

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QA Team received 18/07/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Psychology

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All psychology undergraduate degree programmes and modules.

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.

The opportunity provided for students to receive one-to-one feedback on examinations.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

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 / 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 / N
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y / N
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y / N
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y / N
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y / N
<p>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>The programmes are coherent in terms of their structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
<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>This is clear from the content of the range of assessments, and the relevance and quality of final year research projects.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / N
<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>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y / N
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p> <p>The courses are aligned to the appropriate subject benchmarks and appear to be compliant with the requirements of the British Psychological Society (the relevant PSRB) for accredited undergraduate programmes in Psychology. Such accreditation is extremely valuable in relation to graduate employability and professional development opportunities.</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<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>The design of the programmes clearly align learning outcomes with assessment.</p>		

18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y / N
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y / N
<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 academic standards achieved by students on the undergraduate psychology programmes are very good and are comparable to academic standards achieved on similar courses in the UK.</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>		

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

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

The examination scripts that I saw had all been annotated with good, helpful notes and comments.

There was a very good range of final year project topics. Occasionally, however, the agreed mark was not supported with adequate justification of the process by which the agreed mark was determined.

The administrative arrangements were very effective throughout the year. I received samples of work and draft assessments in good time to provide feedback and comments. These were responded to very quickly and thoroughly by Module Leaders.

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):

Psychology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All Psychology UG programmes and modules

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

All psychology undergraduate degree programmes.

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

School of Psychology

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. 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

We were pleased for your positive comments on this aspect of our work. Increased feedback is something our students consistently request and this is one of our various efforts made to address this.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

N/A

Response to Matters for Urgent Attention

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

N/A

Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)

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

N/A

Standards**Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

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

Thank you for your positive comments on our overall standards.

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:

Thank you for your reassuring observations on our work in this area.

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 your positive feedback on our processes and responsiveness.

And thank you for highlighting where we could improve on the occasions where you felt that the final year project marks were not supported with adequate justification of the process by which the agreed mark was determined. We will add a reminder to staff on the markers' report forms to address this and will reiterate its importance at our staff teaching briefing day.

Other comments

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

N/A

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 23/09/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Psychology

Subject(s):

Psychology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Psychology UG Programmes

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

BSc

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. Some of the short answer questions in Level 3 examinations are very good examples of how to set challenging questions of this kind

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box. The school has a fairly settled programme now. There have been some sensible tweaks to the assessments in some Level 3 modules.

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?	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
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

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

This is an excellent programme, taught by dedicated professionals who clearly care about their students. I have commented on whether assessments test the learning objectives for certain modules, and I have seen changes in the assessments for these modules. I have looked at the information students have about how assessments are to be marked, and have asked the School to ensure they provide consistent information about similar assessment types, and those suggestions have been acted upon as well. Where I think the School could improve further is in considering the assessment load across years for students. This requires a holistic approach from management in the School, but I think it's something worth taking forward.

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>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>The programme is wide ranging in terms of both topics and assessment types, ensuring graduates are skilled and knowledgeable. The teaching is very research-led and clearly fulfils all of the requirements for BPS accreditation.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<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>Modules are clearly research-led. The students undertake independent research in their third year, and the quality of these research projects is very high.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p> <p>As above – the programme meets the requirements for BPS accreditation in terms of core topics covered and in terms of methodological training</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: the design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.</p>		

The module outlines clearly explain the relationship between learning outcomes and assessment. The outcomes and assessments are well aligned.		
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 standards demonstrated by the students is high. They are tested in a variety of assessments and are therefore able to show their strengths across a range of assessment methods. In some modules it is noticeable that MCQ performance is higher than in essays. This is particularly so at Level 2. This is something I will return to in general comments.</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>		

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

Other comments

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

I have hugely enjoyed my tenure as external examiner at Leeds and would like to thank both academic and support staff for their collegiality and kindness. I have commented in previous years about alignment of assessments and learning outcomes, and about how the school might go about ensuring there is a better perception of consistency in marking from students. One thing that has bugged me over the last few years is the discrepancy between MCQ scores and essay scores in examinations in some modules. This year I paid greater attention to the module and assessment structure at Level 2 and realised there is relatively little opportunity for students to learn about how to write a psychology essay during the year. This is important because it's a key skill to be able to build evidence and argument together into a logical format. Only a couple of modules have coursework essays built into their assessment structure. The rest are assessed by exams, which are a mix of essays and MCQs.

