

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT received 25/09/19

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Healthcare

Subject(s):

Social Work

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Social Work
MA Social Work

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

Overall, the standard of the work students produce reflects a high standard of teaching and some of the assessments (dissertation for example are innovative. The reflective work that students produce around practice is particularly impressive.

Enhancements made from the previous year

This is my first year as external so can't comment.

Matters for Urgent Attention

I'm not sure whether it is urgent or not, but I would suggest that consistency of feedback requires to be addressed. See below

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 (didn't require one)

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
<p><i>The overall impression of both the BA and the MA is that they are coherent, work as well as is possible and encourage students to develop their abilities in critical reflection as well as in academic work. I am aware that changes have, or are in the process of being, made but as this is my first year as an external, can't really comment on their impact.</i></p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p><i>Research mindedness is a strong theme throughout the programmes and the undergrad dissertation is an effective integration of research and practice in particular. I have not yet seen primary research undertaken by MA students.</i></p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y
<p><i>From what I have seen a broad range of practice opportunities are provided for students and the work they produce reflects a high level of engagement as emergent professionals. However, the current paper-based portfolio seems to be unwieldy, and worth reconsidering. I recognise this is not easy- my own institution has experienced similar issues- but I wonder whether the assessment objectives might be achieved by a more focussed approach, that requires less written work by the student.</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y
<p><i>As far as I can ascertain both programmes are entirely compliant with HCPC requirements. With a new regulator coming in to being, this may change</i></p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><i>I have no concern about assessment methods as currently configured, although there is a heavy reliance on written assignments or exams.</i></p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y

The academic standards generally across both programmes are high and students are given every opportunity to provide evidence of achievement. Stronger students produce very good work indeed and weaker students work is typically characterised by privileging description over analysis

I have an issue with consistency of feedback. When feedback is good, it is very good, developmental of future learning and supportive of students. At the other end, though, (and I have commented on this in individual modules) I saw feedback that was sometimes very brief indeed (an extreme example was 30 words for one assignment) and from a student point of view it is hard to see how improvements might be made, particularly for students in the middle and upper reaches of progression. I am interested in feedback and would welcome the opportunity to see whatever the University produces centrally in terms of feedback principles. This would be my one significant observation at this point.

The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	N
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y

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

Other comments

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

At this stage I don't have a sense of the student experience and note that this is not something that is considered in the EE report. Previous external appointments I have held have provided an opportunity for student engagement, and this is something I would welcome.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Social Work

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA (Hons) Social Work
MA (Hons) Social Work

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

School of Healthcare

Address for communication:

The University of Leeds
LEEDS
LS2 9JT

Email:

Telephone:

*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

Completing the School response

The completed School response (including the full original report) 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

Thank you for highlighting the innovative dissertation and student reflections on practice as areas of good practice. One of the programme's key aims is to produce reflective practitioners so this is very pleasing feedback. The innovative structure of the dissertation is designed to integrate academic theory with reflective practice so this also plays a part in producing reflective practitioners

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

No comments were made in this section as this is the external examiner's first year of appointment.

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:

The issue of consistency of feedback is discussed below.

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:

We apologise that previous examiner reports were not provided and we will address this oversight. The issue of consistency of feedback is discussed below

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:

Both programmes have recently undergone successful annual monitoring through HCPC audits. Responsibility for regulation has now passed to Social Work England.

The issue of portfolios has generated a good deal of debate in the team and the examiner's comments feed very usefully into this. The team has discussed the possibility of moving to an electronic portfolio which would better meet data protection rules and there University is currently considering an institutional-wide approach to procuring such a system. The team is also discussing the production of a slimmer portfolio requiring less written work from the student. These discussions are on-going and we would be pleased to include the examiner in these conversations.

Assessment and Feedback

Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We note the comment about heavy reliance on written assignments and exams. In the recent revalidation of the BA the team has tried to vary assessments but this is an area we recognised would be worth re-visiting with a view to making changes.

The issue of consistency of feedback is clearly an important one which we need to do more work on. The School has recently made some significant changes to improving standards and consistency throughout its supervision, marking and feedback processes and copies of the relevant documents will be sent to the external examiner. Within the team we are aware of some issues of consistency particularly in modules where different members of the team contribute to the marking. A team meeting is arranged to discuss this issue. The examiner notes that students achieving middle and upper grades need comprehensive feedback as much as academically weaker students and this is an area we will also discuss. Programme specific guidelines for staff to follow when providing feedback will be drawn up as a result of these discussions and will be sent to the examiner for his comments.

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:

No specific comments were made.

Other comments

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

The team would be happy to facilitate opportunities for the examiner to obtain a better sense of the student experience and to meet some of our students. We can invite to our regular Programme Management meetings which are attended by student reps as well as offer more informal opportunities to meet with students when visits the School. We will discuss this with to determine what would consider most beneficial. In addition, we would welcome any further guidance from the examiner on other areas may be particularly interested in.

The team would like to thank the external examiner for support throughout the last academic session, and looks forward to working with throughout 2019/2020.