

Carnegie School Of Education

Undergraduate

- BPEAC Primary Education (AD)(UG)

Please indicate, below, whether you agree with the statements about the threshold standards of Leeds Beckett University's awards, student achievement and the conduct of the University's assessment processes, using as a reference the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements. Please also list any shortcomings and areas for commendation. You should expand on any issues you mention here in the main report. If any boxes are ticked "No" the Dean of School or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the Course Director.

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Standards Set

	Yes	No
"In my view, the threshold academic standards set for the modules/awards meet with the requirements of the relevant National Qualifications Statement's."	X	

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short:

Student achievement

	Yes	No	N/A*
"In my view, students' who have been awarded qualifications have had the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar." *Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this statement, please note here:	X		

Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short:

Conduct of process

Yes No

External Examiner's report summary

"In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are reliable, rigorous and fairly conducted."

x

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.

Actions from last year's report

(This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time)

Yes

Areas of good practice/commendation

Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment:

Teaching and learning on the programme this academic year has been impacted by the Coronavirus lockdown and the closure of the University campuses. The Programme team should be congratulated on responding to the situation so quickly and effectively. Tutors have worked extremely hard to enable students to access high quality learning, including by making highly flexible arrangements for students in a range of different circumstances. They have continued to enable a range of different assessment activities that students have been able to complete remotely.

The programme team continues to readily respond to my feedback and to feedback from students, constantly striving to improve the programme.

Aiming high documents written for students in each level 5 module last year to clearly explain the grade boundaries have been extended into Level 6.

The Programme Team has had fewer opportunities than in a normal year to respond to my feedback. However, they have made progress with the following points:

1. Adjusting the timing of some teaching and assessment within the year to spread it slightly and to make it easier for students to focus on fewer assignments at any time.
2. Clearer feedforward oral points on students' assignments, summarised at the end of the feedback.
3. Ensuring I had reliable remote access to assessment samples, marking and feedback.

Main report

In this section you are asked to describe more fully how the University has or has not maintained threshold academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to the course(s) for which you are the external examiner, using as a reference the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements.

Please complete all sections of the form fully and where not applicable please state N/A. Where applicable please also complete the sections for any collaborative provision sampled.

If you are an external examiner for any of the University's Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes (HND/HNC level) provision, please also complete the section on page 9 sections l, m and n entitled "for External Examiners Associated with Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes."

Professional Body Requirements

External Examiner's report summary

	Yes	No	N/A*
"In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met. *Not applicable if the course is not a professional body course please indicate here.			
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.			

(a) The operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board (and/or Module Board meeting you may also have attended).

I attended a Module Board for Level 5 and a Module Board for Level 6 and a joint Module and Progression and Award Board for Level 6. They were conducted quickly and efficiently. All administrative work was in place and seemed correct. Profiles had been carefully prepared and checked in advance. Internal Examiners were able to justify decisions without disclosing inappropriate details of mitigating circumstances, thus ensuring students were treated with respect. Decisions were fair, consistent and transparent.

(b) The action, if any was required, taken in response to your report of last year. (This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time.)

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.

General academic standards are consistent with those I have seen on other education programmes at Levels 5 and 6 in my previous experience of External Examining undergraduate programmes and within my own institution. Students that passed the module assignments have demonstrated achievement of the stated learning outcomes.

(d) The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills.

The modules and the programme have been carefully constructed to give students an excellent grounding in educational issues, philosophy and sociology and actively encourages them to read widely around the subject and to form their personal stance. In general, students have achieved this. Progress across the HE Levels 4 – 6 enables students to become increasingly critical thinkers. The periods of professional experience, are designed to give students tasters of working life in education and enable them to begin to apply theory to practice, with knowledge of but without being constrained by having to work towards the Teachers' Standards. However, these have been impacted by the Coronavirus lockdown and closing of schools and other educational settings, this year and this gap may need to be addressed for the next cohort. A high percentage of the students appear to want to train to teach, this programme will provide them with excellent background knowledge for a one-year training programme, where the focus will be much more on the practical aspects of learning to teach and demonstrating that they are meeting the

Teachers' Standards. Alternatively, if they do not wish to pursue a career in education they will have developed graduate skills applicable to other career paths.

