

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 26/06/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Sociology and Social Policy

Subject(s):

Sociology and Social Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Sociology, BA Sociology and Social Policy, BA Social Policy, BA Social Policy and Crime, Joint Honours BA Politics and Sociology/Social Policy, BA Sociology and International Relations

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.

I would like to thank the department for the opportunity, and the administrative and lecturing staff for the examining samples with all the material clearly laid out and the very helpful and informative letters and supporting information. It made it easy to review and turn them around in time. I would particularly like to thank _____ for assistance addressing queries regarding second marking practices. Staff provided information concerning the measures taken and procedures in place to review module marks and classifications in relation to the recent strike action. I was impressed by the care taken to assure that students were adequately supported.

I would also like to commend the staff on both essay feedback and second marker comments which, in most cases, was detailed and engaged with students' writing and arguments. It showed a commitment to feedback, student development and engaging with them intellectually. The course content and assessments for the modules I examined are innovative and engaging for students, always seeking to involve them in the applied aspects of sociology and social policy.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

This is my first year as external examiner however having consulted the report of the previous external I see no suggestions for enhancements to be made to the programmes or processes over the past year.

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

In terms of next years' external examining, I was wondering if it would be possible to send examiners a map of the programmes and how each module fits in?

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

I found the Sociology and Social Policy Levels 2 and 3 programmes and course structure and content to be well designed and it meets the disciplinary benchmarks, national standards and needs of the students. The aims and ILOS are appropriate and clear. The courses that I examined were all of a very high quality and to varying extents provided an excellent mix of theory, empirical research, contemporary debates, political and social engagement, historical context, and global, national and local contexts.

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 courses that I examined to varying extents provided an excellent mix of theory, empirical research, contemporary debates, political and social engagement, historical context, and global, national and local contexts. Teaching was clearly research led with engagement with current research in the subjects, practice informed by research, and students undertaking their own research (i.e. group presentations and analysing the city in SLSP2953 Urban Disorders).

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

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

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>The material and assignments were appropriate for the courses and levels, national benchmarks and all other standards. They were challenging and assessed a range of skills and abilities. There was also a good mix of varying assessment styles – i.e. group presentations, essays, and exams. From the quality and content of the work I saw, the students seemed to be very engaged in their modules. I thought that the assessment process and administration of modules was excellent. The standard of work and marking fit with other institutions I have experienced. The marking is fair, good practice have been followed and I agreed with the banding in almost every case. Where I differed it was only slightly and on borderline cases.</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>This appears to be a strong cohort, with performance in the range of what is expected on comparable courses. I was particularly impressed with the range/mix of grades in SLSP2953 Urban Disorders, and also of the high quality of work in modules including particularly SLSP3230 Global Terrorism and Violence. The work of a higher standard demonstrated a strong grasp of sociological theories and concepts, and drew on a wide range of literature and empirical examples.</p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>With regards to Undergraduate dissertations: I examined a sample from across the grades including some weaker low 2.2s and some extremely well written, engaging dissertations which were high 2.2s and Firsts. The weaker dissertations were more like long essays and were based on secondary literature reviews. However, I agree that they merit a pass. There wasn't always details of how the agreement between first marker and second marker was reached on the feedback form. It would be helpful for this to be consistently included on forms in future. However, overall, there was detailed feedback from both markers on the dissertations.</p>		

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?	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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i> Unable to attend the Exam Board due to ill health.</p>		

Other comments

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

I would also like to commend teaching and admin staff for the support offered to students as a result of the strike action. The procedure for dealing with this in relation to assessment and appeals was also very clearly communicated to External Examiners, and made the process much more straightforward. It was useful to have details of previous cohort performance in order to compare the results of this year's cohort.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

School of Sociology and Social Policy
Sociology and Social Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Sociology, BA Sociology and Social Policy, BA Social Policy, BA Social Policy and Crime, Joint Honours BA Politics and Sociology/Social Policy, BA Sociology and International Relations; various modules

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Outgoing DSE on behalf of the Head of School

Faculty / School of:

SSP

Address for communication:

SSP

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 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

No issues arising

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

No issues arising

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:

We will ensure we send a picture of the programmes and how the modules fit, as requested

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:

No issues arising

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:

No issues arising

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:

Regarding the issue of transparency on marker reconciliation of dissertation marks – we have sought to structure this into the form filling process and will ensure consistency in completion of this – reminding colleagues of the importance of clarifying how they arrived at a final mark if there was an original discrepancy between them.

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 arising

Other comments

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

We are pleased with the very positive comments throughout. We also note the positive commendation of how we managed the strike action and supported students throughout, and communicated clearly with you as external. May I also take this opportunity, o thank you so much for all your work and your support through the year; it is greatly appreciated. I am sorry you had to miss the Board but we will look forward to welcoming you here next time.

