

MSc Building Surveying

External Examiner's report summary

Please indicate in the relevant boxes 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.

Standards set		
	Yes	No
"In my view, the threshold academic standards set for the modules/awards are appropriate."	✓	
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' achievement is comparable with similar course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar."	✓		
Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision.			
(Interpolation of Programmes from my own institution)			
* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this plea here.			
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.			

Conduct of processes		
	Yes	No
"In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are rigorous and fairly conducted."	✓	

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

Areas of good practice

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

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- The programme appears well lead by the incumbent who has been in post for just over a year. Although not evidence based, I got the distinct indication of a strong pastoral quality to the leadership. The Leader also gave me the opportunity to engage with several members of staff.
- Great improvements have been made in the mechanics of presentation for the EEs (in my view) compared with the previous year. The administrative staff are both welcoming and helpful. It is very clear that they support the academics, particularly through the EE process.
- There has been a good staff addition in the form of a Chartered Building Surveyor who has expertise in pathology. This is an extremely important part of the BS role, so the Department should be commended for this action.
- There are increasingly healthy numbers of students joining the course. This can be seen as an indictment of the course quality, (over and above supply and demand).
- There are areas of excellence in all modules, but not always the same. I would recommend that areas of excellence are used as models to spread across all areas.
- Some excellent levels of feedback. Areas of best practice should be identified and expanded across all modules.

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			
"In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met.	Yes	No	N/A *
*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).
Very good. One recommendation would be that the EEs for each Programme were allowed to report as soon as the awards for that programme had been considered. This would facilitate those travelling considerable distances (5hrs in my case) to be present only for the area pertinent to them. (Thank you for the personal "work-around").

(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.)
I am not aware of having received a full response to my last report, but do appreciate the time constraints that the members of staff were working under. On the positive side it is clear that my report has been discussed with members of staff, since some progress has been made.

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

Student performance was mixed; probably not untypical of distance learning platforms that tend to suffer from engagement issues. I would recommend exploration to explore how engagement (and consequential performance) might be improved. Weekend face-to-face workshops and Boot-camps might be considered. (This is a standing recommendation from last year).

(d) The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual

grasp or application of skills.

The students are mostly from a non-cognate background so there is a very steep learning curve for parttimers over a two year period.

There seems to be over reliance on the students' part on "standard" texts. In any piece of "technical" BS work, I would expect to see reference to material from the Professional bodies including RICS (iSurv), CIOB, IStrucE, etc. Technical papers produced by the Building Research Establishment should always be considered.

On the positive side there is evidence that their working lives within the profession, helps them academically.

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

I would make the following observations, in no particular order:-

- Some improvements have been made to CW “Introductions” but more is required. It should have a defined evidenced based rationale, aim and objectives. I observed the latter two in many areas but rarely a rationale.
- I would like to see more reflective conclusions. This should encompass re-examination of the aim and objectives, with appraisal as to how effective the research has been against each objective.
- Word counts in some cases were being ignored without apparent penalty
- The final year dissertation, I would suggest should be increased from the current 6000 words to at least 10,000 (15,000 maximum) for the final work. The proposal should be weighted at no more than 5% of the total. (Since the proposal contents would normally be included in expanded form in the final report, the word count for it, should not be counted towards the 10-15K above). Any verbal presentation should carry a maximum of 5% of the total.
- The students should be discouraged from requesting “Full Structural Surveys” or carte blanche “further reports” from “experts”. The client rightly sees the BS as the commensurate professional who is able to report and make a judgement on most things without having to spend money on “further reports”.
- There was one module where there was a very high percentage of high marks. This seems in conflict with the normal distribution curve.

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

There is a good broad curriculum that picks up distinct areas of expertise required by the professional BS. Of course I could list many more areas, but the reality is this is a two year PT programme. One of the important aspects is to enhance the “enquiring mind” and ensure that the students are not satisfied with the first piece of information they see. In other words, there are probably five different solutions to any problem, but, which is the best to suit the particular details of any given situation?

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

The Programme is VLE based. Everything I saw, including learning materials, discussion boards and assessment was VLE. The usage is therefore high, however as previously stated, additional mechanisms might be put in place to improve engagement and progression statistics.

