

BAH English and Media

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.			
The final awards for BAEAM students were, by historical standards, high, with very few students achieving a lower overall degree classification than 2:1. Nonetheless, marking standards and the operation of the examination boards were rigorous. I have confidence, therefore, that student achievement is being assessed at comparable levels to my own institution, and those of the other UK HEIs where I have acted as an EE.			
* 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."	✓	
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.

- Curriculum design, giving appropriate space to interdisciplinary modules.
- Innovative assessments and mixed diet of assessment types.
- High level of care and personalization in feedback
- Effective administrative procedures.

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).
<p>Both the February and June boards were well administered and efficiently chaired under university regulations. The views of the course team and of the external examiners were sought at all times. Proper consideration was given to the profile of each BAEAM student within the cohort.</p> <p>In the absence of a more appropriate box, here may be the best place to say something about my experience of being an EE for the BA English and Media. Three points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) It hasn't always been clear how I'm to operate as the course EE for a combined honours programme. There hasn't been any mechanism to report back on the English modules I've been sent, and I've received work by students on other courses than BAEAM. I'm very pleased to report that this has now been attended to, and in future I will act as a module EE, looking at Media modules only – though this poses some questions about oversight of performance across the two subjects. See (b), below. 2) I'm asked to approve all assessment briefs, together with course and module changes. This involved innumerable emails from the course administrator and course leader throughout the year. Although I will be seeing less work in 2018-19, I wonder if there is a way of streamlining the process of gaining EE assent, or of the EE being asked to only scrutinise certain kinds of assignment (e.g. exam questions)? 3). Although the course administrator worked extremely hard to get samples to me, some work (including dissertations) arrived very close to the June board. I am fully conscious of the just-in-time deadlines that staff work to, but I wonder if there's room for discussion about some other way of allowing the EE adequate time to review the range of modules? This might not be an issue in 2018-19 with a smaller and more focused sample to look at, but will again become material in 2019-20 with a much wider range of modules to cover.

(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.)

From my 2016-17 report, and the 9th August response to it:

- **Review the performance of joint honours students in relation to their single honours peers.**

In the final examination board it was clear that, while BAEAM students had performed very well (see my comment under Student Achievement, above), there was a noticeable difference in attainment - at least as indicated by degree classification - between BAEAM students and those on the BA Media Communication Cultures programme. I'm sure that colleagues are considering this gap, and looking also at comparative performance with the BA English Literature, and that these issues form part of the revalidated programme discussed below.

- **Ensure written feedback on assessment explicitly refers to the learning outcomes of the module.**

I saw some evidence of this. In general, as noted above, standards of written feedback were very high.

- **Give further consideration to the overall diet of assessment across modules.**

Consideration has been given to this in the revalidated programme

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

I am entirely satisfied that the level of students' achievements were appropriate and consistent with national norms across the grade bands, with work at the upper end (2.1 and above) meeting typical benchmarks of engagement with theory, critical analysis, independent reading/research, professional-standard creative skills, fluent expression, etc. Work graded at the very highest level showed exceptional levels of independent thinking and cultural analysis. I was also satisfied that the boundary between pass and fail work was rigorously scrutinised, and fail grades were awarded where appropriate. In these ways, student performance was consistent with the expectations of my own institution and of those with which I am familiar with as an EE.

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

See sections e, f and h, below.

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

All assessment is supported by extensive scaffolding in the form of course and module handbooks, assignment briefs, resources on the virtual learning environment etc.

Since I see a very wide range of modules, I also see a very wide range of assessment modes. Colleagues have clearly given abundant consideration to what are the most appropriate ways to develop and assess particular forms of knowledge and skill, while paying attention to the specific requirements of their subject area and/or discipline. See (h) for further detail.

I was impressed by the care which colleagues devoted to the design and marking of assessments. One example stood out in particular: a failed dissertation in which the tutor gave protracted, detailed and extremely clear advice about how the student could recover the work through resubmission.

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

Although, as mentioned in the student achievement section above, the cohort of BAEAM students had a strong profile, BA Media Communication Culture had an appreciably higher proportion of students achieving overall first class honours degrees than those on BAEAM (considered in the same awards board). In my report for 2016-17 I noted a 'flattened' profile for BAEAM students on the Literature of the 20th and 21st Centuries module with no-one achieving a 1st class mark, and this year was similar on the Atlantic Slavery module (the only English module whose comparative grades I checked) where BAEAM students received neither very low or very high scores. There may be all sorts of reasons for this, but as with my comments under section h, below, there may be strategies for helping with 'flow' as students move between different subject expectations.

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

Course materials (module handbooks, assessment briefs etc.) refer students to extensive resources available on My Beckett

(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.)

In all cases, the content of modules was broad, interesting and appropriate to their level.

While in no way wishing to disparage 'traditional' (largely essay and/or examination) modes of assessment, it seemed to me that the more non-traditional forms of assessment were to be largely found on the Media side of the combination (Life Writing being a major exception to this). This posed some questions about the student experience of negotiating very different assessment expectations, and also around the preparatory knowledge and skills needed to engage in an assignment. To single out as an example what I thought was a valuable and innovative mode of assessment, I was interested to know about the experience that students on Lifestyle, Media, Identity would have had of storyboarding, which was a significant aspect of the module's assessment.

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

All the modules I saw carried a sense that students were being progressively encouraged to see themselves as active learners and researchers, becoming increasingly confident in taking control of their studies and generating original, open-ended topics, culminating in their dissertations. The course design promotes notions of cultural and creative industries practice through the place of the Media Professionals Workshop which helps students to reflect on the relationship between their studies and media and communication practice, but all modules contribute to the growth of independent

scholarship. I would be keen to hear about any initiatives that foster co-production of research, or help student work to be published.

(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 have no concerns, or comments to make here.

(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)?	✓		
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>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?	✓		
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"/>
If you were new:		
(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

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

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