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 02/07/2018

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

Title and Name of Examiner: _____

Faculty / School of:

School of Sociology and Social Policy

Subject(s):

Sociology and Social Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

UGR – range of modules

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

BA/BSc

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

Some good modes of assessment. Good to see the use of a range of practices, e.g. blogs, posters, reflective logs. I also think the module 'Beyond the University' is exemplary and offers the students an outstanding opportunity to engage with local organisations and in doing so contribute to the local community and enhance their own employability skills.

Enhancements made from the previous year**Matters for Urgent Attention**

Too much of the material sent is not anonymised. Most worrying is the disclosure of detailed and very personal mitigating circumstances which are circulated in the Board minutes. These are meticulously recorded and noted which is excellent but the details should not be shared and should be seen only by the minimum number of staff (chair plus support?) and recorded confidentially elsewhere. This is also possibly a GDPR issue.

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?	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
A well-designed programme with real strengths in contemporary social policy which give the programme a distinctive edge as compared to other sociology programmes.		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
This is a real strength of the programme(s). As an external who has a good knowledge of staff expertise it is easy to see how current research in the school is reflected in the teaching and programme design.		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i>		
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
The range of assessment methods is broad and students have a varied selection of assessment types appropriate to the module in question (e.g. design a poster for local community users of a service as part of the employability module).		
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 examined a range of work from the strongest through to the weakest students. Overall performance was generally good with evidence of some very strong student producing a high standard of work. This was particularly evident at the dissertation stage.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

Feedback is generally detailed and extensive. However, I am not sure how useful some of this is to students. I would like to see feedback that is more 'directed'. It may be helpful to introduce a more structured proforma for markers that asks for specific feedback on areas for improvement and strengths of the work submitted.

I did not see in any comments students being directed to additional support services – I would be interested to know what kind of provision is offered to Leeds students.

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
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30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
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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?	N

Re: Q35 I commented above that I do not think this information should be circulated. Recommendations for degree classifications in the case of borderline students are often, in my experience, made in advance of the meeting and presented to the Board and the examiners as recommendations. This practice would ensure that the awarding board runs more smoothly at the same time as encouraging discussion of borderline cases.

The criteria for the final award classification seem more complex than is necessary (perhaps a software issue?). It was not always easy to see how the application of the criteria had led to the recommendation of a classification that was awarded. Staff understood the criteria and how to apply them – there was no issue with this – but I wondered if the software needs refining to make this process easier.

Other comments

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

Three additional points:

- 1) The professional services support from _____ and team is outstanding. Extremely well-organised and efficient and it makes life much easier to have one, single point of contact _____ who answers queries promptly and accurately. _____ is a credit to the School.
- 2) The clear explanation of the way that the impact of the strike had been assessed and measured was very welcome. The process seemed to be clear and well thought through. It was evident that the staff responsible for this process _____ (and team) had gone to great lengths to ensure that no student was disadvantaged in any way by the industrial action.
- 3) The samples from Leeds are all sent by mail. In my experience most institutions now do this all online which makes life easier. Is this something that Leeds is considering?

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

QAT Received 19/02/2019

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Sociology and Social Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All SSP programmes, various modules

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Outgoing DSE on behalf of the Head of School

Faculty / School of:

SSP

Address for communication:

SSP

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

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Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

No issues arising

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

No issues arising

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:

Regarding materials sent: this is all anonymised until marking has been completed; names are added to enable straightforward returns of feedback to students.

Regarding the Board: we have noted the concern about what is shared in exam board minutes: we will review our procedures here at the start of the 18-19 academic session through the Student Education Team and STSEC in light of this.

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:

No issues arising

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:

No issues arising

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:

It is observed that we give detailed feedback but that it might be more directed and we could consider a more structured pro-forma which specifies strengths and areas for improvement. These headings are on our normal feedback pro-forma, and we do seek to provide very tailored feedback, so it is helpful to hear this is not deemed to be wholly consistent. The 'strengths/weaknesses/areas for improvement format has been partly displaced through online marking practices (although we think this provides opportunities for very tailored feedback which the students utilise more fully than single feedback sheets). We will review the observation in relation to the modules you looked at specifically and consider this issue through the School Student Education Committee, and keep it under review.

We will also review practice in respect of steering students to support services.

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:

Thank you for the observation, we will review procedures as described above.

In respect of degree classification criteria, we can share this comment with the Pro-Dean and collect views on whether there is scope for enhancing transparency.

Other comments

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

Thank you for the very positive comments.

Regarding the paper copies, will liaise with you this coming session since you should be able to access all work and marking etc online.

May I take the opportunity, , to than you so much for all the work you have done over the last year and for your ongoing support; it is greatly appreciated!