

The University of Leeds  
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QA Team received 16/07/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of  
Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Sociology and Social Policy

Subject(s):

Sociology

Programme(s) /  
Module(s):

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

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.

Each year I receive a very warm welcome from all staff and throughout the year I have excellent contact with , and also this year with . Open communication makes life as an external examiner reassuring, transparent and effective for building positive relations.

It was found that staff across all modules provide first class feedback on student work. And also, some tutors awarded marks of 80. This is to be commended - where a student has reached the very top quality of academic ability. Feedback for students was not only constructive but fully engaged with the debate that a student was seeking to undertake analysis on – demonstrating clear commitment to the core aims of each module.

Within modules and also applying to the Dissertations students completed work that was exceptional and showed much diversity. This was shown for example by a student's excellent bibliography and at other times by extensive empirical or textual research.

In Gender, Technologies and the Body, there were excellent pieces of research from the Guitar to Prosthetic limbs.

In all modules there were an excellent range of topics covered, but also, there was a focus on the highly contemporary issues of 'Employability': here staff need to receive praised for the manner in which students critically engaged in understanding this topic as both a practical area of relevance and also a part of neo-liberal ideology. First class thinking and engagement.

In general, the work that was sent to me which included - Dissertations, Central Problems in Sociology, Education, Culture and Society, Gender Technologies and the Body, Sociology of Culture, Health and Society and Debates in Childhood and Youth - students undertook creative

and innovative work showing the development of their sociological imagination. In order for students to complete such work and succeed it is clear that they receive positive pedagogic relations with staff, also demonstrating that staff are committed to all students across all grades

#### Enhancements made from the previous year

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

I have mentioned before that student work should include visual material or visual evidence to support the direction of their assignment if relevant. This has been undertaken by a selection of students and could be further built upon for next year.

In Sociology we need to remember that the Chicago School of Sociology under Park and Burgess, which professionalised our discipline in their classic studies of the 1920-1930s used photographs, maps and related visual images to enhance sociological theory and studies.

#### 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

There was one main issue this year which related to a number of missing examination scripts in Central Problems in Sociology. In discussion with \_\_\_\_\_, Deputy Head of School, it was agreed that to resolve the problem, whereby the School would follow the *University Mitigating Circumstances Committee*, to offer the students the following choices:

- to allow the mark for the first assessment (essay) to be counted as 100% of the module mark
- to give students the option to take the exam as a first attempt in August
- to consider any anomalies at the Exam board.

I have confirmed the course of action set out by \_\_\_\_\_ and the School and applaud the School for its transparency and honesty with which this issue has been both discussed and resolved.

Overall there were a few minor issues, but it would be more valuable to make recommendations for improvement rather than criticism:

1. In the meeting prior to the Board I raised the issue of one particular grade comment on one student essay - was wholly negative. It was pointed out that perhaps these comments could have been turned around to be more positive offering degrees of how to improve.
2. It may be useful for staff to reflect on the whether the grade awarded is subsequently confirmed within the written comment. A few times it was found that some students gained a high mark, by the comments specified that they had made errors. It needs to be stated that this represented only a minority of cases.

3. There were a small number of students across modules who did not do very well. Either gaining a fail or very low pass. It is clear that these students do not possess what Bourdieu called the 'academic stylistics' and thus require more specialised academic support. I'm sure that support in the School is already available for these students, but perhaps staff could reflect on current delivery of material and sessions for students as they move through each cohort to help improve their abilities.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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 only

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	YES
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	YES
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	YES
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	YES

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?	YES
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	YES
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	YES
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	YES
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	YES

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

<p>Overall, each of the modules where I have seen work, the students are set challenging assignments which require creative, intellectual and real hard work. Staff are to be applauded for trying to stretch their student's capabilities. If truth be told students also enjoy have their abilities tested and it shows to the students that staff are committed to them.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	YES
<p>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)</p> <p>In the School all staff do excellent research, and this should form part of what staff actually teach. Staff should include their published research work in the bibliographies of modules where relevant, so that their creative input features in the curriculum and student learning.</p> <p>It is well known that students are exceptionally positive towards staff who publish work in the areas that they are studying.</p> <p>Furthermore, as mentioned before it might be an advantage for students to be aware of different external examiner's research work related to particular modules, both , and myself have written extensively about issues focused on research methods, education, gender and also young people's culture. Especially so on the Gender, Youth and Dissertations modules.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	NO
<p>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y / N
<p>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</p> <p>The grades and marks were overall accurate. The range of assessment was broad and also the diversity of assessment enabled students to develop a range of critical skills.</p> <p>I raised just a minor point about possible discrepancies between the grade awarded and the comments in the box.</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>		

