

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 04/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:	Leeds University Business School
Subject(s):	Business Analytics
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BSc Business Analytics 1525, 1530, 2920, 2931, 2940, 3200
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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

Points of innovation and/or good practice

n/a

Enhancements made from the previous year

n/a

Matters for Urgent Attention

n/a

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?	N
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?	N

<p>The degree programme only began 3 years ago and has just seen some of the first cohort graduate. Not enough time has elapsed for significant improvements to the programme to have taken place; it has been more a question of bedding in the programme and modules. I have had responses to comments and there have been some changes for the better. In the main, the modules are interesting and well designed, marking is accurate and fair, the standard of work of many students is very good, and the administration of the programme is excellent. Looking ahead I suggest consideration of the following:</p>

- More work needs to be done on providing high quality feedback, on the annotation of assessed work, and on providing clear evidence of second marking (other than a tick on a mark sheet);
- Attention should be given to the strong similarities in exam papers from year to year as this encourages question spotting. I suspect this partly explains the very high number of firsts awarded in some modules. It would be better to set assessments that can discriminate between students so that a more normal distribution of marks is produced. I feel there is something wrong with an assessment if 80% of students can gain a first class mark;
- Consider the change to the module 'analytical methods' (LUBS1525), which looks now like a module in introductory statistics. This change may well leave students less well prepared in data analysis as they enter year 2. I doubt it is appropriate for Business Analytics students to do a module in introductory statistics (that could be given to anyone on campus needing stats in their degree); rather they should have something especially designed for them, as was the case until 2017-18.

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
<p>The programme is 3 years old (and has produced its first graduates). The structure of the programme is sensible, with a combination of core and optional modules. Modules are well designed and cover all key areas of the subject. The programme aims to develop analytical skills that can be applied within a business context to enhance evidence based decision making. It is clear how the learning outcomes relate to skills to be developed, to programme aims, and to the modules being studied. The aims and learning outcomes are suitable for the level of the award.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p>Most of the modules I deal with are first and second year modules. Therefore, I would not expect to see academic research feature strongly in module content or in learning and teaching. There is a project taken by final year students, which gives students an opportunity to do a piece of independent research. I noted last year that the assessed coursework for module 1520 is an excellent example of how to incorporate academic research into the curriculum (even at first year level). It is a pity that this module does not appear to have been offered this year. The programme was the better for it.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p>Assessment strategies and methods comprise a mixture of examination and coursework, with some modules being 100% coursework and others 100% examination. The assessments are appropriate given the programme's intended learning outcomes and aims. It seems that work has been second marked though the evidence for it is limited in some cases (only a tick on a mark sheet). As noted last year, there should be clear evidence of internal moderation, including annotation on work where applicable.</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>Module assessments are appropriate to the level of the award: the assessments I surveyed were pitched at the right level and they were fair. Most of the assessments provided a good challenge to the most able students and all students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of key concepts, methodologies, and quantitative techniques. If students work hard and do what is asked of them, they can do very well. Those students who choose not to engage properly will rightly be found out. There was evidence of very good work in all modules and I believe the standard of performance to be as good as on comparable courses. Very few students performed badly. Quantitative skills are excellent in some cases and generally good, while written answers and answers requiring interpretation were solid rather than inspiring. Examination papers were well designed and were a good test of students' knowledge. However, I do notice that certain exam papers are rather similar from year to year, which increases the likelihood of question spotting. This in turn is likely to lead to a mark distribution that is skewed at the top end. The percentage of 1st class marks in some cases is very high. I would recommend less predictability in the assessments so that students are tested more on their understanding of the whole of the module content. First marking appears to be accurate, fair and consistent (but see below about feedback). As noted above, I did not see clear evidence of second marking.</p>		
<p>I noted last year that I was concerned about the quality of feedback in some cases. This year there has been an improvement but more needs to be done. Specific comments are in the respective module reports. There should be comprehensive and constructive comments on assessed work. Effective feedback on work is crucial in helping students learn by pinpointing where they may have gone wrong and what they need to do to improve. Feedback by annotation should be standard practice in all modules. It is not the job of an external examiner to be a third marker; an external should be given suitable guidance on how a mark has been arrived at and be told where a student has gained or lost marks and why. There needs to be clear and detailed annotation on coursework and exam scripts should continue to show where marks have been lost or gained.</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?	n/a
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	n/a
Regarding 29, see comments above; regarding 31, see module report; regarding 33, due to the late change of date for the Board I was unable to attend.		

