrate their knowledge of specific areas from a good range of topics. Some of the scripts from the sample I inspected were excellent and the feedback to students was very clear and constructive. For the 26 students taking the module, the average mark was 61 and there were no fails and no firsts.

### **3964 Project dissertation**

Twenty four students were registered for this module and the dissertation marks ranged from 50 to 73; the average mark was 62. Whilst I was unable to access the work and feedback via VLE, I did get sight of a sample of six dissertations and these included some excellent student work.

The dissertation handbook also provides students with a clear and relatively succinct guide to structuring their work and offers signposting to different sources of guidance for students who need further help and advice. The course is structured around a series of bi-weekly workshops, online discussion and one-to-one supervision meetings and, from the information and feedback that I received, this appeared to be working well. The work is broken down into three areas, ie the literature review, methods and analysis and students are advised to submit drafts of these sections at three points during the year in order to gain formative feedback.

In light of my broader comments about the need for greater engagement with real-world topics and prospective employers, the module staff might give further consideration to improving the opportunities for students to produce their dissertations on topics that are mutually beneficial to student learning and the research needs of external organisations.

### **LLLC3967 Technology, New Media and Society**

Using an active learning approach this is potentially a very exciting and ambitious module that is of great contemporary relevance. It also seeks to make effective use of video and gaming as a teaching tool and

engages students via their own experience with social media., as well as providing them with the opportunity to develop their digital skills through the creation of an online blog. At the same time, however, it is also a very demanding module in terms of the volume of content and assessments that initially seem rather challenging. The three components of assessment for the module are outlined below:

- 1) 10% Written Work  
Strategic plan, including aims, objectives and resources needed for a technological resource/intervention (500 words)
- 2) 50% Practical Assignment  
Resource/intervention could be a website, blog, social media campaign, prezi, vlog or other similar resource developed to address a particular issue. (2500 word equivalent)
- 3) 40% Written Work  
2000 word critical explanation of technological resource/intervention

From the module outline there appear to be lots of different tasks for students to complete each week and this presumably demands some extensive guidance from teaching staff in the weekly sessions. The extent of the assessments (equivalent to 5,000 words) also seems quite high for a 20-credit module.

Whilst the module outline included a summary of effort hours, I wonder whether sufficient time is devoted to preparing for the three assessments? The broad assessment criteria appear to be a little different from those with which students are familiar too and, from reading the module outline, I got the sense that many less technically-literate students might struggle with this module. Whilst overall student satisfaction for the module was very low (38%), my concerns did not seem to be reflected in the marks, however, as the average mark was 64 and, overall, there were no fails or third-class marks. Written comments from students also suggested that whilst many found the module 'hard', they also enjoyed the challenge and the sense of achievement at learning a new skill. Twenty-two students were registered for the module and the marks for the strategic plan assessment varied from 58 to 75 and from 53 to 72 for the practical assignment. Marks for the critical explanation ranged from 47 to 71.

More positively, tutor feedback to students for this module was excellent. It is genuinely of the highest order, exceptionally detailed, personalised and constructive, with each student receiving sound advice on how they might go about improving their work.

### **LLLC3968 Understanding leadership**

This is a well organised and nicely constructed course that seeks to provide students with a theoretical and practical understanding of leadership models and the skills required to lead change effectively in different organisations. The two assessments comprise a review of leadership styles (2500 words, 50%) and a case study report (2500 words, 50%) and provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of a particular leadership style and apply their understanding of effective change management to a case study. Twenty-four students took the module and marks ranged from 40 to 68 for the review and 45 to 77 for the report. I received a sample of 9 of the reviews. The feedback is very good and the scripts were annotated with extensive comments and corrections. Each student was also provided with a clear set of points on how they might improve their future work. It is worth noting that some of the weaker pieces of work in the sample had significant weaknesses in relation to referencing and this is slightly worrying for a final year module when one might expect students to have mastered this particular skill at this level. I was unable to access the feedback for the reports via Minerva.





## Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

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

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Subject(s):*

Professional Studies

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

BA Professional Studies – all core modules

*Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):*

BA

*Title and Name of Responder:*

*Position\*:*

Programme Manager

*Faculty / School of:*

Lifelong Learning Centre

*Address for communication:*

*Email:*

*Telephone:*

*\*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 make a lot of effort to ensure a quality and exciting learning experience for the students on Professional Studies – whilst also focusing on ensuring it contains enough flexibility for them to pursue their own interests and that it also focuses on building employability skills. It is great that the External Examiner has recognised this – and emphasised in particular the confidence building and public speaking elements on the LLLC1396 Employability module which are a new innovation this year (in recognition of the need to build students' social capital right from the beginning of the degree). The relevance of the degree to the students' own lives, developed through student-led learning as well as a continual effort from tutors to ensure clear connection to the changes in our contemporary world was also highlighted. We also aim to give the students extensive opportunity to receive formative and summative feedback on their work – and this effort was recognised. Finally, we have made an effort through the last couple of years to integrate many different sources for the students to engage with to learn theoretical concepts on different modules – and this was also highlighted. The External discusses the supportive environment we provide for and foster with the students – he talked to some students to get an idea of their experience. The support is a key part of our work to create a productive learning environment and undertake our Widening Participation work – it is pleasing that the External recognises we value every student and that through this they influence and help constitute the programme.

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

n/a

#### **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:*

There were no matters for urgent attention.

**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:*

1-3. Access was given to all the necessary materials. 4-7 were not related.

**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:*

The Programme Team welcomes the comments regarding the coherence of the programme and the appropriateness for the level of study. We were pleased to see comments on the flexibility within core modules which allows students to pursue their own interests and specialisms while also meeting the learning outcomes. Similarly, the recognition of the scaffolded nature of the degree which allows students to incrementally build on their learning – but which is also designed to build upon the experience and knowledge they already have as mature students. We note the recommendation that we could consider working with external organisations to give students the opportunity to collaborate with these organisations and so produce work which responds to issues and problems which are really happening in the ‘real’ world. This is an idea we are inspired by and will work on pursuing this year. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the degree we will have to think carefully about what external organisations would be appropriate and because of the fixed deadlines of the academic year it might take a bit of time to work out the practicalities.

**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 appreciate the comments about the coherence across the programme; we have worked to help students build knowledge and skills incrementally throughout the core modules. We will reflect further on the comments that while there is a good range of marks across the programme, there are fewer students gaining first class marks. As a team, we are going to review this situation to think through whether it is to do with having too many assessments per module (it might be harder for students to achieve a first on a module with 3 rather than 2 assignments) – and we are also going to think carefully about how we can make sure we are really rewarding students for high quality work (careful reflection about this will also be necessary now we are moving from the 20-90 marking scale to the 0-100 marking scale). We note that LLLC1396 and LLLC2264 had more students gaining firsts – this could be to do with the creative nature of the assignments on these modules but also to do with the way particular tutors are marking (although the moderation process is taken seriously). This is all something we have started to review as a team – and we are going to ensure the moderation process always allows for discussion about marking scales and range and about what is rewarded within assignments (and whether assignment requirements can be even more flexible to allow for different learning needs). It is worth noting that there are a high level of students with diagnosed specific learning difficulties on the degree (about a 3<sup>rd</sup>) and most of the students are parents – both of these factors make it hard for students to consistently achieve highly on the module which is why we put so much emphasis on support. We should also recognise that achievement is relative – so a 2.1 mark could be an incredibly impressive achievement for a student who has returned to study after a poor school experience and gap in their education, and who is now experiencing a complicated home life. Many of the students we would have expected to achieve more highly experience had significant life complications which meant they were not submitting their best work. While this can be mitigated for through mitigating circumstances and tutor extensions to some extent, and whilst we provide students with access to extra support, these adjustments only work so far. This is a challenge we are continuing to work on and we appreciate the External Examiner’s perspective, which has helped us to think about how much we can ensure module and assignment design can be used to help students achieve more highly.

**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:*

## Other comments

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

The External Examiner makes a number of useful recommendations which are addressed here using a number system:

1. has asked for summaries of final marks for each module showing the number of students taking the module, the distribution of marks, the average mark and the number of fails. This is something the Student Education Service team are considering to see whether this can be provided in the future.
2. It is recommended that we review how we are allocating first class marks – as stated above, this is something we are exploring actively as a team and will be thinking about in relation to the 0-100 scale we have now moved to. (but we do think it is about more than individual tutor marking – it is about assignment and module design as well – see thoughts above).
3. The External Examiner recommends the adoption of external speakers to be involved in various parts of the programme – this does already happen on some modules (e.g. there are already external speakers every year on Exploring Diversity). However, it is something we know we need to build, especially in terms of getting potential employers involved. This is something we have already started to implement in the changes made to LLLC1396 Employability in a Changing World – this year's iteration will contain a lot more external input. Similarly, the new version of the Leadership module – Leadership for a Changing World – will also involve guest speakers (hopefully including local organisations and employers). It was also recommended that the programme team could further develop relationships with prospective employers through applied projects and placements. This is something which happens in a student-led way on Creativity, Work and Change and through the Dissertation – but it is also something we will continue to think about and work on in discussion with the Community and Partnerships team and the Careers Service (and with our own Professional Studies alumni).
4. As a programme team we are all very inspired by the External Examiner's idea to 'use the city as a classroom' – we talked about it extensively on the Professional Studies Away Day and have drafted ideas related to different modules (including getting students to undertake a Diversity audit of the city, getting them to 'read' and 'write' on the city to think through their own experience of it, and encouraging them to contact organisations as part of the Employability module (this is now part of the assessment for this module). It is important that we make time to continue developing these ideas – we are hoping we can find this time and that we can benefit from the expertise of the External Examiner in this area.
5. We completely agree that we need to keep working on ways to raise the profile of the degree to help with students' employability. They already can and do get HEAR recognition for their volunteering to be Learning Champions and Course Reps – but we will double-check whether they can for volunteering (a lot of our students volunteer and we help them find placements). We agree that inviting prospective employers in to talk to Professional Studies students in particular would help raise the profile of the degree locally (this is done at a Lifelong Learning Centre level but not at a degree level as much as it could be).
6. This is a big issue we will need to time to think through further. We have modules such as Creativity, Work and Change we are designed to respond to changes in the third sector through the way in which students choose their own case study of a local organisation to study further. But it is true that modules such as Employability and Leadership need to be continually updated to respond to changes in different work sectors – however, the degree is not just about this employability strand so we also need to spend time (as we do each year) to make sure that the other modules (on the interdisciplinary strand) are kept up to date through research-led teaching.
7. Students are already guided through the similarities and differences between assignments such as the reflective assignments – this is done by working closely with the Skills team and also ensuring that module tutors know what is going on with different assignments. The reflective assignment on 1396 has different requirements to the one on 2263 and also the connections between 1396 and 2264 are made clear – this is something we already work hard on as a team, ensuring we are responsive to any student feedback which suggests confusion.
8. We will review how we are indicating student effort hours and develop a consistent way that this is communicated on Minerva – the VLE (it is too late this year for this also to be in all of the handbooks).
9. We have already had our first discussions as a team about 'over-assessing' and about challenge. The assignments for 3967 are all connected and the student feedback and experience suggests that the first assignment is needed for them to plan their project and the next two they work on as one assignment (they

back each other up – and the written work mitigates the risk and worry of producing a website/blog). We will review other modules, however – and think about whether we can work on having 2 assignments per 20 credit module rather than 3 (unless assignments are connected as discussed above). We appreciate the detail that the External Examiner has gone into to help us reflect on how to make the assessment procedure even more accessible for the students by providing guidance about effort hours, for example – this is something we will think about carefully as a team. As notes, though, sometimes the breadth of assessment is there for reasons of inclusivity – to ensure students have a chance to develop a range of skills but also find their area in which to shine. We are always using student feedback and staff reflection to think about the best ways to ensure assessment is a productive and useful part of the learning and something which includes, supports and stretches all students.

The External Examiner has also taken the time to comment on individual modules – any issues which are not already discussed above are addressed in the following:

LLLC2264. This is a really useful comment about the feedback for students which isn't always as clear as it could be about how students could improve on their work. This advice will be passed onto the tutor to reflect on with the moderator.

LLLC3967. This module now has a new tutor who has taken on board the External's comments – students will receive a lot of assignment guidance in the teaching sessions and there is a lot of flexibility in the assessment to ensure students who are not as technologically literate can access the learning.

LLLC3968. As the External notes, some of the work on this module was of a lower quality than would be expected on a level 3 module – this seemed to be because some students became a bit confused about assessment requirements and then a bit demotivated (this has been gathered through conversations with students who achieved low marks on this module but higher marks on other modules). The assessment strategy on this module has now changed to give students more of a chance to discuss issues of their own interest.

Overall, I would just like to say how much we appreciate the effort and time taken to review the programme so thoroughly – the External Examiner met with staff and students as well as undertaking a thorough review of the assessments on all the modules and he has given us a lot of food for thought – we will continually strive to make this the best programme it can be and we are grateful to have input and expertise to help with this.