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	YES
<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>Within and across modules there is an excellent range of different types of assessment including examinations. While never that popular, examinations do retain a positive element of measurement and should be retained alongside other mechanisms of assessment.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	YES
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	YES
<p>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:</p> <p>Many staff were very positive towards students who gained low marks and outlined for them how to improve their work but also staff recommended that student contact them for a discussion on how to improve their work for the next academic year.</p> <p>It may be worthwhile considering if this sort of tutorial meeting could be extended to students who gained a mark of 70 and above to ensure that they know exactly how and why that gained such excellent grades.</p> <p>Staff used the full range of marks, include over 80, please continue this on the basis of exceptional and outstanding work.</p>		
<p>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</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?	YES
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	YES

22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	YES
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	YES
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	YES
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	YES
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	YES
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	YES
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	YES
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	YES
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	YES
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	YES
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	YES
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	YES
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	YES
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	YES
Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:		

### Other comments

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

Examination scripts: a series of examination scripts were sent to me and looking at these scripts it could be recommended that perhaps examinations should be undertaken on computer because some of the hand writing was particularly difficult to read. Further, if examinations were undertaken on computer this would have removed the problem of the missing examination scripts.

For the last 15 years I have examined undergraduate student work at a number of different universities on comparable sociological courses, it can be confirmed that work by students at the University of Leeds corresponds with other student work. Both formative and summative responses from staff were first class and the employment of the marking criteria was used effectively and consistently.

Consolidation of the visual in sociology, as mentioned already, last year I recommended that staff encourage students to employ more visuals in their assignment as a source of evidence to support argument. This year one of the highest marked dissertations included visuals. This was productive. I would like to recommend more consistent use of visual where they make an additional claim as relevant or contextually related evidence.

And at the same time, it would be productive to see module handbooks equally use visual both on the cover and inside the module handbooks. Some modules booklets look exceptionally dry and could be made more exciting and attractive with some visual sociology.

The School needs to be commended for the high number of awards for students who do outstanding work and gain an excellent prize for their efforts. Awards are positive and act as a good source of motivation amongst students.

### Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

**Sociology & Social Policy**

Programme(s) / Module(s):

SLSP2180 Sociology of Culture, SLSP2062 Health and Society, SLSP2730 Central Problems in Sociology, SLSP3160 Education, Culture & Society, SLSP3500 Gender, Tech and the Body, Dissertations

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

**EL/Sociology & Social Policy**

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 [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto: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

Thank you for recognising the innovative character of our student work. The ability for students to choose to write about innovative topics and succeed is a source of pride for the school. I am also very pleased that you have recognised the quality of the feedback our staff provide to students as I know staff put considerable effort to ensure that students are supported in improving the quality of their academic work. Recognising the contributions of and is too very pleasing as they are key members of our school who work tirelessly to ensure an excellent student experience.

#### Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

I note that some students have deployed visual evidence in their assessments, but agree with you that such material could be more widely utilised in student work. I will cascade your comments here down to module convenors.

## 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:

I want to thank you for your support and understanding in which you supported us through the difficult circumstances that occurred in relation to the Central Problems in Sociology exam. I am pleased that you appreciated our transparency and honesty.

Overly negative comments in feedback and comments that do not reflect the mark awarded have been handled in group discussion at our school meeting about marking, and smaller discussions with relevant staff about the marking process and the giving of feedback are ongoing.

## 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 agree with that you my colleagues produce excellent research papers. Ensuring the visibility of the work of our academic community (including external examiners) in the modules that we deliver will be touched in a school meeting later in the year.

## 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 agree with that students enjoy being intellectually challenged, I think this is persistently underplayed in the sector. Your suggestion that students who achieve over 70 should receive a 1-1 tutorial so they understand why they have attained such excellent grades is interesting. We routinely encourage all students to come to our open doors to discuss their feedback in more depth, it is my experience that students at either ends of the poles of attainment are the keenest to do so, with students achieving marks in the upper ends of the first often being particular keen as the desire to do better still is often insatiable.

## 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 want to thank you for thoughtful interventions throughout the award board that helped the board conclude some complex discussions.

