

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 15/11/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Medicine and Health

Subject(s):

Psychology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programme: MSc Psychological Approaches to Health MPsysc, BSc Advanced Psychology.
Modules: PSYC5902M, PSYC5906M, PSYC5907M, PSYC5908M, PSYC5912M PSYC5909M

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

MPsysc Psychology, MSc Psychological Approaches to Health

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Good to see continued use of the detailed feedback grid for the systematic review module. This provides students with excellent guidance about what needs to be included and how well they have done at each aspect.

Really good to see the use of assessment tasks that require students to apply their knowledge.

The student self-assessment sheets were really useful and potentially valuable for students. It was interesting to note that these were not particularly closely aligned with the assessment marks given

Enhancements made from the previous year

It was clear to see what work was moderated and how this was done and that it followed the code of practice.

Matters for Urgent Attention

None

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

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

I looked at a range of the M-level modules on this programme along with . Undergraduate level work on the programme was assessed by and .

The programme is well structured with a wide range of assessment which require students to apply their knowledge.

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)

Research clearly underpins all aspects of the programme and students undertake research and learn about research methods and analysis as part of the programme. Academic staff make clear links to their own research.

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
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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.

There is a good range of assessment methods employed on the programme and students are generally able to achieve excellent performance in the assessment tasks indicating high quality teaching. Students receive detailed feedback about how to improve and where they have done well.

In one module: PSYC5912M Psychology of Patient Safety one part of the group work was assessed by peer review. The peer reviewers marks were higher than that of the tutors and this artificially raised the marks for the task overall. While peer review is valuable as a learning experience and feedback from peers can be useful I would recommend that the peer marks are not used for grading this task.

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

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:

Students demonstrated good performance that might in part reflect that fact that they were selected based on their achievement at the end of year 3 (at least 2i). The standards are comparable to other institutions.

There are a number of group presentations that are assessed within modules and I noticed that the marks for this work were very similar across groups. While group tasks are excellent for developing team working skills they can mean that marks do not reflect the abilities of students well such that weaker students do better and stronger students do worse. While these tasks only ever contributed a portion of the module marks, the extent to which students are able to demonstrate their skills and abilities within these tasks should be considered.

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

Students on this MPsych programme undertake an M-level project that has a lower credit rating and is done in less time than the M-level project taken as part of the MSc. It is not clear what differs between the projects in terms of the expectations of the students and how this difference is taken into account in assessment criteria and marking. I would urge the team to reflect on this.

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

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

We considered one case at the exam board where a student had less time to complete an option module because of the different timetables for the two programmes. The team should consider whether these choices should be made available to students if they are likely to be disadvantaged in doing so.

We considered one borderline distinction case at the exam board. The marks overall were, to my mind, indicative of a merit given that only 2 modules (systematic review and project) representing 85 credits were at distinction level and some of the modules were at only a pass. However the code of practice document indicated that we should focus on three specific modules: systematic review, project and advanced research methods. Based on this guidance we discussed and concluded that the student should receive a distinction because the marks for these three modules were primarily at distinction level.

The ability of academics to make subjective judgements about whether students on the boundary should receive the higher mark or not (except where there are mitigating circumstances) is quite unusual. The practice in many institutions is to award the higher mark when a student is on the borderline only when 90 credits are at the higher level. This means that the decision is based on objective criteria. The danger otherwise is that the decision is based on factors such as the people who are in the room at the time and other factors which mean that the decisions may not be made consistently and fairly, I would strongly recommend that the course team consider making a change to the code of practice in this regard.

Other comments

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

I would like to thank the course and module team for their excellent organisation of the examining process and communication about various aspects of my role.

It was not possible for me to properly moderate presentations. While I saw the feedback and marks and could agree that these looked appropriate and consistent I was not, for most modules, able to see the slides and/or video recordings of the presentations. This would be helpful in future years.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Psychology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programme: MSc Psychological Approaches to Health
 Modules: PSYC5902M, PSYC5906M, PSYC5907M, PSYC5908M, PSYC5912M

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

MPsyc, BSc Advanced Psychology, MSc PATH

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

Psychology

Address for communication:

University of Leeds

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. 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

Thank you for your positive comments on the use of the detailed feedback grid for the systematic review module. We are delighted to read that you rate the guidance it provides as excellent. We were also pleased to read your positive comment about the application of knowledge that is required by our assessment tasks. Furthermore, it is useful to note that the students' own self-assessment of their marks do not always match with their actual marks since a closer alignment would perhaps increase student satisfaction in the area of assessment and feedback.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Thank you for the positive comment on the clarity of our processes in relation to moderation. We are pleased that this has improved since last year.

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:

N/A

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:

We are happy to read the positive feedback on standards, particularly in relation to our wide range of assessments, our research methods training and research led teaching. We are also happy to note that you deem all aspects of our programmes to be clearly underpinned by research, including the research of our staff.

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:

Thank you for your positive comments about the good range of our assessment methods and the level of feedback received by the students. We were delighted to note your comment about excellent student performance indicating high quality teaching.

We have noted your comments about the contribution of peer review to the marking of group work in the Patient Safety Module (PSYC5912M). Your recommendation that peer review should not be used for grading the task will be passed onto the module leader.

We have also noted your wider comment about how group work might not be particularly useful for differentiating between weaker and stronger students. We have considered this in the mark weighting, for modules that include these tasks, to ensure that (within a module) the weighting of group tasks is less than or equal to that of individual tasks. However, we will reflect on the extent to which students are able to demonstrate their skills and abilities within group work.

We also note your comment about the difference between the MPsync (5908M) and MSc research projects (5909M) which are 40 and 60 credit modules respectively. MPsync students start their projects in semester 1 (having been allocated to a project during the 3rd year of the undergraduate programme) whereas MSc students are allocated a Project during semester 1. The MPsync project is therefore undertaken during semesters 1 and 2 whereas the MSc project is undertaken during semesters 2 and 3. The assessment of each module also differs in that MPsync students also deliver a poster presentation whereas MSc students deliver a PowerPoint presentation in their respective conferences. MSc students also complete a 1000 word project proposal which counts for 10% of the overall module mark whereas MPsync students are assessed 100% on their dissertation. Both dissertations are 10,000 words maximum and so do not necessarily differ much in terms of size and scope. You note that it is not clear what differs between the projects in terms of the expectations of the students and how this difference is taken into account in assessment criteria and marking. These comments will be passed onto the module leader and we will reflect on this before the next academic year.

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 overall positive evaluation of this process.

We have noted your comment about the issue that one student experienced when studying an elective module because of the different timetables for the two programmes and whether these choices should be made available to students if they are likely to be disadvantaged in doing so. We have, however, revised our masters programmes for 2018/19 to replace the elective module with a new in-house module on Advances Research Issues in Psychology.

In relation to the point about academic discretion being subjective, we considered this at our Taught Student Education Committee (which is why our response to this report has been delayed). The committee agreed that a change be implemented such that it will, in future (in line with our UG criteria) be necessary for a student to achieve at least 90 credits (50%) the higher category for the award the higher class in borderline cases.

Other comments

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

Thank you for your comment about your inability to properly moderate presentations the slides and/or video recordings were not available for all of the presentations. We will pass this comment onto the relevant module leaders and endeavour to provide this for all presentations in the future.