

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 20/11/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Education

Subject(s):

International Education Leadership and Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

MA

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.
The overall standard of work remains high; some assignments and dissertations were outstanding.
The quality of feedback for students is excellent. I understand that the programme leader has received a Faculty award – I am not surprised!
Overall, the care and attention paid to student needs is very strong.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Last year, my main concern related to a perceived over-dependence upon one member of staff, the consequent vulnerability of the programme to staff changes and the dominance of one particular academic view. This has been partly addressed by the appointment of a new member of staff. Unfortunately, the new member of staff was unwell for part of the year. Hopefully, full strength will be restored for 2018-19.

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

My main concern related to the guidance given in research methods. Some students chose to do additional methods options; others did not. As a result, students entered the final stages of the programme with varying levels of exposure to and expertise in different research methods. My feeling is that all students should be required to take research methods to the same level.

(I am pleased to see that the School has responded to such concerns and has initiated a full review of research methods teaching.)

Another criticism voiced by students is the fact that modules delivered in other Schools, advertised as options within this programme, are in practice “full-up” and therefore unavailable. I am sure that the small print will say that such options are not always available, but it creates a very poor impression. There is a “feeling” among students that more options are needed within the School of Education, and I have to agree with their sentiments.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y / 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?	Yes
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Yes
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Yes
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Yes
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Yes

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

This is a strong programme and I am impressed by the quality of work produced. The overall structure meets the objectives. However, I have some concerns about the balance between core modules within the School, options from outside the School and research methods modules.

As stated above, this is a strong programme; standards are at least as high as similar programmes elsewhere and are often higher. At the same time, it is always important to refresh programmes, even the best of programmes. Based on my observations and on some student comments, there is some suggestion of "sameness" in the approach to teaching and assessment. This may reflect the dependence upon a single member of staff and may change as the new member of staff becomes established. I wonder whether different forms of teaching might be explored (eg one student suggested the use of role playing) and consideration might be given to different forms of assessment (eg some short critiques of significant papers as well as full assignments).

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Yes
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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)

Assignments display a strong grasp of recent research. Some of the dissertations show significant original research and thought.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	No
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

I believe that most students completing this programme would be suitable for a PhD. My main concern relates to the variability in research methods training – see earlier comments.		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	No
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
N/A		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	No
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		
N/A		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Yes
<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>		
The assessment methods are fully appropriate for this programme. They are based on written assignments and a dissertation. However, other features are included, such as power point presentations. As noted above, I would encourage the use of different tasks, such as shorter pieces of critical writing.		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Yes
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Yes
<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>		
The standards reached are fully appropriate for a programme of this kind and at least match those in similar courses elsewhere. Students have full opportunities to demonstrate their ability.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		
Overall, this remains a very strong programme and a credit to the School and University. The care given to students is exemplary. However, as I have remarked earlier, every programme needs regular refreshment and I do feel that there are areas to be considered. These include training in research methods (now under consideration by the School), the range of options available both within and without the School (can more in-house options be developed) and the range of assessed tasks (I wonder whether some small piece of assessed work might be introduced in the first term to help focus student attention early in the programme).		

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?	Yes
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Yes
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Yes
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Yes

24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Yes
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Yes
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Yes
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Yes
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Yes
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Yes
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Yes
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Yes
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Yes
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>The administration and conduct of the whole process was outstanding. I have examined many programmes in other universities over the years; the administration and oversight provided by the School of Education at Leeds is the best I have experienced.</p>		

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 Examiner:*

Subject(s):

MA International Educational Leadership and Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

MA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

School of Education

Address for communication:

Hillary Place
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

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. 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 feedback is very encouraging. Diversity and progression built into the assessment from EDUC 5042M (presentation plus short essay) to EDUC 5043M (longer essay) to Dissertation (12,000 extended writing and analysis) has clearly paid off in leading to much higher levels of student attainment.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

The health of the new member of staff continued to be a problem into 2018-19, but more recent hospitalisation has managed to locate the problem more precisely, with a better long-term prognosis. has made a good contribution to the enhancement of learning resources on Minerva, especially on higher education and education policy. However, pressures on the Programme Leader continue, partly because of taking on additional duties, such as Deputy Postgraduate Research Tutor, faculty representative on the Graduate Board Examinations Group and member of the Faculty Graduate School Committee. also acts as the Probation Adviser for the newly appointed member of staff assisting with the MA (IELP) programme.

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:

The issues raised regarding MA research provision are focused more specifically on concerns regarding consistency and equity of provision across the School, rather than any individual programme. This is currently under review, and a working group has been set up to review research methods provision at M-level across the School with a view to establishing more standardised provision that both meets diverse individual student needs and provides equity of research training provision. The Programme Leader for the MA (IELP) will be a member of that group, which will be meeting on a regular basis from 12 March 2019.

The more specific issue of MA (IELP) students gaining access to relevant modules is to some extent outside the control outside of the IELP team. With the exception of the research methods modules, there are few if any modules offered in Education that are directly relevant to education policy or leadership. However, in the current year MA (IELP) students have been very positive about gaining access to such POLIS modules as 'Education and Development', 'Global Inequalities and Development', and 'Global Justice', along with positive reports on their excellent quality. One MA (IELP) student expressed disappointment at not being able to register on leadership modules offered by LUBS, but, as yet, we have not been able to negotiate access to LUBS programmes.

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:

There are no issues to raise here.

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:

In response to issues raised in Point 12, rather than 'sameness', there is considerable evidence of enhanced variety and diversity of teaching and learning. Within the two core modules (EDUC 5042M and EDUC 5043M), there is greater variety of assessment than existed under the previous MA (IEM) programme; we now have more contributors to the two core modules (a total of four regular staff and two regular guest speakers with different approaches and styles); and much more diversity through the extra 60 credits of elective modules offered by other staff in both the School of Education and POLIS. Added to this are: invitations to attend and present at the regular Education Policy Group meetings, along with PGR students and members of staff; the opportunity for at least one school visit to engage with practitioners; and a four-day trip to London to visit the DfE, the Houses of Parliament, the newly formed Chartered College of Teaching, and other educational establishments, to engage in discussion with key policy makers and actors working in both the schools and higher education policy sectors.

The suggestion that the critique of a journal paper could be introduced as an additional activity is a most useful one, as this will enable students to evaluate more formally both the strengths and limitations of academic papers, thus honing their skills in conducting a literature review in preparation for the dissertation. This task will be introduced from next 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:

As previously stated, the recommendation for the reviewing of a high quality journal paper of direct relevance to their programme of study is accepted and will be implemented. Also as previously stated, issues related to research training are of more general concern across the School of Education, and this is currently being addressed by a working group.

Research training provision within the MA (IELP) is well-established through: (a) having a specific session in each core module on how to research education policy and how to research education leadership; (b) embedding research implications in all the other sessions; (c) encouraging student membership of BELMAS and attendance at their annual conference and other events; (d) encouraging attendance at the Education Policy Group seminars (with PGRs and staff); and (e) the provision of two extra two-hour seminar sessions in December on research ethics and preparing IELP dissertations.

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 issues to address.

Other comments

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