## Other comments

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

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 01/07/2019

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

Social Sciences

*Subject(s):*

Sociology & Social Policy

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

Programmes: BA Social Policy & BA Sociology (and associated programmes)

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

As above

**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.*

These are excellent programmes developed and delivered by professional and dedicated academic and professional service staff. The modules are timely, relevant and enable students to engage with a range of contemporary sociological and social policy issues while not losing sight of the core tenants and values of a social science education at HE level. All modules are excellent and, in different ways, highlight the value of a sociology or social policy degree to the wider world. See further comments below.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

In my view the second marking/moderation process continues to be made more transparent. There also seem to be more support for/checks on less experienced markers. These are both very good to see.

**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*

none

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment only**

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

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment only**

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?	Y
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	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*

These were very good programmes when I joined as External Examiner. In my view they have continued to develop, with new teaching and learning materials, innovative and challenging assessments, and improvements to procedures (particularly around moderation). Students continue to be treated fairly and the various University rules & regulations always adhered to at the Progression and Award Boards I have attended.

## 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.*

See comments below

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)*

See comments below

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:*

N/A. However, I should think students are very well equipped for this thanks to the excellent training in critical thinking, opportunity for independent work, and research methods modules. The quality of the Dissertations I have seen suggest that many students are certainly capable to PhD level study

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.*

See comments below

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:*

See comments below

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

See comments below

### 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?	N/A
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:*

See comments below

## Other comments

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

### Programme structure and content/Standards

- In my opinion, these are excellent undergraduate programme. Modules are well designed, interesting, relevant and robustly assessed. All standards are appropriate for the awards under consideration and meet the AQA benchmark requirements.
- Given the quality of module design across the programme, I am reluctant to single out particular modules for particular praise here, but the support provided to students completing the Dissertation is outstanding. This year (once again) students turned in some brilliant work and it is good to see that empirical sociology continues to fascinate students. The Dissertation module is well designed and delivered and, in my view, continues to be better than similar modules at competitor institutions. 'Sociology and Public Policy Beyond the University' was another notable module, mainly for its ability to get students out into the world and for its engaging method(s) of assessment. A lot of excellent marks awarded on the on Research Methods module, particularly for quantitative skills and I hope these students are encouraged to do quantitative-based dissertations in the future

### Assessment and feedback

- Teaching and learning materials are well developed; marking and feedback transparent, justified and fair. I believe the programme offers a good quality teaching and learning experience for students. In all modules the assessments aligned with the learning outcomes without restricting students to pursue their own interests.
- Students have ample opportunity to demonstrate the full extent of their learning and understanding. Their work is comparable to (and often better than) that produced by students on other programmes I am familiar with. Based on the samples of work I reviewed students by and large receive constructive feedback and are encouraged to perform as well as possible.
- The teaching team continue to see a good range of assessment styles that not only assess pedagogic progress, but also provide opportunity to develop employability skills.
- Marking and feedback is generally good and usually engages with what the students have written. There is very clear evidence of second marking in operation. I like the forms that have been introduced to support this process. Going forward, it was not always clear to me whether a process of 'moderation' or 'second marking' was in operation, and the teaching team may want to ensure there is consistency of purpose as well as practice here. It is also unclear what might happen if a first and second marker disagree about an assignment (outwith the Dissertation module, where procedures are clear). If first and second markers disagreed by, say, over 10% (which was the case in one example I looked at), would other assignment marks awarded by that marker, or within that grade boundary also be checked? I would hope so, but it is not necessarily obvious to me that this either would, or does, happen as a matter of course.

### Progression and Award Boards

- This was well attended by knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. It was chaired very well. Good time was given to the consideration of complex cases. In my view all students were treated fairly. Knowledge of the University's rules and regulations was outstanding. Administrative input/support was excellent.

This is my final report as an external examiner. It has been a pleasure to have insight into the ongoing development of such good programmes. Students undertaking degrees in sociology and social policy can leave the University of Leeds safe in the knowledge that they have had access to an excellent teaching and learning environment. All staff involved in teaching delivery, management, professional services, and other student support roles should be proud of what they do to deliver the best student experience possible. I wish all the team, and their programmes, well in the future.

