

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 13/11/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Sociology and Social Policy
<i>Subject(s):</i>	
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	MA diet including interdisciplinary MA and MA in Social Research Methods – Dissertations; Qualitative Methods; Quantitative Methods; Working beyond Disciplines; Researching Society and Culture
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	MA

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

Points of innovation and/or good practice

The focus on interdisciplinarity is important, particularly given that many or even most of the students will have careers at least in part outside the Academy. I thought the general tenor and the character of teaching in the module: Working beyond Disciplines, was particularly good in this respect.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Not applicable

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

Need to resolve how marks are incorporated from modules in other schools – procedure for this year should work but this needs sorting out in principle.

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?	N
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

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 by ESRC
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y
<p>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>MARM programmes across social sciences in UK Universities are somewhat standardized given the need to meet ESRC requirements for 1+3 programmes. Most Leeds programmes in this School follow this format and do what they do well. The Interdisciplinary programme is an important and innovative departure from this norm. I think this is tuned to the future and very much to be encouraged.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p>Leeds has a good and deserved reputation for innovation in methodological work. The influence of this was clear in modules on these programmes. I wonder about the possibility of introducing a collective work element to recognize the collective nature of much research as done. This is at this stage a thought but worth considering.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / N
<p>I don't think this applies but please correct if I am wrong.</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y / N
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p> <p>Again not quite sure if the ESRC recognition is meant here but if so then the programme does fulfil the necessary criteria.</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p>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.</p> <p>Generally I think this is done although there could be more emphasis on the actual practice of research as it is done. This is by no means meant to imply that fundamental methodological issues should not be central to assessment but there might be some</p>		

more variety in forms and a recognition of the contexts beyond the Academy where social research is done. The actual community of practice is now much wider and the way assessors assess should take this into consideration. I say this to make a point. In terms of a strict answer to the question set, the answer is YES.

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

Standards at Leeds are high and comparable with other MARM and related courses on which I have examined. I do think there is an issue in minor key in relation to high performances where I would place more issue on the actual understanding of the research process as opposed to the content of research projects. This is a point in relation to dissertations. This is an issue everywhere and Leeds is no outlier. Standards are good and much more than adequate.

A clear position must be established in relation to work done by students working in a second language. Again this is a general issue across UK taught Master's programmes and by no means specific to Leeds. I find it somewhat odd that students can (correctly of course) claim special treatment on the grounds of disabilities but that the issues of working in a second language seem to attract no concession. My own view is that provided the work is coherent, correct and conveys arguments and understanding adequately, minor grammatical infelicities should not matter. I would distinguish here between assessed work at Masters level and final Ph.D. submitted theses. The latter are public documents and should be proof read to a standard of good literacy in English but MA assessed work for me is different and does not require that high standard.

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?	N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	NA
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 MA projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the MA 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

Other comments

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

Sooner or later we are going to have to stop using a 30 mark range for the distinction at MA or First at undergraduate level. I keep saying this in the hope that it may lead to change but so far without result.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Dissertations; Qualitative Methods; Quantitative Methods; Working beyond Disciplines; Researching Society and Culture

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MA and MA in Social Research Methods

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

MA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

Sociology & Social Policy

Address for communication:

University of 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) must be sent directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at gat@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 highly interdisciplinary nature of the MA Social Research (interdisciplinary) creates a series of complex challenges for the programme team, so I am pleased to see their work recognised. I note the positive feedback for Working Beyond the Disciplines and will ensure staff are informed.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous 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:

We have met with the graduate school and taken a number of actions to ensure there are not similar problems again in the future.

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:

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:

I am pleased to hear recognition of the excellent work my colleagues in the field of methodological research. We will continue to consider how this reputation can best feed into student education.

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:

I am working with _____ on establishing our position on work written in a students second language. Your comments above are very informative and will be taken into account.

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:

Other comments

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

I will raise your concerns with our Pro-Dean for Student education and when I see him next I will discuss them with the chair of our University working group on marking and classification.