

## BAH Human Geography and Planning 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.”	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’ achievement is comparable with similar course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar.”	x		
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.”	x	
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 a variety of assessment methods, and many very interesting coursework assignments, which ensures that students develop a variety of skills and knowledge, and also keeps the programme fresh and interesting for students (and teaching staff).

The programme of academic tutorials is an additional demand on both staff and students, but it is an excellent (and I think necessary) initiative. The input of teaching staff needs to be recognised in workload models if this is not already the case.

## 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>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A *</b>
			<b>x</b>
<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 preparation for the Board was exemplary, and its conduct fair and transparent. It was business-like whilst ensuring that everyone had a chance to have their views heard and discussed if they wished.  As a new examiner I especially appreciated the care with which I had been briefed by administrative and the programme leader ahead of my visit, and during it.

(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.)
N/A

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.
The very best student performance is comparable with the best in other comparable institutions with which I am familiar. Possibly there are – in some years – one or two more students who fail to do themselves justice because they do not fully engage; but in this my first year that is no more than an initial impression.

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

As a new examiner two features stand out. First, the grasp many students have of issues of equity and social justice. One might expect this in modules such as the excellent Women and The Built Environment, but it is also threaded through housing modules, for example. As a consequence, analytical and expressive capabilities in relation to this important set of issues appears to be good, overall. Second, the programme develops the capacity for spatial analysis and strategy/plan-making at various spatial scales in a systematic and thorough way.

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

Everything I have seen suggests that assessment is conducted in a rigorous fashion.

I have commented earlier on the thought that is put into designing interesting assignments, and the enthusiasm of both students and staff that is evidenced by the quality of work and feedback provided. I would have appreciated seeing more of the feedback on coursework in some modules. While a great deal of coursework was available on-line it appeared that some had not been marked on-line and hence comments made as feedback were not available to me. There may be merit in moving to on-line marking for all modules where coursework is to be available on-line; alternatively, hard copy with feedback will still need to be available on the days I visit. Otherwise any comments I make about the quality of feedback must always be qualified.

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

The curriculum is well considered, and appears – quite rightly – to be configured wherever possible to draw upon the particular interests and expertise of the teaching team. The evidence of module handbooks and assignment briefs is of a well-organised and dedicated teaching team. The way that the team has coped with this year's sad loss of a team member is testament to the quality of its members and its leadership. It is important, however, that this unanticipated reduction in teaching strength is replaced as soon as possible.

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

None on this occasion.

**(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.)**

Module content is engaging, topical and the evidence of work produced is that students generally respond very positively. Learning outcomes are appropriate at all levels, and well-related to assessment. Everything I saw suggested that most students achieved the learning outcomes.

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

Many staff are active in the activities of the planning profession beyond the school, and in discussion it was clear that this fed into inter-actions with students.

Assignments such as the development of a campaigning document in the Housing Policy module reminds students of the ways that their university studies can connect with life outside the university.

**(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.**

None on this occasion

**(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).**

**External Examiners' Report Checklist**

**Please comment for all boxes**

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

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

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

<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
a.	(i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative partner students?	x		
	(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?			
<b>Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:</b>				
<p>a) <b>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>c) <b>Samples to consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process.</b></p>				
b.	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	x		
c.	Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	x		

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

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

<b>Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements</b>				
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
a.	Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?			x

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