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Sociology &amp; Social Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

SLSP2150 Debates in Childhood &amp; Youth, SLSP3242 The Social Life of Data, SLSP2040 Disability Studies, SLSP2010 Research Methods, SLSP3930 Sociology of Consumerism, SLSP2975 Social &amp; Public Policy, Dissertations

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

EL/ Sociology &amp; Social Policy

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](mailto: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**

I am particularly pleased that you consider all of our modules to be excellent and to show the value of degrees in our subject area. Recognising the professionalism of academic and Student Education service staff is too hugely pleasing.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

Thank you for recognising our attempts to make the marking process more transparent. We will continue to provide support to new markers as they traverse the transition to marking in our school, I acknowledge that in the last year we recruited a large amount of new staff and thus said transition was as well supported as has been previously.

**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:

**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:

I am pleased that you believe treat students fairly and that our programmes have continued to improve during your term as external examiner. The school will continue to work to improve our student education offer to be the best it can be.

## 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 have introduced a quantitative methods pathway to our degrees. This has proved to be more popular than we were expecting we will continue to encourage students who achieve highly in this area to conduct a dissertation that deploys quantitative 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:*

Cases of the engagement of a third marker are brought to my attention via the dissertation tutor and I follow up with staff as necessary. From here on the dissertation tutor will check the marking of other dissertations when a colleague has requested a third marker.

## 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 recognising the knowledge of the process the quality of the charring this year. As you note there were a number of complex cases that needed to be handled with care and precision.

## Other comments

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

Throughout your time as our external examiner you have been a thoughtful and helpful critical friend. The quality of our student's education has been improved by the rigour in which you have conducted this role and we wish you well in the future, and miss your role in our academic community. Thank you.

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 04/07/2019

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

School of Sociology and Social Policy

*Subject(s):*

*Sociology and Social Policy*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

BA Sociology, BA Sociology and Social Policy, BA Social Policy, BA Social Policy and Crime, Joint Honours BA Politics and Sociology/Social Policy, BA Sociology and International Relations

*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.*

As with last year, overall I was impressed with the standard of teaching at Leeds including the range of assessments and detailed feedback provided by staff to students and also the level of work undertaken by students doing sociology and social policy at Leeds. There is indication of students critically and reflexively engaging with the modules and assessments. The assessments were all very engaging and contemporary for students. It was also good to see the links in assessment and modules between sociology/social policy and practice in the 'real world' being explored in the students' work, which fits with expectations around skills and employability. The teaching, assessment and administration processes and procedures are all examples of good practice. There appeared to be staff commitment to active engagement with students in relation to their learning and providing robust and detailed feedback for assessments.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

N/A

**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*

N/A

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment only**

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 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
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 found the Sociology and Social Policy Levels 2 and 3 programmes and module structure and content to be impressive and well designed. It meets the disciplinary benchmarks and national standards. The modules that I examined were all of a high quality and standard. The programme structure is in line with general expectations for sociology and social policy programmes across England. The aims and learning outcomes were clear and tested appropriately via the various assessments on modules. In sum, I examined the below modules and dissertations:

### Semester 1:

#### **SLSP3120 Disability Rights and International Policy**

I was sent a selection of essays from across the grade banding to examine (6 in total) and the second marker's comments. I was in agreement with all of the grades. This was a really innovative and interesting assessment to examine in terms of the detailed and critical independent research that that students were required to conduct to inform and develop their case study / evaluative policy document. There were some really impressive case studies, particularly those at the higher end of the grading (78 and 80). I was also really impressed by the meticulous and detailed nature of the marker feedback given to students. I appreciated being able to view the online feedback and moderation comments for this and other modules.

#### **SLSP2020 Crime, Law & Regulation**

I was sent a selection of essays from across the grade banding to examine – 11 in total. Overall there was a clear spread of marks and I was in agreement with the grades awarded. Again, some really impressive and strong pieces of work in the upper grades (i.e. 78). The rationale for the grades was clearly explained via the online feedback provided to students and the second marker comments.

### Semester 2:

#### **SLSP3211 State Crime and Immorality: 5000 word essay**

I was sent a sample of 9 assessed essays to examine for this module which represented a distribution of grades across the bandings. I was in agreement with all of the grades awarded. Some very impressive, original and critically analytical case studies on examples of social harm, immorality and crimes of the powerful, at the higher end of the gradings. I really enjoyed readings these. The weaker essays contained grammatical errors, issues with structure and were more descriptive than analytical.

### SLSP2953 Urban Disorders

I was sent a sample of 8 assessed essays and 8 feedback sheets for the oral presentations. The assessed essays were been appropriately graded and I confirmed the grading for these. I was confused as to why the feedback sheets were sent for the presentations, but no Power Point slides of the presentations? Last year I was sent the PowerPoint slides. If I'm required to review the feedback for the presentations it might be helpful to send the slides too to assist with this. This was raised at the programme board for next year.

