

MA Housing, Regeneration and Urban Management 2017/18

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."	Y	
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."	Y		
Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision.			
* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this please indicate 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."	Y	
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.

There is clear evidence of thorough and effective feedback on student work as shown for instance in the dissertation. It is creditable here that marking sheets are available for both first and second marker, and also that the quality and density of feedback is relatively consistent between markers. It is also good to see achievement which is clearly in the excellent category, with one dissertation achieving 88%. It is noted in this context that a new grade descriptor was introduced in Feb 2018 which added description of three sub-levels within the range 70-100% and this is welcomed as encouraging use of the full marking range at the upper level where appropriate.

The linkage of theory and practice is also commendable in many modules including for instance Leading Partnerships and Change, which was also reflected by student comments I received during my visit. As noted elsewhere, the rigour and quality of teaching materials is also worthy of commendation, including appropriate linkage to current aspects of policy and practice.

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. <i>*Not applicable if the course is not a professional body course please indicate here.</i>	Yes	No	N/A *
			y
<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 operation and conduct of the Board of Examiners was transparent, rigorous and fair, and in line with Regulations.

(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.)
It is noted that comments last year in relation to stretching of marks at the upper level, where appropriate, led to a revision of the Postgraduate Grade Descriptors which is helpful. Suggestions for promotion of more consistency in detail and density of feedback to students last year would also seem to have been taken on board for instance in relation to feedback on the dissertation.

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.
The overall performance of students was comparable to that of those at the same level within other institutions with which I am familiar, and it is gratifying to see achievement which is clearly excellent as shown for instance in the dissertation.

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

It is clear from the coursework (including dissertations) which I saw illustrated the application of an appropriate range of skills and knowledge. As observed previously this often relates to clear ability to integrate theory with practice, but also to critically evaluate approaches to policy in relation to housing and urban regeneration for instance.

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

The standards in relation to structure, organisation, design and marking of assessments I saw were consistent, fair and appropriate. Cross-marking was clear and transparent for instance in the dissertation for which both first and second marking sheets were available.

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

The curriculum remains in line with the aims of the Programme, with clearly appropriate resourcing in relevant teaching, as evidenced by the performance of students in assessments. Commendation is also due to the way in which teaching staff have effectively addressed the gaps in teaching as a consequence of the sad death of a member of staff during the year.

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

The availability of all relevant course materials and samples of coursework via My Beckett is to be commended, since this makes the accessing of such material prior to the Board much easier.

(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 content of modules remains in line with the Programme aims. There is commendable rigour in the use of module guides and other teaching materials as evidenced from the samples provided. There was appropriate use within the Programme of assessment modes which align with the current needs of employers and relevant professions, including for instance group work as well as individual work. As indicated above there is a high standard of feedback to students on their coursework with for instance generally clear and appropriate use of assessment criteria.

I would also highlight the following points in relation to modules I examined earlier in 2018:

Housing and Urban Regeneration Policy:

There was clear achievement of excellence by students (with appropriate and fair assessment) and feedback was clear and related to learning criteria. It was also good to see in the course materials credible contemporary elements eg lessons from Grenfell case, and lecture slides were excellent with clear interactive component.

Theoretical Contexts:

There was clear achievement of excellence (with one mark of 85%) and work was assessed fairly and appropriately. Feedback was clear and appropriate, with for instance very clear use of assessment

criteria, and teaching materials were full and comprehensive.

Policy Implementation and Appraisal:

Work was assessed fairly and appropriately, with an appropriate spread of marks. There was rather more variability in feedback style/content to students than on other modules, perhaps related to different markers. I wonder if rather more standardisation might be encouraged (within modules) to allow greater ease of use for students (though acknowledging that there may still be need for variation depending on particular cases). Teaching materials were full and comprehensive.

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

It is clear from student comments that there is appreciation of the integration of practice-based and case-based material in relation to several modules which assists substantially in the linkage of theory and practice. While such comments also indicated that there was variation in approach to theory in particular across modules (with some applying a more critical approach and some applying a practice-based approach) it is acknowledged that a Programme such as this will inevitably contain a variety of such approaches.

(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.

I consider that the regulatory framework of the University is appropriate and effective.

(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

External Examiners' Report Checklist

Please comment for all boxes

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

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

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

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?			y
	(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?			y
<p>Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:</p> <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?			y
c.	Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			y

Dissertations/project reports				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate?	y		
b.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?	y		

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?	y		
b.	Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory?	y		

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?			y

Module Board/Progression and Award Boards				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Were you able to attend the meetings?	y		
b.	Were the meetings conducted to your satisfaction?	y		
c.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Module Board/Progression and Award Boards?	y		