

MSc Criminology 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 quality of the learning materials in mybeckett (especially for modules CRN12097 and 12101).

The generally excellent feedback provided to students – positively oriented, detailed and comprehensive

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).
<p>The Board ran smoothly and professionally. There was very good attendance, participants were well prepared and on occasion the care and enthusiasm felt by staff towards their students was evident and impressive.</p> <p>Much of the Board (approximately 2 hours of a 3 hour meeting) dealt with Undergraduate modules which I have no responsibility for. By the end, most other staff had long left, including the Programme Leader for the programme I am the external examiner for, had left. I am not sure why this was necessary. I could have signed forms off sooner, as others had been invited to do.</p>

(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.)
<p>I noted that I thought evidence of moderation could be a little bit clearer/made more explicit. There was an improvement in this regard this year.</p>

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.
<p>The level of performance was in general very high indeed with a large proportion of students achieving grades in the distinction band and very few obtaining fail grades. The level of achievement is higher than it was last year and I would judge it rates favourably with levels at other HE institutions.</p>

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

The students who produced the best work demonstrated a mastery of the literature in the relevant topic areas and, relatedly, a high level of conceptual and theoretical knowledge. They had also mastered how to structure an argument and support it with relevant evidence.

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

Most assessments are long (4000-5000) word essays, appropriate for Masters level. The essay questions were clear and appropriate.

Marking standards were rigorously upheld. Some of the work at the bottom end (including some failed assignments) could in my view have been marked more generously but this speaks to the maintenance of high standards. Where lower marks had been awarded, feedback pinpointed the reasons.

Generally the feedback provided to students was very good indeed, highlighting strengths but also areas for improvement, and communicated in a positive manner.

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

The curriculum includes a number of very interesting, contemporary modules which enable students to critically analyse important criminological issues, drawing on up to date resources and perspectives.

Three of the six taught modules are taught by the same member of staff. This is not necessarily a problem – and as is emphasised elsewhere in this report, the quality of teaching is very good overall – but it does seem quite unusual for a Master’s programme.

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

This is a real strength. Learning materials are very well organised making it easy for students to navigate a splendid range of resources (readings, links to film clips, assignment guidance). The inclusion of recorded lectures represents good practice.

(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.)

Modules are consistent in terms of delivering high quality material on a range of up to date criminological subjects pitched quite clearly at Master’s level. There is a strong sense of criticality (with modules on race and gender for example), an engagement with current theoretical perspectives in criminology and a focus

on issues that chime well with the research interests of staff.

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

(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?		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		

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?			
<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?			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		