

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

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):

**MSc in Cognitive Development & Disorders
PSYCH5909M Research Project**

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

November 2019: MSc in Cognitive Development & Disorders

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.

A good range of modules and assessments within modules.

PSYCH5901 – A good mix of quantitative and qualitative teaching and assessments.

PSYCH5911M – A good mix of assessments, I particularly liked to contrast of the essay and practioner report.

PSYCH5908M – An interesting and diverse range of research projects.

PSYCH5900 – This is a new module this year which was timely, interesting and well-assessed.

PSYCH5909M - Projects were interesting and diverse. Several projects were of a very high standard with really exceptional writing and attention to detail.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Programme is running well and to a high standard. Teaching and assessments are continually reviewed to assure high quality. As assessors the inclusion of slides for presentations this year was helpful for review of material.

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 / 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

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

The MSc in Cognitive Development & Disorders programme is designed to expand students' learning at a postgraduate level. The programme material and assessment is appropriate and at the required level. Learning outcomes are clear and appropriate for both the programme as a whole and individual modules.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
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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)

Research-led teaching is integrated into the whole programme of study. Research skills and awareness of the wider context of research are developed through PSYC5900 and PSYC5901. In content based modules such as PSYC 5905 and PSYC5910 it is clear how research influences outcomes and practise.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / 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?	Y / 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)?	Y / 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 / N
<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>There are a good range of different types of assessments across the programme, which encourages students to apply their knowledge and to think about the societal and clinical applications of what they are learning. Assessments are well aligned to the learning outcomes. The work produced by students is generally of a very high quality.</p> <p>There remains very little variation in grades awarded for presentations. These represent a small proportion of the assessed grade and are often group presentations, however changing these to pass/fail may be something to consider given the lack of variance in grades.</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 programme utilises a diverse range of assessments which allows students the opportunity to demonstrate and apply their knowledge. The feedback is helpful and I particularly commend the helpful comments for students performing very well.</p> <p>The quality of students on the programme is generally moderate or high and this is reflected in the largely high grades awarded.</p> <p>There appears to be an ongoing issue with MCQ offered for PSYC5905 and PSYC5910 which I have already discussed with the department, see comments below.</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>Modules PSYC5905 and PSYC5910 use MCQ as part of the assessment. It is clear that this assessment successfully distinguishes between students with grades being awarded from fail to high first levels. However a large number of students are failing the MCQ element of the modules (which was noted in 2017-18). Note that the department have spent a large amount of time reviewing MCQ assessments overall and they are at an appropriate difficulty for the level.</p> <p>I raised this after Semester 1 when reviewing PSYC5910 where 34% of students failed the MCQ exam. I was concerned about this high rate but it is comparable to 2017-18. Furthermore the department has reviewed performance on MCQs which were included in both exams for 2017-18 and 2018-19. This has shown that the MCQs are comparable across years. The rate of fails on MCQ exams is unusual for the profile of students overall.</p> <p>I am aware that modules have made a large effort to introduce practise MCQs this year, however fail rates remain unusually high for these assessments. I have reviewed these with the department in some detail. It appears that students joining the MSc programme (CADD) are disproportionately affected by the difficulty of the MCQ exam compared to students on the MPsych Advanced programme. Therefore my concern is more relevant to the MSc CADD programme than the MPsych Advance programme but is worth noting here. It appears that students new to the department are finding the MCQ exams very difficult, therefore they may require more support in preparation for this assessment.</p> <p>Please note, I am very satisfied that the department are working to monitor this issue and to find solutions.</p> <p>PSYC5909 Research Project I reviewed a selection of projects across different grade classifications. On the whole, projects were interesting and well written. Grades were appropriate and feedback both on the proposal and projects were good. Project and proposal grades were at a very similar level to last year (2018-19 Proposal, M=67.4; Project, M=65.4; 2017-18 Proposal, M=67.75; Project, M=66.23).</p>		

Resolving discrepancies: I did review one project where there was a large discrepancy (12 points, 50 and 62 with final grade=52) between the markers. While I do not disagree with the final mark awarded, please justify this more clearly ie expertise of the first marker making it clear what is omitted from project etc. (Note, this was an unusual discrepancy with most markers awarding very similar grades).

Topics: It may be worth monitoring whether the project topics students are completing are a good “fit” with the aims and overall topic of the MSc. The research is of a high quality but are projects being offered that meet the lifespan aspect of the programme? It may be that I was not given these to review. At least one of the projects may have been better suited to the MSc PATH programme.

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:

Regarding point 29 above. This year feedback for a number of assessments were provided online rather than on paper. There was some inconsistency with us being able to see all the feedback when online systems were used. When online feedback is provided it would be helpful to receive all (both overall and intext feedback). I would be equally happy to review this online in the future if that is more practical.

Other comments

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

Overall the MPsych provides high quality teaching with appropriate assessments and feedback. Modules are interesting and timely, and provide students with good opportunities for learning and skill development.

A few minor points for the future.

There were a few errors in marks sheets this year. I know that we have discussed this and everything has been checked, but needs to be monitored in future years.

Could I please see mark breakdowns by question for coursework and exams?

I would like to review all the fails in the future.

Can we continue to monitor MCQ performance?

PSYC5909 Research Project

I previously asked for word count and student contributions (for group projects) to be included. There is an additional group contribution statement on the feedback form, although this was not consistently completed in detail. Word counts were available for some but not all projects.

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

Subject(s):

Psychology

Programme(s) / Module(s):

PSYC TGP modules

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

MSc Cognitive Development and Disorders

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School of Medicine

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Medicine and Health

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 are happy to read the positive comments regarding the projects, including the very high standard of several of the submissions.

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:

N/A

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 are pleased to see the positive comments overall.

Regarding discrepancy between markers, where this exists, markers will be encouraged to provide a clearer justification for how an agreed mark was reached.

To address the issue of appropriate allocation of projects to students, academic staff members are required to specify whether the projects that they offer are appropriate for PATH, CDAD or both sets of students. While this approach has been used previously, programme managers now check the allocation of projects to pathways. In instances where the appropriateness of the project to the pathway is not clear, the programme managers/module leader seeks to clarify this with the project supervisor. Depending on the appropriateness of the project at this stage, the projects either go ahead as initially planned or revised, removed or re-allocated to the relevant pathway. For the CDAD pathway, appropriateness is broadly determined by whether the project has a focus on child development, ageing, cognitive function, and/or neuropsychology. We have implemented these changes for the current cohort of MSc students (2019-20).

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:

N/A

Other comments

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

Supervisors will be reminded to consistently complete the group contribution statement.

We considered how to implement improved monitoring/recording of word counts. For 2019-20, students will be required to state their final word count when submitting their projects. This will be recorded by the administrative team on a revised version of the 1st markers cover sheet.