Last year, there was a high percentage of students at the end of Level 5 with an incomplete mark profile due to late submissions, deferrals etc. This has been exacerbated this year due to the challenges of lockdown. The first year of the accelerated degree is particularly intensive and it seems that many students were suffering cognitive overload or fatigue. However, this issue also applies to Level 6. For one of the Level 6 modules, I looked at 6 samples chosen by the markers from the 8 that they had seen. I am sure that the programme team is aware of this and thinking about ways to address this, assuming next year is more normal, these might include the following actions that I recommended last year:

1. Thinking about the marketing and recruitment to the programme. It seems that many students on the programme have chosen it for purely financial reasons. Some of them have experienced significant barriers at an earlier stage in their education which may suggest that they need additional support and possibly extra time to achieve their best at degree level. Some of these students may be educationally more suited to a traditional three-year degree.
2. Continue to think about the timing of module submissions to see if it is possible to spread them more. I know this is difficult within the parameters of the two-year degree. Some progress has been made on this point, already.
3. Work more with the students to help them understand the consequences of late submission. It seems that it has almost become part of the culture of this cohort to believe that late submission is perfectly reasonable and acceptable. However, as many of them wish to go on to teacher training, the programme team members will need to write references for students, indicating aspects such as their commitment, reliability, punctuality and attendance.

Many of the students on the programme are not confident with academic writing. This includes general grammar, word selection and punctuation. As many of these students intend to train to become primary teachers this is an area that they need to address. The tutors have provided significant support for students in structuring their assignments and they have responded well to this, following guidelines carefully. Many now need to work on linking sections and paragraphs more effectively. There is noticeable improvement in analysis from level 5 to 6 in general. However, some students need to move on from picking out similarities and differences in ideas to proposing why these may be. Typically the best assignments are supported by wide reading, including of research articles. These assignments are also reflective and students have clearly changed their perspectives as a result of their study. Tutors have clearly worked hard on helping the students to reference their work carefully.

The range of assessments on this programme is impressive and many students respond very well to spoken assessments and generally obtain higher marks in these than in essays. I have noticed that one or two students use an overly informal style in spoken assessments. The programme team may wish to discuss this and to think about whether this is appropriate.

(e) The standards of the structure, organisation, design and marking of all examination papers and/or other forms of assessment.

The course has been very carefully structured to enable the students to progress appropriately on this accelerated degree. A variety of forms of assessment has enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in different ways. Generally, students have received higher marks in the modules that involve an oral element to the assessment such as a presentation or interview with a course tutor. Interestingly, very generally, students have been awarded higher marks in these assignments and in terms of ranking, are broadly in the same order as for written assignments. Oral feedback has been used this year in all of the Level 5 and Level 6 modules. Marking of assignments is detailed and supportive. Each has two or three pieces of advice or targets for students to work on to improve future submissions. These are summarised in clear points at the end of feedback comments.

These are general enough to be applied to new modules and to Level 6 work. I expect the students appreciate this, although I was not able to speak to any of them about this. I think they might appreciate the slightly less-formal way that oral feedback comes across, there is also more detail, especially about the positive aspects of their work. However, as I observed last year, it will be interesting to evaluate this in terms of the points for development for future assignments, as these may not be remembered or easily referred to as clearly numbered points at the end of written comments.

(f) The curriculum, teaching or resourcing of the programme of study as indicated by the performance of the students in the assessment

It continues to be clear to see how the teaching of sessions has allowed and encouraged the students to achieve the learning outcomes for each module as evidenced in their assignments, including in the weakest assignments. The teaching on the programme is designed to be engaging and interesting and students are motivated by a variety of learning activities and teaching styles. Unfortunately, this range has been necessarily limited this year due to the move to completely online teaching during the lockdown. I hope that the team is able to build on this experience for next year so that teaching and learning can benefit from the whole range of new and more established approaches.

