

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Education

Subject(s):

Childhood Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Childhood Studies programme / Play and Learning (EDUC1208), Building a Career from Education Studies (EDUC1604), BA Dissertation (EDUC3805), Approaches to Research: Theory and Practice (EDUC2102), Literacy and Learning (EDUC2604), Supporting Learning in Children with Additional Needs (EDUC3042), Psychological Approaches to Understanding and Supporting Children's Learning (EDUC2104), What is a Child (EDUC1204); Education Year Abroad (EDUC9001); Health, Well-being, Childhood and Youth (EDUC2100)

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.

The role of a programme-level Assessment Champion which allows sharing of good practice amongst module leaders, ensures consistency and facilitates innovation in assessment across modules and year groups

I believe this is an important role, and it is good to see that the programme team was able to continue this work this year given the changes in staffing. Conversations with the UG Programme Director and the Assessment Champion have been very productive.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

- (1) Double Dissertation Module: Dissertation projects are now being marked and moderated by two markers. I think this further strengthens the rigor of the marking process given that the dissertation is a major and often quite idiosyncratic piece of work.
- (2) I attended two meetings in my role as external examiner this year, one with students in March and one with academic staff in June. These meetings were well organised and provided plenty of opportunities to reflect upon and discuss learning and teaching on the programme from the students', tutors', and programme director's perspectives. Meetings with the programme director and tutors were constructive and productive. It was good to see that a larger number of staff were engaged and attended the June exam board meeting compared to previous years.

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 / 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
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?	Y
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y

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 enjoyed acting as the external examiner for this programme and appreciate the openness of staff to reflect upon feedback I have provided over the years. I do believe the programme has gained in rigour. This year in particular, I observed a true sense of commitment to further enhancing the quality of the student experience at the School of Education UG division.

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.

The programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes - as set out in the relevant module handbooks and reflected in the marking criteria - are appropriate for the level of study. Students are encouraged to question their assumptions, to critically reflect on other authors' work, and to engage with a wide range of educational research. Marking criteria focus on the concepts of 'evidence' and 'critical analysis' and are in line with comparable programmes I am aware of.

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)

The programme and module handbooks and my conversations with tutors and students suggest that teaching is research-led and that students are encouraged to access and critically engage with current research. Students are well supported to undertake an independent research project in their third year. This often includes empirical work, which is a strength of the programme.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	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)?	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
<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>I scrutinized a range of student assignments across mark-bands and modules and was able to confirm all marks. Feedback was typically detailed, tailored to the specific assignment, constructive, and well matched with the assessment criteria. Areas for improvement were highlighted, and this was more explicit this year.</p> <p>I have a few suggestions for the programme team to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Second marking process: A second marking process of a subsample of work (e.g. 10% of the assignments for a module) should not lead to changes only in these module marks. This is an unfair process towards those students who were or were not part of the second marking subsample. Instead, second markers should check that the scripts are marked consistently, the marks awarded are aligned with the module learning outcomes / assessment criteria, and that feedback provided is sufficient, appropriate and constructive. When there is reason for concern, e.g. when there are systematic differences in marks awarded by first vs second markers, then the entire module needs to be checked and remarked. (2) Feedback: I have commented on consistency in feedback in last year's report, and I am aware that a new process has been put in place that involves a form of moderation at the beginning of the marking process. I can see that this is a useful process. However, based on my conversations with a group of students, as well as my own reading of a sample of feedback, there is still some room for improvement. Student concerns related to a perceived unfair treatment when there is a team of markers marking on the same module, and not knowing who marked their assignment. Some students would have liked further elaborations and clarification of the feedback they have received. It might be worth spending more time in class helping students contextualise the marking criteria and understand what differentiates a first class from a second class assignment, for example. 		
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
<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>The academic standards demonstrated by the students were adequate for the level of study. The student work was generally of solid to good quality. The overall number of first-class assignments seemed somewhat higher compared to previous years, at least for some modules.</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
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?	Y
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>I attended the UG External Exam Board on the 19 June 2018. Administrative arrangements were very good.</p>		

Other comments

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

I enjoyed speaking with a number of students this year (though of course this group was not a representative sample of the student cohort). Many were positive, engaged and felt supported by their tutors. Some concerns were raised, and I outlined these above and in my meetings with staff in June. A suggestion was made that inviting guest speakers, including practitioners, would be appreciated as it might help contextualise module content and build links with e.g. schools. Other exposure to practical experiences might be offered via placement modules and school visits where appropriate.

As I have highlighted in previous reports, I believe this to be an exciting programme that offers students a multi-disciplinary perspective on childhood. The programme team, including the administrative support, is clearly committed and work hard to ensure the student experience is of excellent quality. I would like to thank academic and administrative staff for their time and efforts in supporting me in my role.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

BA Childhood Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

School of Education

Address for communication:

School of Education
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 important role of the Assessment Champion is highlighted by the External Examiner. The programme team will continue to work with the Assessment Champion moving forward.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

The external examiner notes that dissertations are being marked and moderated by two markers thus strengthening the rigour of the process. This process will be continued going forward.

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:

It is pleasing to see that the external examiner has witnessed a commitment on the part of the programme team to enhancing the student experience on the BA (Hons) Childhood Studies.

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 indication from the External Examiner is that the programme is appropriate to the level of study, and that teaching is research led. Particular attention is drawn to independent research carried out by many students for their final year project.

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:

In response to the EE's comments with reference to the second marking process, the Undergraduate Strategy Group has reinforced the process of standardisation prior to marking on modules for which there are multiple markers. The Undergraduate Strategy Group has also agreed that markers will indicate with their initials who has marked a piece of work so that student concerns regarding fair treatment may be addressed and, more importantly, students can follow up any feedback which they feel needs clarification. Note that new assessment criteria have come into operation in the year 2018-9 as well as categorical marking. The second and third year students have been informed at their induction meeting of the change of marking criteria and the introduction of categorical marking.

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 programme team continues to invite guest speakers into modules where relevant. An employability officer is now in place in the School of Education and links with schools can be further enhanced through work.