

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 02/01/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Food Science and Nutrition

Subject(s):

All modules in MSc programmes

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programmes: Food Science and Nutrition; Nutrition
 Modules: FOOD5174M Diet and CV Health; FOOD5045M01 Microbiological and Chemical Food Safety; FOOD5280M Functional Foods; FOOD5405M Professional Development for Employment and Research; FOOD5196M Impacts of Food Processing on Nutritional Quality; FOOD5340M Food and Cancer; FOOD5410M Nutrition Policy and Practice; FOOD5425M Personalised Nutrition; FOOD5510M Applied Nutritional Epidemiology; FOOD5515M Nutrition through the life cycle/life course; FOOD5071 Research Project

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

MSc Food Science and Nutrition, MSc Nutrition

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.

Very much like the format of the research project report – good to see the format in a scientific paper. Also excellent to see such a wide range of experimental and research skills displayed in only 12 samples viewed.

I also liked the coursework for Food5410m Nutrition policy and practice. The use of a study covered in the media was very good and I think the students will have gained a lot from this.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

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

I have written the main points for attention in the box underneath standard #19.

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.

As with previous years, the quality of the programmes remains high. Learning outcomes are relevant but should be considered against the many assessments the students take. The programme team should consider if all assessment components are necessary and are mapped to competencies (especially for MSc Human Nutrition).

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)

Scholarly activity and research is clearly embedded in the teaching and assessment of both programmes. This includes content in exams, critical analysis of research for coursework, and supervision of research projects by research active staff.

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

The final research project provides ample opportunity for students to develop research-specific skills that would enable them to apply for PhD positions.

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N/A
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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)?	Y
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

For MSc Human Nutrition, the course is accredited by the AfN. It is clear through the assessment and learning outcomes that the content of the programme continues to meet the PSRB requirements (although please note comments later regarding compensation).

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><i>The assessments for both programmes are good, however some modules have a lot of assessment components. This means that staff involved in the assessment are under an increasing amount of pressure to turn work around and under tight deadlines. I would encourage all involved in the delivery of the programmes to look at assessment and consider the need for multiple assessment components. These assessment components also pose problems for accredited programmes such as MSc Human Nutrition, as each component must be passed in order to pass the module.</i></p> <p><i>There are some interesting observations that have arisen from module leader summaries this year, in particular around why students picked certain topics and avoided others.</i></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><i>Overall there continues to be a high level of academic quality demonstrated by students on both programmes. I have been particularly impressed with the sample of dissertation work that I viewed this year.</i></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><i>There are some specific observations for the team to consider:</i></p> <p><i>It has been very useful to have module summaries and also a commentary from the module leader. These have been very insightful and helped make sense of the marks and performance of the students.</i></p> <p><i>Food Science and Nutrition</i></p> <p><i>FOOD5280 Functional Foods.</i> <i>Evidence of question picking with few (n=3) students attempting question 3. The ML noted in their comments that the small number of students attempting Q3 was likely due to this being the first time this topic had appeared on the exam and that students were not prepared for it. This raises questions as to how students prepare for exams, especially as the topic to this question was covered in lectures.</i></p> <p><i>FOOD5241 Structure and function of food components</i> <i>Large standard deviation in the exam component of this module, suggesting wide ability in this topic.</i></p> <p><i>FOOD5270m Food Analysis</i> <i>Module leader suggested revision was low in this module, as this is not a “compulsory to pass” module. Students may sacrifice this for other modules. This raises the important point of the value of this module if it is not compulsory. Equally I would imagine a food analysis module <u>is</u> fundamental to a food science MSc.</i></p> <p><i>FOOD5055m Food Processing</i> <i>Half marks are awarded but this will be investigated. Also, as stated Q7 on water treatment was a new question which students did not favour due to past similar examples. We will review this aspect to identify to students that all material should be revised as potentially examinable.</i></p> <p><i>Human Nutrition</i></p> <p><i>FOOD5510m Applied Nutritional Epidemiology</i> <i>This module has 4 assessment components which I feel is too much. Students and staff never get a break for assessment. I had seen 38 questions during the exam paper moderation yet the exam contained 40. I had suggested to reduce the number of questions or extend the time for the exam. I also observed 7 fails in the MCQ</i></p>		

component of this module. Did these students resit the failed exam in order to pass the module or did they “compensate”?

