

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 17/09/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Medicine and Health / School of Healthcare

Subject(s):

Pharmacy Practice Programme and Pharmacist Prescribing

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Compulsory modules for the Pharmacy Practice Programme:

HECS5139M Personal and professional development within healthcare
 HECS5242M Pharmaceutical care: core conditions
 HECS5243M Pharmaceutical care: specialist conditions
 HECS5141M Service development within healthcare
 IOFN5004M Research methods
 HECS5152M Dissertation Module

[Optional modules for the Pharmacy Practice Programme are provided below; the one reviewed during 18-19 is in blue text]

HECS5168M Ethics in contemporary health and social care
 DISC5012M Professional work-based learning
 HECS5008M Accrediting learning from study days
 HECS 5235M Clinical examination
 HECS 5291M Performance Management and Commissioning
 HECS5145M Programme design and delivery for supervisors of trainees in the clinical setting
[HECS5122M Assessment, appraisal and evaluation for supervisors of preregistration pharmacy training](#)
 HECS5237M Introduction to qualitative research methods

Pharmacist Prescribing Programme

HECS 5146M Independent and Supplementary Prescribing for Pharmacists

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

The Pharmacy Practice Programme leads to postgraduate diploma (and certificate) and masters awards.

The Pharmacist Prescribing Programme leads to a prescribing qualification (postgraduate).

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

Points of innovation and/or good practice

- Using patient actors in the OSCEs enhances the authenticity (it helps transform the assessment into a more realistic patient interaction)
- Having access to the virtual learning environment (VLE) facilitates transparency
- Feedback provision exceeds that of other higher education institutions

Enhancements made from the previous year

During 2018-19, I have reviewed significant module change proposals for 'Educational Supervision in the Workplace HECS5319M' and 'HECS 5146M Independent and Supplementary Prescribing for Pharmacists'. The enhancement to these modules was necessary to meet changes in pharmacy and higher education and ensure teaching material and assessments reflected updated guidance and standards from the pharmacy regulatory organisation (the General Pharmaceutical Council). The module teams also wanted to enhance the appeal of the modules to potential students, given the competitive market, and the suggested changes should hopefully help them achieve that aim.

The OSCE team continues to develop new stations and think of ways to challenge students about real issues (such as a busy work schedule preventing a patient from taking her medicine as directed). I review the OSCE stations and my feedback relating to each is largely addressed. The team are currently engaged in introducing formalised standard setting to the OSCEs, having consulted with experts, which should enhance the rigour of the assessment process. Other assessments continue to test students on matters relating to contemporary pharmacy practice, including the ability to be an evidence-based, reflective practitioner.

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 are none. An urgent and pertinent matter is the re-accreditation of the Prescribing Programme. The Programme Lead and her team are in the final stages of preparing the documents for submission to the GPhC in September 2019. This also includes addressing the GPhC's previous suggestions around standard setting for OSCEs.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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

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

N/A – I am not completing my term of appointment

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.

Programme structure and design:

- Logically structured and well organised; there appears to be effective communication with students
- Comparable to other postgraduate pharmacy courses offered
- The design facilitates an academically stimulating and challenging programme

Programme aims and intended learning outcomes:

- The intended learning outcomes are appropriate for the level of the award, and map to the assessments
- These are similar to other postgraduate pharmacy practice courses offered in the UK. A minor point is that some of the learning outcome phrasing in the module handbooks could be improved
- Accredited programme aims and leaning outcomes align with the stipulations of the accrediting organisation (General Pharmaceutical Council)

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
-----	---	---

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 a clear focus on evidence-based healthcare. Students are expected to ensure their clinical decisions are evidence-informed. They are challenged to consider the quality and relevance of the available evidence and integrate local, national and international clinical guidance into their practice and assessments. The students are taught by a module team with research expertise and experience. They also use real world evidence from being in practice as discussion points and questions for students within oral assessments.

Assessments reflect those published in medical and pharmacy educational literature.

Within the Pharmacy Practice Programme there is a research module (and an optional one on qualitative research methods) and one relating to dissertations.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
-----	--	---

Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

The postgraduate Pharmacy Practice programmes are not primarily intended to be a foundational step for doctoral work but relevant transferrable skills gleaned (such as critical appraisal, problem-solving and evaluation) would be valuable for students considering a PhD.