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):

Business Analytics

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BSc Business Analytics
1525, 1530, 2920, 2931, 2940, 3200

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

BSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Director, Centre for Decision Research

Faculty / School of:

Leeds University Business School

Address for communication:

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 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

N/A

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:

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:

Thank you for your input during the initial establishment of the programme.

We will note your suggestions for more evidence of feedback and marking. The issue of similarities in exam papers between years has been investigated and action taken. Be assured that all modules do go through a moderation process for both exams and assignments, which we take seriously, but this is not second marking in the full sense. Specific comments might not be added by the moderator if they have identified no issues with the initial marking.

We are sorry you did not favour our changes to LUBS 1525. Although this module has always been statistics based (indeed statistics is a core skill for an analyst and is widely used commercially a part of analytics), we have had difficulties in the past at Level 2 with a relatively poor grasp of statistics among students. Given this, and the fact

few students arrive with statistics knowledge from school studies, we feel the more direct focus on statistics will provide students with the knowledge they need going forward.

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:

Thank you for confirming you feel our programme is coherent and meets its learning aims and objectives. Student do indeed undertake a research project at Level 3, and this will allow them to demonstrate their abilities in independent research. I am pleased to confirm that LUBS1520 has not been removed from the programme.

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 will note your suggestions for more evidence of feedback and marking. Markers will annotate where the reasons a response is not correct are not clear. Markers are also encouraged to annotate as time allows. The issue of similarities in exam papers between years has been investigated and action taken.

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 positive feedback on the progression and awards process.

Other comments

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

N/A

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 25/06/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Leeds University Business School (LUBS)

Subject(s):

Management

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programme: BSc Business Analytics
Modules: LUBS 1785, LUBS 2765, LUBS 2785, LUBS 3885, LUBS 3895, LUBS 3950

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

BSc

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

Points of innovation and/or good practice

I like the generic feedback that's given on exam scripts that haven't reached a pass mark, as the feedback is informative for students to help them improve in the future. Similarly, it's good to see generic comments on coursework assignments concerning what students need to do better to improve on future assignments.

Enhancements made from the previous year

I noticed that some of the coursework assignments I reviewed had some in-text comments on them, which is something I have recommended previously. I also noticed the presence of some 'feedforward' comments in the generic/summary comments section on some coursework assignments, which is something I have recommended previously.

Matters for Urgent Attention

None

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

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

I'd like to thank everyone I've dealt with at LUBS over the last 4 years for their hospitality, friendliness and professionalism in accommodating me as an external examiner. It's been a privilege to serve as an external examiner for modules on the BSc Business Analytics programme and it's a role I shall miss undertaking dearly.

The programme is well-run with robust assessment procedures and standards. The programme comprises suitably challenging and innovative assessments that are effective at discriminating among students. The quality of the work I've assessed on the programme is generally good, with some really impressive exam question answers and coursework assignments produced by students with marks of 70 and over, which is testament to the good quality of students that take modules on the programme.

I've always been satisfied with the marks awarded on modules and feel that the quality assurance procedure adopted for marking assessments on the programme is commendable, with an effective record being kept of how marks are arrived at, for example. Although I've rarely seen more than a handful of marks in the '1*' category (80-100%) awarded on all the assessments I've reviewed, which seems a little out of kilter with the very good quality of some of the assessments awarded between 70% and 79% (often no more than 75%) and the generic/summary comments on some '1' category assessments which are sometimes very positively-worded (e.g., 'an excellent essay' – that gets a mark of 72%). Given the high quality of the students the programme tends to attract, I would recommend that markers are more disposed to award 80s or even 90s for assessments that might, at present, attract marks in the 70s.

I've made recommendations regarding markers providing more extensive and more informative feedback to students on coursework assignments since the start of my period of appointment. I have seen some good improvement in this respect over the years, with some 'feedforward' generic/summary comments being evident on a number of scripts and a handful of in-text comments on several of the assignments submitted through Turn-it-in. However, I still feel that markers could provide more in-text comments on coursework assignments (maybe even one per paragraph?) as there are still some assignments that contain only 1 or 2 comments; this would be especially beneficial for students that haven't got such good marks, although all students (weak and strong) would I'm sure appreciate more 'pointers' regarding what they did well and not-so-well and what they need to do to do better to improve their performance in the future.

