

# MSc Civil Engineering

## 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.			
Please see section (k) for my comments on collaborative provision with Hong Kong HKCT.			
<i>* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this please indicate here.</i>			
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."	✓	
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.		

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

Good use of Blackboard (VLE).

Use of industry standard software.

Double marking of assignments and exam scripts.

Open-ended assignments where evident allow students to be creative and explore ideas.

## 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 *
<i>*Not applicable if the course is not a professional body course please indicate here.</i>	✓		
<i>If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.</i>			

(a) The operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board (and/or Module Board meeting you may also have attended).
The Module Boards that I attended were conducted in a very efficient and professional manner. My questions and queries were addressed in a helpful way and I was satisfied with the responses.

(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.)
This was my first year as the external examiner.

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.
The overall performance of the students was of a comparable level of work in other UK institutions that I am familiar with. Please see section (j) for my comments on HKCT.

(d) The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills.
Strengths There were some very good student performances with good distribution of marks in most modules representing a grasp of subject knowledge and in many cases the application of skills including critical and creative thinking, problem solving and technological skills.
Weaknesses

Transportation Studies: Three students failed to pass out of a total of 9 on the marks list. I looked at samples of exam and coursework scripts: top, middle and bottom. Very good first marker feedback was evident. The lower coursework final mark of 48% disappointing to see when the minimum pass mark is 50%. I would suggest that the assignment weighting be looked at to see if this could be avoided.

Professional Applications for Management: 13 students were enrolled on the module. The weighting of this module was 40%/60% exam/coursework. The overall mean percentage mark for the exam was 72% which is slightly higher than the overall mean percentage mark for the coursework at 69%. This appears to be unusual as these component marks are usually the other way around. I found the high number and nature of the assignments exercises and exam slightly confusing. I would suggest that consideration be given to rationalising the number of assignments and the exam questions which appear to involve part of previous group work.

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

These are in line with other UK HE institutions that I am familiar with.

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

LBU student performance in the assessments were entirely appropriate. However, a high number of high marks were awarded for the Civil Engineering Dissertation, mostly in the 70+ range. I think that this should be monitored in future in order to ensure that this was as a result of a very good cohort.

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

The use of Blackboard (VLE) is very good and consistent across the range of modules on the UK programme.

**(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.)**

This has been the subject of correspondence. The aims and learning outcomes stated in the module descriptors and specifications are appropriate for taught Masters level awards. This is confirmed by the fact that the LBU course is a JBM accredited course giving currency to student employability.

I was given the opportunity to look at and comment on LBU proposed changes to a number of modules. I was happy to confirm that I fully supported these changes and made the following comments.

- All modules have their module code included with the module titles.

- There appears to currently be a large range of exam/coursework weightings, eg, 80%/20%, 70%/30%, 40%/60% and 50%/50%. I would suggest that consideration be given to rationalise all of these to either 50%/50% or 70%/30%.
- ‘Geotechnical Analysis and Design’: Module Learning Outcomes: These should be written in the same format as the other modules and in accordance with the Level 7 Output Standards Statement for a JBM Accredited Engineering Programme. Indicative Module Content and Learning Activities: *‘The design of this module is strongly influenced by the geotechnical research work which has been conducted at Leeds Beckett over recent years. Thus, the module has a strong research-informed teaching emphasis’*. What provision is being made for this research conducted at Leeds Beckett to be incorporated in HKCT delivery? Unless this is collaborative research between LB and HKCT, my suggestion is to consider modifying this text so that issues, as previous experienced, regarding this are avoided.
- Minor comments were made for ‘Professional Applications for Management’ module and the ‘Water Engineering and Fluid Mechanics’ module.

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

Some of the project work I looked at in Transportation Studies related directly to professional practice.

**(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 MSc Civil Engineering programme at LBU is accredited by the JBM and has an overall pass mark of 50% as other UK level 7 accredited courses. I understand that the HKCT franchised provision is not JBM accredited and therefore the LBU regulations apply where the overall pass mark is only 40%. I am therefore concerned that there is this discrepancy for what is apparently the same provision. If the learning outcomes and assignments are the same, in my opinion, the pass marks should be the same or there should be a clear distinction between the two programmes such that they have different award titles and or different module codes. The other concern is that students that complete the MSc at HKCT may mislead potential employers if their MSc pass threshold is lower than that at LBU.

**(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).**

I had to be spent on some time on a number of historical issues related to the MSc delivery at HKCT franchise partnership. Specifically the moderation of marks for the Materials Technology module. Three samples were uploaded from a cohort size of six, one high, one low and one medium. The Module Leader for the home LBU delivery wished to reduce the HKCT marks by a substantial amount and the Module Leader from HKCT disagrees with this reduction. These were moderated by a third marker at LBU.

In a bid for total transparency and fairness, I was asked to look at six coursework and exam scripts and give my independent judgement on how best to proceed. My understanding was that this had been an ongoing historical issue which was hoped to resolve by carrying out HKCT training. Additional support was

also to be provided for the Module Leader at LBU in terms of quality and effectiveness of the exam questions at Level 7 as well as the thoroughness and clarity aspect of model answers.

Having gone through the documentation my comments included that I was not clear whether the exam paper has gone through any internal quality procedures and that the layout of some of the questions required, in my opinion, complete review. These essentially needed to be made clearer. Each part of a question should have been clearly identified together with the allocation of the marks in order to effectively gauge required student effort. The marking scheme was not very clear and lacked detail. This should have been more detailed particularly due to the simultaneous provision taking place at HKCT.

There was a difference of opinion on the awarded marks by HKCT. There clearly appeared to have been a misunderstanding of expectations. I did not believe that the students were at fault and therefore should not be penalised. As it appeared that two (different) marking scheme interpretations had been used, I suggested that the best way to proceed was that both LBU and HKCT devise an acceptable and agreed marking scheme that covered the module learning outcomes (noting the delivery expectation differences) for the HKCT students and the work be remarked and then resubmitted for moderation.

I noted that the training to be provided between LBU and HKCT should avoid this type of situation in the future.

## 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/marketing 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?	✓		
<p><b>Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:</b></p> <p><b>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.</b></p> <p><b>b) Samples to include all classification categories, and it is helpful to concentrate around the boundaries to include some fails.</b></p> <p><b>c) Samples to consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process.</b></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?	✓		

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?	✓		

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?			✓

Module Board/Progression and Award Boards				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Were you able to attend the meetings?	✓		
b.	Were the meetings conducted to your satisfaction?	✓		
c.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Module Board/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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If you were new:</b>		
(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 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"/>
(d) Did you find the mentoring you received helpful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

## 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
N/A
(m) Areas of good practice you have identified specifically relating to HND/HNC course(s) with which you are associated
N/A
(n) Any other comments that you wish to make that are related specifically to the HND/HNC course(s) with which you are associated
N/A