



External Examiner's annual report for the academic year 2019/20

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

- (a) 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;

The course content, structure and learning outcomes are appropriate in meeting the subject benchmarks in psychology. The programme is accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

- (b) the appropriateness of the marking scheme/grading criteria and the extent to which the grading criteria have been rigorously and consistently applied;

These are clear and consistently applied across modules.

- (c) threshold standards: the standard of students' performances in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding in reflecting the level of the qualification;

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.

- (d) 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.

The applied standards are similar to those applied at other comparable HEIs.

Assessment

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

The programme contains a variety of different methods of assessment with clear expectations about the standards required across levels. Learning outcomes are appropriately assessed.

- (f) 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);

This year – due to the extraordinary circumstances of the national lockdown, the examination board was conducted online. Examination Board procedures were followed and both fairly and equitably applied.

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

n/a

(h) 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);

We were well supported in our examining role by the Examinations Officer (Dr Daniel Baker) and the administrative staff (Kelly Freebury). This year we were able to remotely access student work and were given detailed statistical analyses of module marks and distributions. I am pleased to note that the University has moved to an electronic system for signing off progression/degree awards. The system worked well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

(i) 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;

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

(j) **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?

n/a

End of term of office overview

(k) **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.

This is my final year as an external examiner at the University of York. As in previous years, my report is overwhelmingly positive on all key reporting criteria: course structure and content, the quality of the work that we examined, comparability of standards, departmental and University quality assurance procedures, assessment standards, conduct of the examination boards, marking criteria and consistency in application, and processes etc. The Department of Psychology is an exceptionally well-run department in every respect, and a credit to the University of York.

Previous issues

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

Yes	No	n/a (no issues raised / first report)
x		

(Please comment as required)

Additional comments

(m) 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;

A particularly outstanding feature of the academic programme is the high quality of the final year student projects. These are a credit to the department, its staff and quality of the supervision.

Feedback regarding the report form

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

none

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: 30/06/20_____

External Examiner Annual Report 2019/20

External Examiner reports should be made available to students on the programme. Please ensure that any names (staff or students) and/or any information that may identify a student (for example a dissertation title) are redacted prior to making the report available to students.

You can also access this form through [External Examiner Annual Reports 2019-20](#), in a format which allows you to search and examine all of your department's reports at the same time.

External Examiner Details			
Name	Amanda Seed	York Department	Psychology
Email address	ams18@st-andrews.ac.uk	Level of Study	UG
Home Institution	University of St Andrews	Degree Programme/ Modules Examined	BSc / MPSYCH Psychology
How many years have you been an external examiner for York?	This is my third year		
(i) How effective were the procedures for induction and preparation for your role? (optional)			
(i) Please provide an overview of quality and standards covering the duration of your term of appointment. (optional)			

Attendance

Did you participate in any virtual Boards of Examiners meetings?	Yes	Please use the space below if you have any comment about opportunities to participate in these virtual meetings.
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Standards

Please comment on the following:

a) the appropriateness of the course structure and content to the level of qualification and to the relevant benchmark statement

The course provides students with an excellent degree in psychology and is BPS accredited. Students in the 3rd year of the BSc and the 4th year of the MPsych have a broad range of advanced modules to choose from, taught by world-leading experts. The inclusion of clinical psychology modules is a particular strength of this degree programme. The provision of a project and extended essay gives students experience in working closely with a PI and the quality of work produced in these modules reveals the excellence of the education that students receive.

b) the appropriateness of the marking scheme/grading criteria and the extent to which the grading criteria have been rigorously and consistently applied

I reviewed Year 3 of the BSc and Year 3 & 4 of the MPsych degree. The criteria are transparent and give appropriate descriptions for work of the standard expected to attain a degree of the different classifications, and the consistency of these descriptions across modules, including the extended essay, which will be very helpful to students in tailoring their learning appropriately over the course of the degree.

Last year I suggested that the lecturers provide a full moderation report to examiners that includes the selection of scripts for moderation, and the moderator's impression of the way that the marking has been applied, details of any disagreements and how these were resolved (including whether or not further work was looked at following any changes, or if any grade adjustment was made).