I think I can see the reason for this. There are very large numbers of students on some of these modules, and it's difficult to ensure there is efficiency when marking assessments. However, essay performance at Level 2 is noticeably lower than at Level 3. I wonder if students feel they've been through some kind of baptism of fire in the transition to Level 3 because of the requirement for them to write essays that they have not been trained to do. Part of this problem might be because, understandably, some staff concentrate their assessment efforts on their Level 3 modules, where their specialities are taught. But it seems worth considering whether a more even spread of skills development could be achieved by concentrating more essay writing skills development at Level 2.

I understand that the School timetables tutorials for all students at Level 2 (and possibly elsewhere?) but that the activities carried out in these tutorials are not credit bearing. This seems like an opportunity lost by the School. If staff are having to spend timetabled sessions with students then why not make these more worthwhile for the students. We all know that student effort tends to correlate with credit availability. If you brought essay writing skills development into second year tutorials, then students may work harder to attain those skills, you could cut assessment load elsewhere, and the transition between years would become easier.

We seem to be under greater and greater pressure to give over our time. At Leeds you do that, but I would urge you to do it in a way that benefits both academics and students. If you can tie your tutorial activities into skills development and make that credit bearing, then student effort will go up, assessment load will go down (because you're doing it anyway, and you can cut elsewhere) and student satisfaction will go up (I hope). This requires some reflection on the structure of the degree. A balance has to be found between your effort and the benefits students will receive. But helping with the transition to Level 3 would be useful for everyone involved, I think.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Psychology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Psychology; Psychology (International); Psychology (Industrial)

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

BSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

FMH/Psychology

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

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

Completing the School response

The completed School response (including the full original report) must be sent directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at qat@leeds.ac.uk. External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

We are pleased that you agree it is possible to formulate challenging short answer questions at this level.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Thanks for this acknowledgement of the effort that has gone into the design of the novel methods of assessment being used in Level 3.

Response to Matters for Urgent Attention

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

N/A

Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)

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

Where I think the School could improve further is in considering the assessment load across years for students. This requires a holistic approach from management in the School, but I think it's something worth taking forward.

Thank you for your comments about the assessment load across years for students. We have been working hard to ensure equality of assessment load for similarly credit weighted modules especially in level 3 in response to previous EE reports and feel that this has been improved. However, we are aware that our level 2 assessments are heavily dependent on examinations and could be diversified. The School will consider this issue carefully during the curriculum review and assessment mapping exercise that we are currently involved in.

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:

Thank you for these positive evaluations.

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:

Please see response below.

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 communicating your perceptions of the amount of essay preparation that we provide in Level 2. We agree that this is an important issue and have reviewed our provision in recent years and have introduced additional support. We feel that Level 2 does now provide students with a greater range of opportunities to develop essay writing skills, although we are continuing to reviewing the provision. We provide training sessions related to finding, using and evaluating literature and an essay writing tutorial specifically associated with the Memory and Language module, which has a semester 1 coursework essay assessment. We have also specifically timed the marking of this essay such that students receive both written feedback for the essay and a feedback session in which they can seek further clarification from the markers about their feedback, all before the first set of semester 1 essay-based exams in January.

With regard to your comments about including skills development in Level 2 tutorials, our view is that in both levels 1 and 2 we have carefully mapped the provision of skills training either in modules, or tutorials, to the assessment requirements of each level of study, and students are provided with this information at the start of the year. All skills necessary for assessments including presentations, essay writing, and practical report writing, are covered in this way. This was put in place for 2018-19.

However, we are interested in, and very much appreciate, your suggestion of making level 2 tutorials contribute to the module credits and we would like to explore this idea further.

Other comments

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