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y
-----	--	---

Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

The Pharmacy Practice Programme (including the Prescribing Programme) provides a variety of learning environments and opportunities. There are taught workshops and lectures in tandem with virtual and work-based learning. Work-based learning is a recommended approach within healthcare disciplines. Module content is pertinent and relevant for practice and adheres to the requirements of the accrediting pharmacy organisation, where necessary. Assessments collectively centre on students demonstrating their ability to identify learning needs, apply knowledge, interpret findings, critically appraise, communicate with others, and reflect. Skills developed as a result of undertaking these programmes should enable students to have a more meaningful impact on pharmacy practice. Feedback provided in relation to assessments is constructive and comprehensive; students can see where they fell short and what is required to address such deficits.

OSCEs are recognised as a robust way to assess clinical competence, explaining why they are used routinely across healthcare courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level. From comprehensively reviewing these stations in my capacity as External Examiner, I know that the deliberate errors reflect patient safety issues and/or highlight real concerns that patients have about medicines.

Much of the Prescribing Programme is dictated by the General Pharmaceutical Council. Given the programme includes the involvement of designated prescribing practitioners in students' learning and assessment, it is important that the module team has robust quality assurance measures in place in relation to these external supervisors. The portfolios are substantial and result in an intense period of marking. While portfolio content cannot be significantly altered, the time commitment for students and staff could potentially be reduced if e-portfolios were used, as is done in other higher education institutions. Therefore, it was encouraging to hear during the year that e-portfolios are being considered by the team. Having an e-portfolio could also potentially eliminate the need to scan large documents for external review.

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)? *Y refers to the Prescribing Programme	Y*
-----	--	----

Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

The Prescribing Programme is well-established and has been accredited from the outset, however, re-accreditation is now pending (submission of all documentation in September 2019 and meeting in November 2019). Firstly, the previous accreditation report (2016) outlines conditions and recommendations; the pharmacy prescribing lead is cognizant of these and has been working with her team and statisticians to ensure they are addressed prior to re-accreditation. Secondly, the GPhC has recently published new standards for this programme which means that further changes to the existing programme have been required. Again, the Programme Leader has led the team in reviewing the current programme against the new standards and changes have been made.

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: the design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.</i></p> <p>As previously stated, the ILOs map to the assessments. The chosen assessment types (such as OSCEs, reflective accounts, portfolios, presentations) are commonly employed in healthcare courses, including being used within the pharmacy profession.</p> <p>With regard to the work I have reviewed, the marking was fair, accurate and included feedback comments. The level of internal moderation was appropriate. Given the Prescribing Programme has new standards and involves 'designated prescribing practitioners' in students' learning and assessment, it will be important that the module team has robust quality assurance measures in place in relation to these external supervisors.</p> <p>On occasions where students were provided with extensive guidance (such as reviewing draft material with subsequent feedback), I might have expected their grades to be better than they were. OSCE mean marks continue to be high, but this may change in the future if new scoring methodology is employed. Other higher education institutions do not include OSCE marks when calculating overall grades (they are recorded as a pass/fail only). The module team has expertise in practice which helps ensure authenticity and that key skills and competencies are being fostered and assessed. This is apparent in the oral presentations I have reviewed where assessors ask relevant questions about patient care or include personal experience and views within discussions.</p> <p>Some minor comments and suggestions are provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be useful if students' oral presentations and OSCEs could be audio-visually recorded for quality assurance purposes, but I appreciate financial constraints may prevent this from happening • Where there are many assessors, it is important to have guidance or a standard operating procedure to ensure consistency of approach. Prior to marking it might be useful to undertake a calibration exercise (calibration of standards) to help with standardisation and support new assessors • Doing post-hoc analysis on the individual OSCE stations (and the complete set) could be useful • Moving towards an e-portfolio would reflect practice and could make completion, marking and the internal and external review process more efficient. Again, I appreciate this will require resources and expertise in digital technology • In terms of the student voice/satisfaction and demonstrating you deem their feedback important, you could prepare a summary sheet of 'you said, we did' comments at programme or module level (if not done already) 		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses; the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort:</i></p> <p>The standard demonstrated by students and the range of performance was comparable to that seen at other higher education institutions. Weaknesses included a lack of high-level skill ability (reflection, critical ability, evaluation) but there were also fundamental issues with referencing. From my experience, these issues are not unique to the University of Leeds, or to postgraduate students. However, since the same weaknesses appear to be recurring, perhaps this warrants further investigation and discussion among the team about ways to potentially address them.</p> <p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>In all the work I have reviewed, the quality and quantity of feedback comments provided to the students is commendable. It should be particularly helpful to students who fall short of the required standard and are required to resit assessments.</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?	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? <i>*I was invited to, and attended, an exam board meeting on 18th June 2019</i>	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:

As mentioned last year, the exam board process and review of samples of student work is different to that of my own institution. We have one annual board with the external examiner reviewing samples of student work over a one or two-day period prior to the exam board. This means that it is easier to get a sense of academic performance and final qualifications of the whole cohort. However, disadvantages of one examination board per annum include the intense review period in a short space of time and lack of flexibility for the students to have results heard outside of a single board.