Previously, across levels 5 and 6, students seemed to enjoy and benefit from the opportunity to learn outside the University, e.g. on visits to schools, museums, outdoor learning centres and from an educational visit to Northern Ireland. Similarly, inviting outside speakers into University sessions was seen as advantageous by the students. These helped the students to think more critically about what they are learning in their lectures, seminars and tutorials and through their reading. They made links between theory and practice. I hope the programme team will be able to provide these opportunities and will be supported in arranging them in future years.

Many of the dissertations were very interesting to read. The stronger ones had a precise and narrow focus, allowing them to address the issue in depth and detail. These students provided, compared and contrasted definitions of terms they were using, this is a quick win for students in showing criticality right at the start of their assignments. Some were clearly passionate about their chosen subject. Some of the subjects will clearly support the professional development of those intending to train to teach. They had been clearly and thoroughly inducted into the techniques of literature review. Most of the feedback comments were structured around the sections of the dissertation and I think this was detailed and helpful for the students, especially if they go on to further study at HE Level 7.

(g) Comments on the use of My Beckett (Virtual Learning Environment) within the course (if applicable).

Nearly all of the teaching for Level 5 and much of that for Level 6 was online this year. I am unsure how much of this was hosted on My Beckett, but I know that module handbooks and learning resources were located there. In previous years, students who are unavoidably absent from sessions could view recorded lectures.

(h) Module content, consistency of modules and module assessment across the course and the achievement of learning outcomes. (You may be asked by your School to provide detailed comments on the modules that you examine.)

The level 5 modules provide a good balance of insight into the background to and factors influencing

primary education today. They provide opportunities for students to develop their understanding of the following aspects, listed in the module learning outcomes:

- Historical influences
- Social perspectives
- Policy and political influences
- Philosophical stand points and ideologies
- Students own identities and how these have been and continue to be shared by their experiences and education
- Different learning environments and their contribution to children's learning.

A variety of assessment styles have been structured to enable students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in a variety of interesting ways, including:

- Written essays
- A spoken essay
- Oral presentations supported by visuals
- A Portfolio
- One to one interviews with a course tutor
- Combinations of the above.

The level 6 modules build on level 5, providing students opportunities to explore new issues of education. They provide opportunities for students to develop their understanding of the following aspects, listed in the module learning outcomes:

- Effective learning and the use of technology
- Curriculum models, including international comparison
- Global perspective on education
- Arts education
- The dissertation module allowed students to choose and to investigate an aspect of education in greater depth

A variety of assessment styles have been structured to enable students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in a variety of interesting ways, including:

- Written essays
- Oral presentations supported by visuals
- A Portfolio
- A dissertation

All of these enable the students to attain the learning outcomes. The variety is to be commended, as it keeps students interested and engaged. It also means that students can play to their strengths and gain confidence in other areas. Consistency is maintained through the small course team who work across modules. This enables them to get to know the students well and to support their development across the whole academic level.

It was pleasing to note particularly this year, in Level 6 assessments, that students are beginning to make appropriate links across and between modules.

I have commented separately on each Level 5 and Level 6 module using the External Moderation Forms.

(i) Areas of student/staff engagement in teaching and learning, scholarship, research or professional practice.

The staff team working on this programme is small but this year it has been broadly the same people as last year. The Programme Director and the deputy have both had some extended time away from the University. One member of the programme team has completed and been awarded his doctorate this year. This deserves particular congratulations as it has not been an easy year for the programme or the team.

(j) The University welcomes external examiners' comments on its academic regulatory framework. Such comments may not have a direct bearing on standards set and achieved or the conduct of processes and so it may not be appropriate to include them elsewhere in this report or its summary. Please record any concerns or comments you may have here.

N/A

(k) Collaborative Provision: please include here any comments you wish to make on elements of collaborative provision for which you have responsibility (in addition to those you may have indicated previously in this report).

N/A