FOOD5515M Nutrition through life-course

As per AfN Core Competency S3c – “compensation, trailing and extended re-sit opportunities within and between modules where core competences are assessed (all modules within this programme) are not permitted”. The programme team must ensure that assessment is mapped accordingly and that students are not able to compensate for failed pieces of work. I would appreciate a response directly to this point.

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:

#29. There is variation in how markers add comments to documents. This was most evident in the research project module. Some markers provided in text comments whilst others wrote a paragraph at the end of the work. I feel some consistency is needed on this.

There was good variation in the research projects viewed, and this is a reflection of the wide backgrounds the academic members of staff have. It really does provide the students with an excellent opportunity to engage with and undertake research which is fundamental to both degree programmes.

Other comments

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

There were a few issues this year relating to the marks for the research project. This seemed to relate to students on the MSc Food Science and Nutrition programme. Marks on Turnitin and Minerva were not consistent. I have been informed of how this happened and am satisfied that this will not happen again.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

All modules in MSc programmes below

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programmes: Food Science and Nutrition; Nutrition
 Modules: FOOD5174M Diet and CV Health; FOOD5045M01 Microbiological and Chemical Food Safety; FOOD5280M Functional Foods; FOOD5405M Professional Development for Employment and Research; FOOD5196M Impacts of Food Processing on Nutritional Quality; FOOD5340M Food and Cancer; FOOD5410M Nutrition Policy and Practice; FOOD5425M Personalised Nutrition; FOOD5510M Applied Nutritional Epidemiology; FOOD5515M Nutrition through the life cycle/life course; FOOD5071 Research Project

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

MSc Food Science and Nutrition, MSc Nutrition

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

Food Science and Nutrition

Address for communication:

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

The school continually seeks to develop teaching methods which encourage independent, creative and critical thinking and which also require the integration of existing knowledge to produce critical and rational objective enquiry. It is appreciated that the modules FOOD5071M and FOOD5410M are recognised as providing innovative platforms to assess these attributes

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:

Recognition of AfN core competences is an essential aspect of our programmes, consequently the observation of the **AfN Core Competency S3c – “compensation, trailing and extended re-sit opportunities within and between modules where core competences are assessed (all modules within this programme) are not permitted” will be verified and mitigated where appropriate.**

Response - We will ensure that no assessments are the sole contribution to any of the core competencies so it will not be the case that a student will not meet the competency if they do not pass all components. Obviously if they failed 2 components then they would fail the whole module. Noted that there are 4 assessments in nutritional epidemiology but we are planning on submitting a request to reduce this module to one semester with one piece of coursework and one exam. There were very few core competencies related to nutritional epidemiology.

The school will ensure all elements of multiple assessment components will be made available to EE for future assessments. These may be provided by hard copies but some instances this may require online evaluation.

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:

External Examiner observations are appreciated in particular with relation to AfN core competencies and module assessment.

Programme/module reviews will endeavour to ensure appropriate assessment is conducted to satisfy learning outcomes and to minimise assessment duplication and maintain relevancy and the school will make any necessary changes to programme/module content to facilitate this aim.

Consideration of appropriate structure, content, delivery, support and assessment to a diverse student cohort is an important issue. We will continue to enhance new material, technologies and learning approaches to ensure optimal delivery and assessment strategies. In particular, the school will evaluate coherence and relevance of examination formats across programmes. Standards are routinely assessed at programme/module level to ensure compliance to School CoPA and accommodate any changes raised at faculty or university level.

EE comments relating to embedded nature of scholarly activity and research is acknowledged, this aspect is important in providing blended approaches to teaching and assessment methods.

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:

The detailed comments supplied much appreciated in providing an independent objective assessment. The School regularly reviews assessment and assessment type to ensure that learning outcomes are examined at appropriate levels and which also ensure compliance for accreditation purposes.

The rigour of the assessment methods and their relevance to learning outcomes is important in supplying coherent feedback to students. The school is implementing standard formats for module handbooks to ensure consistent delivery to students and which will include information relating to marking criteria to inform correspondence in attainment levels and improve clarity in assessment and feedback.