### SLSP2690 Racism, Ethnicity and Migration

I was provided with a sample of 10 essays to examine. I confirmed the grades. Some very weak essays at the lower end of the scale which were cobbled together and do not engage with readings, academic debates, etc. And very impressive well written essays at the higher end of the scale – i.e. on Brexit.

### Undergraduate Dissertations

I was sent a sample of 12 dissertations for Sociology & Social Policy which reflected a spread of marks across the grade bandings, from 50 to 86. I confirmed all of the grades. This was an impressive selection of students' work which includes original and innovative studies on i.e. Trumpism and white masculinity, and cosmetic surgery in South Korea. I enjoyed reading students' work. The 86 dissertation was an especially impressive analysis of Trumpism and the performance of white masculinity. As noted by the markers, this work was almost at a publishable standard.

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)*

There is clearly an aspect of research-led teaching in the modules I examined in relation to module design being informed by research in the subject, although sometimes this was implied rather than made explicit in the module documentation. Students were encouraged in the majority of assessments I examined to undertake their own research via i.e. case studies, literature reviews, and also in the final year dissertations. The higher grade final year dissertations which I examined were very impressive, and the highest graded dissertation as noted by markers was of a publishable standard.

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.*

As with last year, this year's assessments were appropriate for the modules and levels. They were challenging and assessed a range of skills and abilities. There was an excellent mix of varying assessment styles – i.e. group presentations, essays (of varying lengths) and case studies.

It was very helpful to see the moderation/second marking comments. However, it is still not clear to me if the process is second marking OR moderation, and what happens if there is disagreement with the grades?

The classification of awards was transparent and fair. There seems to be a large number of first class degree awards this year, which was apparent at the programme board. As I wasn't at the board last year I cannot compare year-on-year, however in terms of the sector average more generally there seems to be a high number of firsts awarded.

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:*

As noted above, the classification of awards was transparent and fair. There seems to be a large number of awarded first class degree awards this year, something I noticed at the programme board. As I wasn't at the board last year I cannot compare year-on-year, however in terms of the sector average more generally there seems to be a high number of firsts. However the students did appear to be a strong cohort from the module assessments I examined and the grades I confirmed.

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

### 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?	NA
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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>I was concerned that changes to the allocation of dissertation supervisors in the students' final year were being used as 'mitigating circumstances' to change students' final degree classifications if they were borderline. In my view this sets a dangerous precedent and I have not encountered this practice at any other HE institutions in the UK (thus far). I would advise that further discussion of this is necessary at institutional level to ensure a standard policy is in place to deal with these kinds of cases. There was an in-depth discussion of this in the programme board and external examiners were consulted, but there were a variety of different views about how these cases should be dealt with and no consensus was reached (although in some cases student's grades were changed to enhance their classification, and in others they were not).</p> <p>I also felt uncomfortable being provided with the names of those teaching staff / supervisors, and details of their sick leave, personal circumstances, etc. that led to supervisor changes in the documents provided at the Programme Board. This information would have no bearing on me being able to do the role of EE so it isn't required or appropriate for me to have knowledge of this.</p>		

**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):

Sociology &amp; Social Policy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

SLSP2020 Crime, Law &amp; Regulation, SLSP3120 Disability Rights &amp; Int Policy, SLSP2953 Urban Disorders &amp; Soc Control, SLSP2690 Race, Ethnicity and Migration, SLSP3211 State Crime &amp; Imorality, Dissertations

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

School of Sociology and Social Policy

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 [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto: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**

Thank you for your kind comments regarding the contemporary character of our assessment strategy and its engaging nature. It is also very pleasing to see that in the work you saw students were making links to real world issues. We will continue to provide detail feedback to students and will work to improve its quality.

**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:

**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 particularly pleased that you were able to read the dissertation on Trump and Masculinity. That piece of writing was exceptional. I note that you were not sent PowerPoint slides with the feedback sheets, we will ensure this happens in the future.

## 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:*

If second markers cannot come to an agreement with the first marker, we send these to a third marker whose decision is final. Regarding the number of firsts awarded at our board, I cannot comment on the sector average for this year but in previous years we have below the Russell Group average in the awarding of firsts, exceeding this for the first time last 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:*

I am sorry to hear that you have had concerns about our usage of mitigation in relation to students who had their supervisor changed multiple times throughout the year. I have discussed this with our Pro-Dean for Student Education and he is comfortable with our actions.

