

## MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 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 assignments are extremely creative and diverse. I think that this is helpful with respect to questions of equality and diversity as it fosters different types of learning and my impression is that the cohort of students is more diverse than in many comparator institutions.

The module leaders are to be praised for the innovative module design. All modules work differently and assess different sets of skills, which encourages student learning in many different 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 board went through all the marks and modules in much detail. It went well and important things were given enough space for discussion.

(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.)
I notice that the students this year are stronger in terms of 'thinking critically', compared to last year. Essays are written in a less descriptive way overall. I assume this must have to do with changes in teaching styles and staff teaching this skill in their lectures and seminars.

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.
The performance overall is not very different from comparable institutions. There are some very strong as well as some very weak students in each cohort, which can be a challenge for the lecturers, who, however, manage very well to maintain the interest of the strongest students whilst supporting the weaker ones.

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

The students are particularly strong in 'non-traditional' assignments (e.g. job applications, portfolios). They struggle more with issues of methodology and developing conceptual frameworks.

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

With respect to assignment questions, I notice that broadly speaking, essay questions are rather wide and I do wonder if this can be difficult for some students (I noticed that some struggle narrowing the questions down into more manageable questions); perhaps more narrowly framed questions might be helpful here as they inherently provide more guidance to the students.

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

The teaching and curriculum are innovative and it is visible in students' assignments (specifically the dissertations) that many of them have developed a genuine interest in their field of study and are enthusiastic about it. This, to me, is a tremendous success as it will shape the ways in which the students develop their future careers and lives.

In terms of resourcing, I am aware of the amount of work that academic staff members are putting into contacting students about missed assignments and similar issues. In other universities, such tasks are undertaken by a team of administrators. I therefore wonder whether an investment in this place might be a resource well-spent as it might free up time for the academics to focus on other things.

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

I have to admit that I find the VLE slightly difficult and quite slow to load – it does not correspond well with all operating systems the same way.

Overall it is obvious how much information there is on the VLE and how much time is spent on its organisation and content management.

**(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.)**

I have provided comments on the individual modules before and during the board. Whilst the assessments are generally coherent, during the board we discussed that it would be helpful if penalties for poor academic practice were clearly communicated to the students and applied coherently across modules.

Overall, the marking is consistent and fair (perhaps slightly on the generous side) and the moderation process is transparent, with moderators providing extensive feedback on individual pieces of work.

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

It is clear to me that the teaching staff are very engaged in their roles and go further than the extra mile to ensure that students succeed in their careers – both in terms of providing feedback and pastoral care. The content of teaching is relevant and presented in an exciting way, and the formats of delivery are varied.

**(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**

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?			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		

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?			x
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?	x		
<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		

## 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"/>
<b>If you were new:</b>		
(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"/>

<b>Any general or specific comments on the development and support offered by the University, especially improvements you would like to see:</b>
N/A



## 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

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