

FdA Early Years 2015/16

External Examiner's report summary

Please indicate in the relevant boxes below whether you agree with the statements about the standards of Leeds Beckett University's awards, the standards of student performance and the conduct of the University's assessment processes.

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 the Faculty or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the course leader.

Standards set		
	Yes	No
"In my view, the standards set for the 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 performance			
	Yes	No	N/A *
"In my view, the standards of student performance are comparable with similar course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar."	✓		
I have reviewed a sample of student work from the collaborative / franchise institution and in my view the standards of student performance are comparable with students studying the award(s) at Leeds Beckett.			✓
* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess national standards 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 sound 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 for commendation

Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes

The team are very responsive to the specific needs of work based learners and assessments are planned accordingly to allow students to reflect on their own practice in the workplace.

The current team should be commended for stepping in to cover staff absence to ensure consistency of provision, the students do not appear to have been adversely affected by staff changes.

Main report

In this section you are asked to describe more fully how the University has or has not maintained academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to the course(s) for which you are the external examiner.

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 / franchise provision sampled.

If you are an external examiner for any of the University's Pearson Edexcel (HND/HNC level) provision, please also complete the section on page 8 sections l, m and n entitled "for External Examiners Associated with Edexcel Courses."

Professional Body Requirements			
<p>"In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met.</p>	Yes	No	N/A *
<p><i>*Not applicable if the course is not a professional body course please indicate here.</i></p>			✓
<p><i>If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.</i></p>			

(a) The operation and conduct of the Board of Examiners (and or Examination Committee meeting you may also have attended).

The board was conducted professionally – all paperwork was to hand and accurate. There was ample time for discussion when discussing individual students. It was disappointing that there was no representative from Leeds Beckett to oversee proceedings.

(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.)

Due to changes in staffing it is difficult to see whether discussions held at the previous meeting and through the previous report have been responded too as the new team have had to ensure the smooth running of the course in the absence of staff members.

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

Performance would appear comparable to that of students in my own institution, with some very good marks being awarded. Students are clearly very good practitioners who are provided with ample opportunity for reflecting on their own practice. Academic writing can be a challenge for some, particularly around ensuring that their reflections are appropriately linked to a good range of academic sources. Continued support in academic

literacies would be recommended, particularly help in selecting good academic sources, and writing in a critical manner.

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

Strengths of students lie in their good practical knowledge, and there is a sense that they are beginning to apply the relevant theory to what they have observed in practice. There is a good level of creativity evident, and students rise to the challenge when undertaking alternative assessments e.g. leadership module, showing a good level of critical thinking.

The students do, however, need to draw from more academic sources in their writing, and also need to ensure that they are providing good balance in their discussions, rather than relying on preconceptions. More care needs to be made in the selection of source material and the development of good academic discourse is recommended.

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

Marking on student work is consistent, and feedback is thorough giving students clear guidance as to where they might improve their writing. Texts on annotations also help students to see where they might develop work. It is good to see Turn It In being used for submission, although there may be some benefit in teaching students how to use their originality report in self-assessing their use of academic texts. Students might benefit from having specific targets in their work to help them move forwards with their writing, as sometimes when this is embedded into feedback it is less clear for the students as to what exactly they are aiming to achieve. It would also be useful to see more directly how the feedback and mark links to the LO' s for the module.

At times there was some discrepancy between the mark awarded and the feedback given, for example students receiving very high marks (80+) were receiving feedback related to the improvement of basic skills (referencing, structure) which at this level should be embedded. It would be useful for the team to consider exactly what constitutes a high first and the feedback that should reflect this.

There is a clear IV process embedded and evidence that the team work together in agreeing marks.

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

There is a good balance of assessments at this level of study (only level 5 work has been viewed due to a change in provider), and it is clear the students are given appropriate opportunity to link theory to practice. Modules also cover a range of subjects and topics, although I did question the relevance of two of the elective modules (Teaching and Learning in the Core Subjects and Teaching Skills) which seemed out of keeping with the EY focus of the course. The student work reflected a superficial understanding of the role of the teacher reflected in a number of sweeping generalisations. The team may need to rethink the assessment focus for these modules if they are to remain in the future.

There are, however, some very relevant modules, Contemporary Issues for example showed a clear focus on current issues which were very much related to the current challenges which the children's workforce are dealing with, and likewise work in context allowed reflection on the current status of the EYP – this reflects a team who are knowledgeable in issues related to the sector.

(g) Comments on the use of X-stream (Virtual Learning Environment) within the course (if applicable).

N/A

(h) Module content, consistency of modules and module assessment across the course and the achievement of learning outcomes. (You may be asked by your Faculty to provide detailed comments on the modules that you examine.)

As previously stated the modules examined (level 5) showed a good balance in relation to the knowledge and skills they allow students to demonstrate. LO's are appropriate to the module content and assessments allow students to demonstrate how LO's have been met. There is good currency to the programme, and the level 5 modules allow students the opportunity to seek further study through a BA top up, or develop opportunities for career progression, for example through the leadership and employability 2 modules.

Some of the modules may benefit from development in terms of relating specifically to the needs of EY practitioners – for example while I appreciate that the Teaching and Learning in the Core Subjects and Teaching Skills module enable students to develop skills which might allow them to undertake ITT at a later date, this did expose some weakness on knowledge and understanding. Likewise, in the Work in Context module there was a suggestion that this was a research project, when in fact it appeared to be more of an extended literature review. Tutors need to ensure that the assessments give the right message in terms of what students are learning.

There is a good balance of assessments, allowing students to demonstrate transferable skills, and the team have not been afraid to use alternative assessments e.g. poster presentations, video presentations. I understand there were some challenges in respect of handing in video's through TII and suggest the team seek alternative ways of hand in so to ensure that the students are not unduly stressed by this.

It was noted that there were quite a lot of non-submissions and it may well be worth considering this in terms of timing /mode of assessments to see if there are any patterns which might explain this.

(i) Areas of good practice you have identified – please expand on the key areas for commendation listed in the summary.

The range of assessments which allow students to demonstrate a range of skills, as well as reflect in their own practice is a strength of the course, as is the range of employability skills encouraged which will open up opportunities for the students in the future.

The team also make their feedback very personalised which shows how the students have developed throughout the course.

(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 / Franchise Provision:** please include here any comments you wish to make on elements of collaborative / franchise 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 / franchise 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 / franchise 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?			✓

Examination Committee/Board of Examiners				
		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 Examination Committee/Board of Examiners?	✓		