We did not change any grades in the exam board, the exam board is unable to do this. We did however model how circumstances could have impacted upon the students based upon the recommendation of our mitigating circumstances committee; then on basis of such modelling we made decisions about the student's classification. Such decisions are within the remit of how mitigating circumstances digression operates at Leeds.

I am sorry that you did not think a consensus was reached around a number of cases and if you were unhappy I would like to discuss this further with you if you can time for a phone conversation, as I take this matter very seriously.

We have no noted your comments about staff leave and other personal circumstances and will operate higher degrees of anonymity in the future.

## Other comments

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

# The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 03/07/2019

### Part A: General Information

#### Subject area and awards being examined

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	School of Sociology and Social Policy
<i>Subject(s):</i>	<i>Sociology and Social Policy</i>
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	Range of UGR modules
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	BA/BSc.

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

#### Points of innovation and/or good practice

*Some of the Handbooks are excellent. Engaging, well-written and clear instructions/guidance.*

*The dissertation sessions are very well-structured and students are clearly very well-supported with their research work.*

*There were examples of 'feedforward' comments to students which were constructive.*

*Good range of assessment types, e.g. blogs, posters, reflective logs.*

#### Enhancements made from the previous year

*I noted last year that there was not enough anonymisation of scripts and I was concerned that too much personal information was being shared. I was pleased to see that this had largely been rectified and MC details are no longer shared.*

#### 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*

#### **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?	Y

#### **For Examiners completing their term of appointment only**

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?	Y

7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y
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*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*

*Overall very satisfactory.*

## 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.*

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)*

*This continues to be a real strength of the programme(s). Current research in the school is reflected in the teaching and programme design and this shines through in the choice of dissertation topics – it is clear that the students are inspired by the research-led teaching and the enthusiasm of staff for their own research.*

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:*

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.*

*The range of assessment methods is broad and students have a varied selection of assessment types appropriate to the module in question, for example, being asked to produce a reflective portfolio rather than completing a three hour exam where appropriate.*

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 perform well overall and make good progress in their learning. Standards are comparable to other courses I am familiar with. The strongest students perform very well and seem consistent in their performance. Weaker students receive sufficient feedback on areas for improvement.*

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

*Feedback is generally detailed and extensive and this is a strength I commented on previously. In the module 'Sociology of Work' markers provide 'feed-forward' comments and this is excellent practice. Sometimes I thought there was more room for more structured and specific feedback on areas for improvement and strengths of the work submitted (as seen in the feed-forward example).*

*Last year I commented that I did not see in any comments students being directed to additional support services – this has not changed and I would be interested to know what kind of provision is offered to Leeds students.*

## 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**

It would be useful if the pre-exam board committee felt able to make clearer recommendations to the Board where outcomes are unclear, e.g. on some borderline cases where there are MC's and reasons for poorer performance than expected. A clearer steer on the day would be welcome. Although mark schemes are communicated in advance and explained on the day it can be challenging, as an external, to fully understand the nuances of local mark schemes and the impact of MC on particular individuals. I welcome the opportunity to discuss such cases but a clearer recommendation would be welcome as a basis for the discussion on the day.

As ever I would like to comment on and praise the professional services support from Nicola Dowson and team - they are outstanding. and team are extremely well-organised and efficient. Queries are responded to promptly and accurately, materials are sent out in good time. is a credit to the School.

**Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report****Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)***Title and Name of Examiner:**Subject(s):**Sociology & Social Policy**Programme(s) / Module(s):*

SLSP3995 Ethnicity &amp; Popular Culture, SLSP3065 Quantitative Social Research, SLSP3220 Cont Child, Young and Ppl Fam, SLSP2650 Key Debates in Social Policy, SLSP2050 Sociology of Gender, SLSP2675 Sociology of Work, Dissertations

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

BA

*Title and Name of Responder:**Position\*:*

Director of Student Education

*Faculty / School of:**EL/Sociology & Social Policy**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 [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto: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**

Thank you for identifying the quality of feedback on the Sociology of Work – I will use this an example of model feedback with staff. We are also trying to raise the quality of handbooks overall to match the high standards that you recognise our best handbooks already reach.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

Thank you for recognising are attempts to increase the anonymization of data in the exam board, we continue to work on further improving our standards in this area.

**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:*

**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:*

Your comments regarding the strength of research led teaching and its role in inspiring students is very much appreciated.

