

## MA Social History 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.

The MA in Social History has run very well in the academic year 2017-18. The courses have all been well set up and materials have been provided for the students, and the assessment and feedback process is working well. I was impressed with the level of feedback that students were provided with which was both supportive and usefully critical. The second marking process also appears to be working well. A particular strength of the courses on the MA is the way in which they allow students to develop their research ideas in creative and novel ways.

## 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 operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board were satisfactory.

(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.)
No specific action was required.

(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 across the MA was good. There was some excellent work – with students on almost every module achieving distinctions. While there were one or two students who consistently scored quite low marks, the range of marks is comparable with other institutions.

(d) The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills.
The work that I have looked at demonstrated that in the options across the MA all students were able to acquire and demonstrate good levels of knowledge of the past, commensurate with that required at MA level for social history. The conceptual engagement of most students was also good – with coursework

demonstrating how many students acquiring and deploying historical theory at a sophisticated level.

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

The structure, organisation and design of the assessment for the courses I looked at this year were all of an excellent standard. Marking was carried out to a high standard – all work was double marked and feedback engaged with student work at a high level.

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

The curriculum for the MA is excellent –and includes a number of creative and original options that allow the students to effectively develop their individual research interests.

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

My Beckett is well set up for the modules on the MA – materials are provided for the students and it is clear and easy to use.

**(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.)**

**CRN 12033 Researching Cultures**

The aims and objectives of this course have been made very clear to the students in the handout materials. The interdisciplinary nature of the course is quite challenging, but this has been centred on a clear historical theme. The modes of assessment are interesting and varied, and it is a great idea to create a conference format for the student presentations, and the students have been given a lot of support in the preparation of proposals and delivery of the papers. It was useful to be able to see the presentation slides as well as the comments from both markers. A good level of feedback was given on the presentations and in the case of the one student who had a very low mark, the issues with the work were clearly explained. The essays had also been clearly marked and a good level of feedback offered.

**CRN 14362 Debating Documents of Life in Twentieth Century History**

Again this course was well set out – aims and learning objectives were made clear and a good set of materials was provided for the students. The focus on particular individuals and texts really well, and allows the students a lot of scope to develop their own interests and areas of enthusiasm. Assignment one appears to be working well and detailed feedback has been offered. In the case of the one student who failed it has been clearly explained why this is the case. Assignment two also went well – and it was good to see that overall there was a rise in the marks, suggesting that students had benefitted from critical feedback from assignment one. In the case of the one piece of work where there was a difference in opinion between the first and second marker it was clear how this had been resolved.

**CRN10791 Underworlds: Representations of Crime, Police and Criminal c.1700 to c.1945**

This is an exciting and engaging course that allows students to explore the history of crime across the modern period. The course materials are very well laid out, and aims, objectives and methods of assessment have all been made clear. The essay appears to be working very

well as a mode of assessment and good and detailed feedback has been given from both markers. Students seem to be performing particularly well on this course – there were no fails, and three distinctions.

#### **HIST 705 Nature, Culture and Society**

This is a very interesting module that focuses on environmental history with a public history element, linking the past with current environmental issues. The module handbook is clearly laid out and the assessment (a long blog of 3,500 words in an academically rigorous style) has been well explained. I enjoyed reading the blogs on the site, and this novel method of assessment appears to be working very well. Two students had achieved distinctions, with a good range in between, and in the case of the lowest achievers, the problems had been made clear through feedback.

#### **CRN 23977 Rethinking the Past: Concepts, Definitions and Approaches to Public History**

This course is also well presented, and the aims, objectives and materials have been clearly set up for the students. The course is an innovative and exciting area, and the proposal exercise in particular allowed students to develop original and innovative ideas for public history. The two activities worked well together and produced some good work, with some students achieving distinctions. The marking was carried out well and feedback was clear and supportive.

#### **CRN 23527 All Consuming: Researching Eighteenth-Century Material Culture**

This is a very innovative course, based on recent developments in the subject. Students are offered a very good grounding in the subject and the assessment through an object-based essay provides a great opportunity to develop individual ideas. The case study objects work very well in generating original research ideas for the students. The feedback that has been given to the students is thorough and detailed and offers both positive support and constructive criticism. Students achieved good marks on the course: there were some distinctions and all students passed.

#### **CRN 13496/CRN 22009 Proposal and Dissertation**

The proposal and dissertation appear to be working well together to support students in the production of their most important piece of work for the course. The structure and content of the workshops is excellent and clearly provides a strong level of support for students. It was pleasing to see that most students had reached a good standard in their dissertation work and there were some highly original topics this year including antisemitism in the Second World War, the decline and fall of Empire Day and Leeds and Bradford in the General Strike. The feedback and comments on the proposals and dissertations were excellent. In the case of the one project that had not met the standard to pass, good and supportive feedback was offered which will hopefully allow for progression.

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

N/a

**(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.**

N/a

**(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**

<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/marking 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?			X
b.	(i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate?			X
	(ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			X
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?			X
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
<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?			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		