Overall, I believe the very good quality of learning and teaching provision on the programme has developed in a positive manner during my term as an external examiner and I commend all who teach on the programme on doing a fine job.

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
The programme is well-designed and does well in meeting its intended learning outcomes. The programme seems to run smoothly and efficiently, with robust procedures being adhered to.		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
In the scripts I reviewed, I didn't see any obvious evidence of the influence of research, although I'd imagine that the final year modules on the programme are based around the research interests and expertise of the lecturers.		
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> N/A		
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> N/A		
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> N/A		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
The assessment methods seem appropriate to their ILOs in terms of their structure and design. The modules are marked fairly and rigorously in line with good practice principles. The quality of the work produced by students across the modules is generally very good and indicative of the good academic quality of students on the programme.		
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
The students typically produced good quality work across the modules, with some really good pieces of work being evident among the samples I reviewed. Not being involved in other Business Studies programmes, I cannot comment on the relative performance of LUBS students to students on comparable programmes at other HEIs.		
My more generic comments are in the free-text box of Section 7 above. I made some specific comments on the confirmation sheets I completed at the Validation Day for the individual modules I reviewed, so please refer to those sheets. Overall though, I was impressed with the spread of marks on the modules I reviewed, with a good few firsts and hardly any fails evident. Similarly, some of the in-text and generic/summary comments on coursework assignments were informative, which is something I've recommended previously there should have been done more. Finally, there was some annotation on some of the exam question answers I reviewed, which is something I recommended previously as being good practice for dealing with student queries regarding exam marks – it makes it easier to see where they went wrong and so justify the marks awarded; I hope the practice of annotating continues and becomes the norm on all exam scripts in the near future.		

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?	Sometimes

30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	N/A
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	N/A
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?	N/A
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	N/A
I had planned to attend the assessment board meeting (which was due to take place on 21 June, the day after the Validation Day, which I attended), but the date of the board was changed to 26 June just over a month beforehand (I received the email on 17 May) and I was unable at that point to rearrange my diary to attend the assessment board.		

Other comments

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

None

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Decision Research

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programmes in this area related to the BSc Business Analytics and Discovery Modules
 LUBS178501 Intro to Effective Decision Making
 LUBS276501 Advanced Management Decision Making
 LUBS278501 How Managers Make Decisions
 LUBS388501 Management Decision Making
 LUBS389501 Applied Management Decision Making
 LUBS395001 Current Issues in Decision Making

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

BSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Director, Centre for Decision Research

Faculty / School of:

Leeds University Business School

Address for communication:

Leeds University Business School
 University of Leeds
 Leeds
 LS9 2JT

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

Thank you for positive comments on our feedback to students who have failed assessments. Our aim in both cases is to help the student do better, either in a resit or in future work.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Thank you for noting our take-up of your earlier suggestions.

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 are pleased to note there are no urgent matters.

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:

Markers are encouraged to comment as time allows.

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:

Thank you for confirming you feel our programme is coherent and meets its learning aims and objectives.

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 on our assessments and the standards of our students work. It is good to hear you feel it has developed in a positive manner during the time you have been with us.

Staff will be made aware of your positive comments on their work – many thanks for recognising their efforts. They will also be made aware of your comments on the low numbers of marks in the highest grades, and encouraged to reward the efforts of our high performing students.

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:

I note your comments about the timings of the Progression and Awards Board being arranged in a different week. The amendment of the exam board date was primarily guided by the industrial action and the potential impact on student's assessment. The faculty had to be assured that all necessary measures had been taken to ameliorate any impact caused by the industrial action. This meant undertaking a rigorous analysis of all modules and programmes and re-visiting our internal quality assurance processes. Alongside the analysis and review of the potential impact, the faculty felt that a clear split of the assessment board and award and progression board would allow a rigorous reflection of the cohort and individual student marks at each meeting, also affording extra time to act upon any issues that may have arose. This additional measure would add a level of agility to our meetings and secure the same level of robustness to our processes. The timings should be back on track this year.

Other comments

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

N/A