

MA International Relations 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." | ✓ | |
| 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. | | | |
| * 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. |
| |

A nice variety of forms of assessment is used across the modules I looked at and the group assignments seem to work effectively. The subject group has made good progress in embedding group work and assessment into the curriculum.

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 * |
| | | | ✓ |
| <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'm afraid I was unable to attend the board this year due to my commitments at my own institution. I sent in my non-attendance forms with my comments ahead of each board. I am very satisfied with the correspondence I had the Student Administrator in Politics and International Relations. |

| (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.) |
|--|
| None required |

| (c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions. |
|---|
| The standard of students' work was much as I would have expected of a post-92 institution. There were some very good pieces of work at the top end and a good number of solid attempts, but also a sizeable number of assignments in the lower-second class bracket (or passes at MA level). In sum, the students' performance is similar to that of students at my own institutions and other similar HEIs I am familiar with. |

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

As noted above, I saw some very good and scholarly assignments. Students seemed to cope well with atypical and group assessments for the most part. In particular, I enjoyed reading the wikis on the Theorising Human Rights module.

Of course, most students could have deepened their analyses and read more widely. To encourage them towards doing so, I was pleased to see a number of markers explicitly referring to 'academic practice' as a category in their feedback.

There were quite a few cases in which students followed the text of their sources too closely and there were some issues with how to deal with high Turnitin similarity scores. I thought three or four assignments should probably have been put through your academic misconduct procedure or at least much more harshly graded. There were a number of other assignments with high similarity scores, about which the markers did not comment.

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

I found the assessments on the modules I looked at to be well designed. Lecturers have obviously given a great deal of consideration to how best to assess their students' performance and to encourage their learning. The modes of assessment seemed neatly tailored to the content and mode of delivery of each module.

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

The curricula comprise a good range of modules. In term of teaching, from looking at the students' assessments, they have been encouraged and stimulated to learn about each subject. Students performing at the top end demonstrate that adequate library and other resources have been provided.

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

It was good to see lecturers making full use of the VLE, especially in terms of using it for assessment and feedback on some modules (e.g., the use of wikis and discussion tools). The distance learning versions of modules made very good use of the platform, with nicely presented and coherently organised sites.

(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.)

As noted above, the courses comprise a nice selection of modules, which ensure that the course learning outcomes can be achieved. Assessment of modules across each level was consistent and the content of all of the modules I was asked to look was interesting and engaging.

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

Once again this year, I was impressed with the level of reflection and consideration staff give to their teaching practice. There are some interesting things going on in terms of the curriculum and assessment. I especially liked the way the assessment of the Active Politics and Volunteering module is shaping up, with students making good connections between the academic literature and their real-world experiences.

(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.

None

(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? | ✓ | | |