

BAH Media Communication Cultures

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.

Once again, the modules that I looked at featured some very good practice. Areas of good practice continue to be: a creative approach to assignment design on some modules; strong evidence of modules being research-led by academics who are making a substantial contribution to their field; detailed student feedback that in most cases provides clear instructions on what the student did well and how they can improve. I also note a strong commitment to helping students to develop their writing skills and consistent encouragement for students to utilize a university-based writing tutor.

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 *
			x
<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).

I attended two Boards this academic year (one in February and one in June). Both were conducted in a professional manner and were highly organised and efficient. Staff members were considerate in their discussion of students and there was a clear sense of a duty of care to the students. The appropriate members of teaching and administrative staff were present and were fully engaged with the board's processes and the chair's decisions.

(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.)

There were no specific action points that emerged from the previous report.

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

In comparison to students I have assessed at other institutions, the overall performance of the students in the cohort I examined was of a suitable standard. In particular, on a number of the modules the better performing students engaged with theory in an effective manner, demonstrating a good ability to synthesize their knowledge of theoretical debates.

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

What was evident from the various pieces of assessment I examined was that the vast majority of students were adept at demonstrating knowledge of a range of relevant theoretical concepts. In relation to their application of these concepts to case studies or examples, there was some variation in the skills that were demonstrated. Modules that were assessed by 100% examination gave less scope for students to develop their conceptual understanding through case study material. However, there were, overall, some good examples of the application of critical thinking skills.

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

As indicated above and in my last report, approaches to assessment design continue to be a feature of good practice. Students were provided with a suitably varied diet of assessment across the two semesters. There were clear examples of a creative approach to the design of assignment tasks on a number of modules. The students tended to respond well to the different assignment briefs and seemed to engage positively with assessment that required them to develop and work with their own examples (either in collaboration with other students or independently). The more creative assessment tasks, such as campaigns, poster presentations and creative projects, complemented the more traditional forms of assessment such as examinations, class tests, presentations and essays.

There are several modules at levels 5 and 6 with only one assessment point (for instance, the modules with 100% exams). I would recommend that the teaching team reflect on this aspect of professional practice. It will be important to discuss whether one assessment point is suitable for such modules when students are expected to demonstrate several learning outcomes. There are some outstanding modules that feature some excellent research-led teaching. Such modules warrant giving students more than one opportunity to produce work based on their interests in the module. This would help the team to build upon its strengths in relation to assessment development, while potentially further enhancing student opportunities to engage in independent research.

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

The samples of work indicated that the curriculum and the teaching are suitably varied and of high quality. It also appears that the course and the individual modules are adequately resourced. In particular, the provision of a writing tutor enables the team to provide effective support for students who struggle with academic literacy.

A key area of good practice continues to be the commitment to research-led teaching that is embedded across a number of modules on the curriculum. What is impressive about this programme is the way in which the range of modules reflect the dynamism and diversity that are at the heart of the study of media, culture and communication. A number of modules did not just go for the 'obvious' textbook approach to the study of media but instead approached subjects in novel and innovative ways.

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

All modules that I examined utilized the VLE to support students' learning. The Media Professionals Workshop module, in particular, made extensive and effective use of MyBeckett in order to assist level 5 students to reflect upon their skills, knowledge and experience.

(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 well organised and presented in a clear manner in the module handbooks. There is, however, some variation in the way handbooks were devised and formatted. Some specific module booklets gave more detailed information about what was expected of students. For instance, the Genre Bending, Genre Blending module featured elements of good practice in the module handbook as there was an excellent section that reminded students of the skills they've already acquired and how the module builds on them. The dissertation handbook also featured very clear guidance on what students should expect from the dissertation process and the list of frequently asked questions was an effective method of ensuring that students did not feel overwhelmed by the task.

Information about specific assessment briefs tended not to feature in module handbooks but instead was given out once teaching had begun. The team may consider whether this is the most effective way of informing students about assessment. Having clear and precise details about the exact requirements of each assignment, including aspects such as essay titles, assessment weightings, specific criteria and so on, within the handbook from the start would enable students to have a single authoritative information point about each module.

Another aspect that has been discussed with the staff team in previous boards is the potential to bring in the use of assignment specific criteria. Currently the majority of modules feature generic level descriptors in both module handbooks and on student feedback forms. The use of specific criteria that is tailored to each assignment may enable each student to have a clearer sense of the skills they are expected to demonstrate for each assessment point. The programme team have informed me that they are currently looking to explore the use of more specific criteria in this way and I look forward to seeing evidence of this during the forthcoming academic year.

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

As mentioned above and in my previous report, one area of good practice is in relation to research-led teaching. It is clear that content on a variety of modules is informed by staff engagement with on-going research and scholarship. Furthermore, it is apparent that modules such as Media Professionals Workshop are underpinned by the professional practices of a staff team with ongoing links to media industries. This year's cohort of students demonstrated a range of impressive skills and qualities. These not only included research skills and critical thinking but also practical problem solving and creativity.

(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.

(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

Course Materials				
Did you receive?		Yes	No	N/A
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		

Draft examination papers				
		Yes	No	N/A
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		

Draft coursework				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive all the draft coursework?	x		
	(ii) If not, was this at your request?			
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		

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?	x		
	(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?	x		
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?	x		
c.	Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	x		

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

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

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?			x

Module Board/Progression and Award Boards				
		Yes	No	N/A
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		

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you were new:		
(a) Did you access the on-line External Examiner Induction Module?	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Some inexperienced new examiners are formally mentored. Were you?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Did you find the mentoring you received helpful?	<input checked="" 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:
<input type="text"/>

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