The only other comment I have is in relation to signing spreadsheets of student marks prior to exam boards and the purpose of the external examiner signing them. I raised this point last year, but I am not querying the number of spreadsheets that need to be signed (or suggesting they are rationalised) but rather the purpose of me signing them. By signing a spreadsheet it almost implies that I am corroborating all of the marks, yet I cannot easily check these for each student. Again, this is different from my own institution where spreadsheets of student marks are provided to external examiners for reference only rather than for 'sign-off'.

Other comments

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

The staff who organise and teach on the postgraduate pharmacy practice programmes are excellent. Indeed, it was great to meet a few of the Pharmacy Practice team in June and I look forward to working with them all again next year. They have been very helpful in terms of communication and organisation around reviewing samples of students' work. They seek out, and are very receptive to, my feedback particularly in relation to assessments. It is obvious that they are striving to enhance the modules and programmes for which they are responsible (including the Independent Prescribing course to ensure successful re-accreditation).

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)***Title and Name of Examiner:**Subject(s):*

Pharmacy Practice Programme and Pharmacist Prescribing

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*MSc and Postgraduate Diploma in Pharmacy Practice
MSc and Postgraduate Diploma in Pharmacy Practice with Prescribing
Independent and Supplementary Prescribing for Pharmacists*Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):*

MSc, PGD

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

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

School of Healthcare

*Address for communication:**Email:**Telephone:***If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.***Completing the School response**

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at qat@leeds.ac.uk. External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

Thank you for highlighting areas of good practice. The team will continue to deliver and enhance the innovation and good practice elements of provision.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

HECS5139M has commenced in September 2019 and the team will review feedback from the first cohort.

The OSCE standard setting is on schedule for full implementation with the January 2020 intake of Independent Prescribing trainees.

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:

A revalidation event for the Independent Prescribing module for pharmacists has been set for 8th November with the GPhC. The team will respond to any recommendations and or conditions arising from this event following this date.

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:

No issues were raised.

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 learning outcomes for HECS5146M are being revised to better match the learning outcomes defined by the GPhC for the Independent Prescribing module for pharmacists.
The University is currently tendering for an electronic portfolio system for use across a number of Faculties. This will be adopted by the prescribing module in due course.

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:

Audio-visual recording of OSCEs has been discussed within the School of Healthcare. This would require a capital expenditure by the School and as such needs to be considered by the School Senior Executive Committee.

The team has planned post-hoc analysis for the Independent Prescribing OSCEs and will keep you informed of the outcome.

The team uses group marking exercises to ensure that there is a common understanding and approach to marking for both written and audio-visual assessments, thus ensuring consistency in marking. New assessors continue to be double-marked by an experienced member of the team.

The team will continue to signpost students to University resources on references and writing skills.

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:

The School operates a number of examination boards throughout the year to meet the progression needs of different programmes and so that students who are unable to complete at the expected time are able to have their results confirmed as soon as possible. This is important to avoid negatively impacting on student employment prospects. Whilst not operating a single Examination Board does mean that it is more difficult to gain an oversight of the cohort's performance at an Examination Board, this is considered by the team, who would be happy to engage in detailed discussion with you on this issue.

The School has gained permission from the central Operations Team to have a simplified process for approving module results, and as a consequence external examiners' signatures are no longer required for results being considered by Module Assessment Boards. (External examiner approval being recognised through the corresponding report form.) It is however a University requirement that the result sheet confirming the final award is signed by the external examiner. This issue has been raised with the central Operations Team and, for the time being at least, the position remains unchanged.

Other comments

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

Thank you for your supportive comments. The team greatly appreciates your efficiency in providing comments on assessments and other reports throughout the year. In particular, we wish to thank you for comments on the revalidation documents for the Independent Prescribing module.