

**External Examiner’s annual report for the academic year 2018/19**

Please complete this form and return it to the University of York, via your University email address, to examiners@york.ac.uk.

**Reports should be submitted within eight weeks of the final Programme (Ratification Panel) Board.**

**Name** Professor Charles Leek

**Institution** University of Liverpool

**Degree Programme/ Modules Examined** BSc Psychology and MPsych

**Academic year appointment started** 2016/2017**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

You are invited to comment freely and **fully** on the programme(s) / module(s) for which you are responsible. Please support your commentary with appropriate evidence where relevant and provide sufficient detail to aid departments in reviewing and enhancing their programmes. If this is the end of your term of office please also complete section k giving an overview of quality and standards covering your term. Note that reports are shared with student representatives and that individual staff and students should not be named and details should not be included which might identify a student (for example specifying a dissertation title).

Please comment on the following:

**Standards**

1. the appropriateness of course structure and content to the level of the qualification and to the relevant subject benchmark statement: including the appropriateness of the learning outcomes of the programme and all its elements to its educational aims, and where relevant, whether the programme reflects additional Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;

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| The course content and structure are appropriate meeting the relevant subject benchmarks in psychology. The course structure is accredited by British Psychological Society (BPS).  |

1. the appropriateness of the marking scheme/grading criteria and the extent to which the grading criteria have been rigorously and consistently applied;

This is appropriate. I noted in my report for 17/18 that a relatively narrow range of grades was applied to the advanced clinical modules. Significant changes were made to the structure of the final exam papers in these modules this year – which is welcome. The exams now have a greater emphasis on applying basic knowledge and critical analysis. Averages marks on these modules tend to be quite high – but this may reflect the fact that enrolment is restricted to high academic performers. Overall, the marking scheme/grading criteria are appropriate and similar to those in use at other comparable UK HEIs. The marking scheme/grading criteria seem to be consistently applied across modules. As noted in my previous report, there remains some variation in the completeness/detail of moderation reports.

This year I focussed on final year projects. Average grades were higher than in previous years. I noted in my report to the Board of Examiners that the department may want to consider alternative ways to assess student engagement and understanding for the final year project – for example, through a spoken presentation and replacing the current contribution component. There was some indication that projects were generously marked in favour of higher marks at the 2i/1st boundary and this may require some degree of ‘recalibration’. An additional assessment component may also help in discriminating project quality around this border.

Another issue that was raised concerned the relatively small number of assessed components to final year advanced modules. Students complete a single final exam in which they answer 2/5 questions (2 hours). This provides a relatively small sample of student ability on which to reliably assess achievement.

1. threshold standards: the standard of students’ performances in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding in reflecting the level of the qualification;

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| The students achieve a high academic standard demonstrating a broad depth of knowledge of psychology and research methodology. Standards are appropriate for the level of qualification. |

1. comparability of standards: the standard of particular degree classifications/distinctions/passes awarded in comparison with those students on similar programmes of study in other UK degree-awarding bodies (with which you are familiar), particularly if the distribution of classifications departs from relevant national patterns;

*While there is no expectation that the distribution of classifications should necessarily conform to national patterns, external examiners’ comments on this issue are valuable in evaluating the University's standards.*

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| As in previous years, the department awards a relatively high proportion of 1st and upper second class degrees (circa 90%+). It is difficult to gauge this accurately against comparator institutional benchmarks. While seemingly high, the percentage of ‘good’ degrees could reflect a range of factors including, for example, the high quality of teaching and student experience, student admissions tariffs etc.  |

**Assessment**

1. Please comment on the appropriateness of the assessment methods (for the subject, level of study and learning outcomes);

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| As in previous years the external examiners reviewed all of the final examination papers for Year 1, 2 and 3. These show an appropriate level of progression of academic expectations. As noted above, the changes made to the final exams on the advanced clinical modules were welcomed. We have also suggested (see above) that the department consider whether there is sufficient variation in assessment in the final year (both in the content modules and final year project).  |

1. the conduct of, and the procedures followed by, the Board of Examiners (specifically whether the University rules relating to assessment, progression and award and procedures governing exceptional circumstances affecting assessment and academic misconduct have been fairly and equitably applied);

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| The Board of Examiners was well attended by academic staff, and it was conducted efficiently and professionally.  |

1. (if applicable), how effectively the requirements of any relevant professional body have been addressed in assessment processes;

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| n/a |

1. the effectiveness of the external examining administrative arrangements (for example the time available for reviewing scripts, availability of documentation needed to carry out the external examiner role);

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| We were well supported in our examining role by the Examinations Officer and the administrative staff. There was sufficient time for reviewing scripts. I note (again) this year that the University continues to rely on its current sign-off system. This is neither a secure nor efficient procedure, and urgently needs to be replaced.  |

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

1. in so far as you are able, please comment on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment (including the quality of feedback to students) as revealed in exam scripts/other assessments, and by the level of student performance;

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| The Department of Psychology provides an academically challenging and vibrant environment in which students can achieve their academic potential. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. |

**Induction**

1. **To be completed by those commencing their period of appointment as an External Examiner at the University in the reporting year.**

How effective were the procedures for induction and preparation for your role?

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| n/a |

**End of term of office overview**

1. **To be completed by those whose term of office is now concluded.**

Please provide an overview of quality and standards, for example indicating whether improvements have been made to the quality of provision, covering the duration of your term of office.

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| n/a |

**Previous issues**

1. if *particular* issues were raised in your report last year, have they been considered and, where appropriate, addressed?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Yes**  | **No** | **n/a** *(no issues raised / first report)* |  |
| x |  |  |
| *(Please comment as required)* |

**Additional comments**

1. any other remarks **not covered** by the above, examples of good/innovative practice identified, opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities based on your experience, any issues to be drawn to the attention of the Board of Examiners or the University;

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| none |

**Feedback regarding the report form**

1. this form is reviewed annually and any feedback on this form is welcome and will be considered as part of the annual review;

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| none |

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| **Please give your overall opinion (delete as appropriate) on whether:**  |
|  a) the standards set for this/these award(s) are appropriate for qualifications at this level, in this subject: **YES** |
| b) the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK degree-awarding bodies with which you are familiar :  **YES** |
| c) the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted in line with the University’s regulations and procedures:  **YES** |

 

Signed: Date: 17/06/19