Please accept our apologies that all assessment components were not accessed. We will ensure that any assessments provided electronically/online or via Gradebook will also be made available and in these cases evaluation may be conducted remotely prior to the EE appointment visit.

The specific observations and issues highlighted have been examined at programme level and the reasons have been identified or the following agreed actions have been suggested to resolve the issues relating to assessment and feedback.

EE findings;

FOOD5280 Functional Foods.

Evidence of question picking with few ($n=3$) students attempting question 3. The ML noted in their comments that the small number of students attempting Q3 was likely due to this being the first time this topic had appeared on the exam and that students were not prepared for it. This raises questions as to how students prepare for exams, especially as the topic to this question was covered in lectures.

Response

Additional support is to be offered to the students in the form of 4 hours of tutorials on exam questions and answer techniques which we envisage should improve exam performance.

FOOD5241 Structure and function of food components

Large standard deviation in the exam component of this module, suggesting wide ability in this topic.

Response

Additional support is to be offered to the students in the form of 4 hours of tutorials on exam questions and answer techniques which we envisage should improve exam performance. In this module the results are indicative of an appropriate discriminatory question but be checked for content and level.

FOOD5270M Food Analysis

Module leader suggested revision was low in this module, as this is not a "compulsory to pass" module. Students may sacrifice this for other modules. This raises the important point of the value of this module if it is not compulsory. Equally I would imagine a food analysis module is fundamental to a food science MSc.

All our modules are currently under review for 'pass for progression'.

FOOD5055M Food Processing

Response

Thank you for your comments on this module.

The addition of a new exam question/topic to the exam will be highlighted and appropriate advice offered.

Additional support is to be offered to the students in the form of 4 hours of tutorials on exam questions and answer techniques which we envisage should improve exam performance. In this module the results are indicative of an appropriate discriminatory question but be checked for content and level.

Nutrition

FOOD5510m Applied Nutritional Epidemiology

This module has 4 assessment components which I feel is too much. Students and staff never get a break for assessment. I had seen 38 questions during the exam paper moderation yet the exam contained 40. I had suggested to reduce the number of questions or extend the time for the exam. I also observed 7 fails in the MCQ component of this module. Did these students resit the failed exam in order to pass the module or did they "compensate"?

Response and action. Programme and module leaders will be assessing module content and duplication of content and will rectify any content repetition issues and ensure appropriate examination level and formats are applied.

FOOD5340m Diet and Cancer

Good number of fails in this exam (n=13; similar to last year). Content is rigorous and covers both cellular sciences and population nutrition. In theory covers a lot of competencies. I did note some half marks awarded. See comment above regarding using half marks.

Response and action. Programme and module leaders will be assessing module content and duplication of content and will rectify any content repetition issues and ensure appropriate examination level and formats are applied.

FOOD5515M Nutrition through life-course

Observed 2 students who failed the coursework component but passed overall.

As per AfN Core Competency S3c – "compensation, trailing and extended re-sit opportunities within and between modules where core competences are assessed (all modules within this programme) are not permitted". The programme team must ensure that assessment is mapped accordingly and that students are not able to compensate for failed pieces of work. I would appreciate a response directly to this point.

If this means elements of assessment are reduced/removed from the programme as a whole then I am happy with this.

Response - We will ensure that no assessments are the sole contribution to any of the core competencies so it will not be the case that a student will not meet the competency if they do not pass all components. Obviously if they failed 2 components then they would fail the whole module. Noted that there are 4 assessments in nutritional epidemiology but we are planning on submitting a request to reduce this module to one semester with one piece of coursework and one exam. There were very few core competencies related to nutritional epidemiology.

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:

Recognition of the range and variation in projects is acknowledged and appreciated as this particular aspect requires significant consideration by project supervisors and the module lead to accommodate areas of interests of students.

Response

Point 29 is acknowledged and we will endeavour to provide a consistent approach in commentary and in validation of assessment.

Other comments

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

The issue relating to disparity between Turnitin and Minerva has been fully investigated and has been resolved. On cross-checking, there were limited discrepancies which were initiated where projects required re-evaluation to agree acceptable grade differences. In addition, due to staff retirements/changes, the agreed amended marks failed to be recorded despite having been resolved.

We have agreed a strategy to cross-check and authenticate grades to ensure the issue does not repeat.