(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.)

Please note 5th bullet in “Areas of Good Practice”

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

There is clear engagement with the VLE process. As noted previously, consideration might be given to some/additional face to face engagement; possibly at weekends.

(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.

The following comments were made last year:-

I believe that RICS accreditation was subject to certain criteria in terms of student achievement. Whilst these criteria may be slightly greater than those set by the University, it is of the utmost importance (from an employability perspective), that RICS criteria takes precedence (where greater than the University's).

In addition:

I note the pass mark of 40%, (set by LBU) which seems a bit low for a Masters course. I would have thought 50% was more appropriate, if only for the pragmatic reason that anyone with such qualification and moving into an esteemed profession, should be expected to get at least half right.

(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).

The following comment was made last year:-

It can be very useful to get employers round the table, at least annually. Amongst other matters, one can discuss the programme; professional & practice needs; latest developments in academia and Practice; economics; employment opportunities; etc. (Two-way conversation of course).

I wonder if there has been any progress?

External Examiners' Report Checklist

Please comment for all boxes

Course Materials				
Did you receive?		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Course Handbook(s)?	✓		
b.	Academic Regulations including any Professional Statutory Body requirements where appropriate (these may be included the Course Handbook)?		✓	
c.	Module specifications (these may be in the Course Handbook)?	✓		
d.	Assessment briefs/marking criteria?	✓		

Draft examination papers				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive all the draft papers?			✓
	(ii) If not, was this at your request?			
b.	(i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate?			✓
	(ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			
c.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			✓

Draft coursework				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive all the draft coursework?	✓		
	(ii) If not, was this at your request?			
b.	(i) Was the nature and level of the coursework appropriate?	✓		
	(ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			
c.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	✓		

Marking Examination Scripts				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative partner students?	✓		
	(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?			

Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:			
<p>a) Samples should be determined by a square root of cohort size, no smaller than 6, no larger than 15. However it should be borne in mind that not all work is assessed in a way that makes a square root sample possible and allowance should be made. For example in subjects such as the performing arts where there may be a requirement for an external to come and view a performance instead, or to visit the exhibition of art work.</p> <p>b) Samples to include all classification categories, and it is helpful to concentrate around the boundaries to include some fails.</p> <p>c) Samples to consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process.</p>			
b.	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	✓	
c.	Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	✓	

Dissertations/project reports				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate?	✓		
b.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?	✓ Broadly yes, but see previous comments regards quantum		

Coursework/continuously assessed work				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative partner students?	✓		
b.	Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory?	✓ see previous comments		

Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?		✓ I would have like to have been able to speak to a student or two	

Progression and Award Boards				
		Yes	No	N/A

For use from March 2017

a.	Were you able to attend the meetings?	✓ (Award Boards)		
b.	Were the meetings conducted to your satisfaction?	✓		
c.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Award Boards?	✓		

Development and support of External Examiners

Please mark the appropriate boxes:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Were you new in post in academic year 2016/17? (2017-18 is my 2 nd year)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you were new: (NOT APPLICABLE)	—	—
(a) Did you access the on-line External Examiner Induction Module?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If not, was there a particular reason?	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	
(b) Did you receive any specific induction or other support from your School?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Some inexperienced new examiners are formally mentored. Were you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Did you find the mentoring you received helpful?		

Any general or specific comments on the development and support offered by the University, especially improvements you would like to see:

In order to ensure seats on what is a very busy train, I booked and paid for my seats back in January. Although not essential it would be nice to be given the opportunity to claim significant expenses at the time of expenditure.

For External Examiners associated with Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes

If you are an external examiner for any of the University's Pearson provision (HND/HNC level), please complete sections (l) – (n) below to enable the University to capture the data requested by Pearson for its Annual review report.

(l) Any major issues with regard to the HND/HNC course(s) with which you are associated

NA

(m) Areas of good practice you have identified specifically relating to HND/HNC course(s) with which you are associated

NA

(n) Any other comments that you wish to make that are related specifically to the HND/HNC course(s) with which you are associated

NA