It was really wonderful to see such module reports this year. The best of these gave:

- Some background to the course including any recent changes or anything that could have affected performance
- An idea of the rationale behind the questions and the marking (e.g. first class answers incorporated independent reading and original evaluation, upper seconds relied more on lecture notes), Also an indication of how these expectations were communicated to students. This allows a comparison of how the marking criteria are being applied across modules which is very helpful for the task of evaluating across modules.
- The performance of the students as compared to any previous cohorts.
- Second markers gave information about
 - o how scripts were selected,
 - o the number of scripts selected,
 - o their impression of the marking and the quality of the work,

- o any recommendations made for adjustments, and how these were acted upon.
- Excellent to see new courses are fully second marked – but it would be great if everyone gave information about whether this was done before or after looking at the first markers (some already did).

Overall it was clear that good practise is being used to mark and scrutinise fairness of marking and consistency across the modules. A very small number of inconsistencies –

- In a few cases it was mentioned that there were small disagreements in the mark of a particular script, and that an adjustment was made. This should not happen unless all of the scripts have been read. Instead it would be better to revisit at least that grade class and re-examine all of the marks in the light of the moderator's comments – to ensure no 'lottery' effect for students.
- In a few cases the report was too cursory to really get an idea of the way things are being done – it would be good to ensure all of the information described above is being included.

Possible addition to the form :where difficulties in delivery or engagement have been identified – perhaps a few words to indicate possible solutions for next year would be useful.

In addition we were asked to comment on the standards from open book exams (needed because of COVID). It was clear that these had worked well and discriminated students just as well as in person exams.

c) threshold standards: the standard of students' performances in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding in reflecting the level of the qualification.

The threshold is set appropriately and students are meeting these standards.

d) 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

I am only familiar with the details of how grading maps on to student performance at my own institution, the University of St Andrews. The standard expected for the different degree classifications are very similar. Both York and St Andrews award degrees in line with national patterns. In some modules the standard of work was really exceptional – particularly the projects and some of the 3rd and 4th year options, and students deserved the high grades they received. There were some modules where I felt that I needed more information to see how the essays I read deserved their marks – see the advice above. But overall, the students' performances are very good and in line with the level expected for a degree from a top institution.

Assessment

Please comment on the following:

(e) the appropriateness of the assessment methods (for the subject, level of study and learning outcomes)

Overall the methods of assessment are appropriate and there is a balance of year long continuous assessment and exams (though it is perhaps tipped towards exams). We were asked to comment on the rescale needed for the second year MCQs. This had been done appropriately and fairly. A plan had been made to make the MCQs 'online-ready' next year to avoid the need to rely on this strategy.

(f) 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);

The examinations officer provided clear information to all staff concerning the distribution of grades across modules and how these compare to average performance, the better to compare the application of the grade criteria. To my knowledge the Exam Board followed all required procedures. Few changes were needed due to COVID-19 - the rescale of MCQs in 2nd year as mentioned above was done fairly and equitably.

(g) 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);

External examiners were provided, by the examinations officer and the secretariat, with access to all scripts, assessments, marking criteria, marking sheets and final grades, we were also directed towards areas where careful scrutiny would be the most useful. The online portal worked very well for this.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

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

Students have a huge array of choice in terms of the modules they can take in their final years of study, of subjects taught by practitioners at the forefront of the discipline. I was very impressed with the standard of student work, both from timed essays and continuous assessment. The level of engagement and the quality of the teaching is evident in the work produced not just by the best students but by a large proportion of the cohort, most of which demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding, and considerable skill in critical evaluation and logical presentation. The projects in particular are extremely impressive, with advanced research methods being used and clearly presented by the students. The Advance Research Method Module is a wonderful opportunity for students to build these skills and it is great to see them being put to use.

Because much of the formal assessment is exam based or at the end of the year, there are not many opportunities for me to review the feedback provided to students which can be used by them to improve performance. This is done formatively with practise questions throughout the year. Some examples could be provided in future years if comments on this aspect of the teaching would be useful.

Previous Issues

(j) if particular issues were raised in your report last year, have they been considered and (where appropriate), addressed?	Yes	(j) Please comment on your response as required. The module reports are really excellent and I hope best practise in filling these out will be shared this year to help all module controllers make the most of them.
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Additional Comments
<p>(k) Please use this space for any other remarks not covered by the above, such as 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, or other thoughts.</p> <p>The exams officer does a wonderful job of preparing the graphs for us to compare grade distributions across modules.</p>

Form Feedback
<p>(m) this form is reviewed annually and any feedback on this form is welcome and will be considered as part of the annual review</p>

Statements	Yes/No
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