

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 26/06/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Education

Subject(s):

Childhood Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Childhood Studies Programme/ EDUC3350 Child Welfare and Young Children, EDUC3040 Critical Debates in Childhood and Youth: Research, EDUC 3042 Supporting Learning in Children with additional needs, EDUC3805 Dissertation, EDUC2102 Approaches to Research: theory and practice, EDUC2104 Psychological Approaches to Understanding and Supporting Children's Learning, EDUC2604 Literacies and Learning, EDUC 1208 Play and Learning, EDUC1207 Children's Rights and Social Justice, EDUC1203 Children, Young People, Families and the State, Educ3903 Children, Families and Cultural Diversity, EDUC2401 Inclusive Education, EDUC2100 Health, Wellbeing, Childhood and Youth, EDUC2101 International Perspective of Pedagogy and Practice, EDUC1015 Introduction to Study in Education, EDUC1204 What is a child? Child Development and Learning, EDUC1205 What is a child? Social Constructions of Childhood, EDUC 1214 Children and Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.

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 am a new external examiner so have noted the following areas of good practice, though have not been involved in instigating them this year.

The introduction of standardisation marking at the beginning of the marking process, a record of which is provided along with the second marking (moderation) on the feedback sheet for several modules.

The constructive and detailed feedback provided across almost all of the modules, with very good consistency within modules and across different modules.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Employability officer (Placements now an option for Childhood Studies students, which was commented on as a positive development by the students I met)

External speakers in lectures (mentioned as a positive by students I met).

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

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For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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 only

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

<p><i>Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School</i></p>

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><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>This module draws on various disciplines under the umbrella of Childhood Studies, a breadth that is appreciated by students that I met. A particular strength is the way that the core modules are enhanced by Optional modules that allow students to follow their particular interests, including Discovery modules, which again were praised as a strength of the course by students.</p>

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>There is very good synthesis of research, including theoretical perspectives, with practice. This is evident for example in the way in which the two are brought together in the assessments, so that the research is applied to practice, as in Literacies and Learning where students devise an activity, then justify it in terms of theoretical perspectives and research. Students also have the opportunity to conduct an empirical research study in the double Dissertation module.</p>

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
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<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
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: the design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.</i>		
<p>I scrutinized a range of student assignments across mark bands and modules and was able to confirm all marks. A range of assessments is used, with a good mixture of traditional methods, such as the essay (as coursework or an exam) and more contemporary forms, such as a blog or a videoed presentation. Where this seemed to work particularly well, a combination of methods was used, though I understand the university is moving towards single points of assessment, which will work against this practice.</p> <p>Feedback was almost without exception full, detailed and written in a constructive and positive tone, across all mark bands. When this feedback was written under the headings of the assessment matrix, this was particularly clear and informative, particularly if a feed forward section was included at the end of the feedback with suggestions for improving future work. It would be good if this could be applied consistently across modules.</p> <p>In just a couple of modules, the feedback was less full and less constructive in tone. In these modules, there was also less guidance on the assignment available on Minerva (EDUC 3350 and EDUC 2101).</p> <p>I had some questions over the way in which Turnitin is used to support students to avoid plagiarism, and consistency in the application of the university and School of Education's approach which I discussed at the external examiner meeting with the Head of Undergraduate study.</p> <p>It would be helpful to distinguish on the feedback form in some way whether a module has been second marked (as in moderated) or whether it has been double marked, as in the dissertation, as this then influences whether one would expect to see different marks between the markers, resolved after discussion in the final mark awarded (double marking) or the marks confirmed (second marking/ moderation).</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
<i>Please comment on the academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses; the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort:</i>		
<p>The academic standards met by the students were adequate for the level of study, and in the case of the most highly performing students, were excellent in comparison with students on comparable courses. Generally the standard was of a good quality, though there were a small number of students who performed less well in written assessments. The full range of marks were used.</p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

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

Other comments

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

The programme team including the administrative team have ensured that the external examining process runs extremely smoothly and efficiently, and their commitment and enthusiasm for the programme was evident when I met staff and students at meetings organised around the exam board yesterday. It was a pleasure to discuss the course with staff who were responsive to feedback, and keen to further improve the student experience and the quality of the course. I was particularly grateful that a meeting with students had been arranged, as though there were just a few still on campus, their perspectives were very valuable in informing discussions with programme leads. I would like to thank all the academic and administrative staff for their ongoing support of my role.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Childhood Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Programme Leader, BA Childhood Studies

Faculty / School of:

Education

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) must be sent 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

Much work has been undertaken over the academic year to streamline feedback and to ensure standardisation processes are working smoothly so it is pleasing that this is recognised by the new External Examiner.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

The External Examiner mentions the Employability Officer who has been in post for the whole of this academic year and has a key role in securing placements (both module-embedded and other) for the students. The support that the Employability Officer is offering to our students is superb and is greatly enhancing the student experience and will continue to support their employability and graduate destinations. The team will continue to use external guest lecturers where relevant as this is clearly popular and useful.

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:

The successful linking of theory to practice is commented upon by the Examiner – this is an important component of many modules and can be enhanced by relevant guest lecturers, as per the comments above.

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 mix of methods of assessment meets the approval of the examiner, although is less certain about the university wide practice of moving towards **reducing** assessment– a concern that I as Programme Leader share particularly in the first year of study; this is something which needs to be discussed at the relevant programme level meetings. Overall the assessment guidance and feedback is praised, but for two modules (EDUC3550 and EDUC2101) the examiner notes that feedback is less constructive and the guidance less detailed. The undergraduate teaching team need to work to further streamline feedback. Note that in terms of assessment guidance much of this is also be provided in focused seminars rather than (only) through the Assignment guidance form – this was certainly the case for both of the modules in question.

The programme team will discuss clarity on the distinction between double marking and second marking with the admin team to ensure that the processes that has taken place is transparent.

There is an increased focus across the programme on academic skills support in response to the fact that some students are performing less well on written assignments. It is important that this support begins from the beginning of year 1 in order to “level the playing field” by the end of the first year. Consideration of a widening participation demographic also needs to be taken into account and it may be appropriate to see if targeted support work with skills@library or other central services can support students through the transition to higher education to ensure that attainment is maintained and improved.

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:

n/a

Other comments

Response to items included in the ‘Other Comments’ section of the report

It is pleasing to note that the external examining process is running smoothly and that the examiner found the team to be responsive and keen to further improve the student experience and quality of the course. On behalf of the team I would like to thank the External Examiner for constructive comments.