

SUBJECT EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2014/2015

NB: This report template is for completion by Subject External Examiners (Tier One) including all External Examiners operating at programmes offered by our Collaborative Partners. Examiners appointed to programmes that have been permitted to operate in a single-tier Assessment Board structure should also complete this template.

Award External Examiners (Tier Two) should complete template EE4A.

SECTION A: NOTES FOR GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THIS FORM

- 1 Please use this form for submitting, electronically, your annual External Examiner's Report. The report will be available to staff and students and receive wide circulation within the Institution as part of our Continuous Monitoring and Improvement process. It will also be available more widely on request, so we ask that you do not refer to staff or students by name. Where staff or students are referred to by name, the report will be redacted to remove these details. The report, when submitted, will become the property of the University and will be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act as applicable.
- 2 Sections B, D, E, F, J, K and M are for completion by all External Examiners. Other Sections should be completed where appropriate.
- 3 Once completed, the form should be submitted electronically to the appropriate Head of Faculty Student and Academic Services at the email address given at the end of this template.
- 4 Your Report should be submitted to the University within six weeks of the date of the final Assessment Board meeting which dealt with cohort(s) of students to which the report refers. Programme Teams are required to respond to External Examiners concerning issues raised in the report. This response will be completed as Section N within this report, which will be returned to you following consideration at the next scheduled Programme Committee meeting.

In completing your report, please use language that is readily understood by all readers.

Thank you for your continued support and contribution to the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

SECTION B:

1	External Examiner Name:	Dr Sandra Sargent
2	Assessment Board(s) of which a member:	Faculty of Education Tier 1 Unit Assessment Board
3	Programme(s) for which the examiner has been approved:	Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning
4	Specialist/subject area(s) examined:	
5	Department/School:	PDEI
6	Faculty/Division:	Education
7	Collaborative provision: (please supply names of all partners and details of provision)	Macclesfield College, Mid Cheshire College, South Cheshire College and Trafford College.

SECTION C: INDUCTION AND BRIEFING			
(To be completed <u>only if this is your first report and you are commencing your period of appointment as an External Examiner at MMU</u>)			
C1	Can you confirm that:	YES	NO
	before taking on the role of External Examiner, you were sufficiently briefed on the nature of your responsibilities, including the units to which you were appointed to examine?		
	you have been provided with detail on where to receive guidance on your role as External Examiner at MMU?		
	you have been offered the opportunity to meet the programme team/faculty staff where you have requested this?		
	you have received the programme specification and relevant unit proformas from the Programme Leader?		
C2	Do you find:	YES	NO
	the External Examiners' website (http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/casqe/examiners/) to be clear and helpful?		
	the External Examiners' Handbook a useful briefing tool?		
	the MMU <i>Institutional Code of Practice and Regulations on External Examining</i> on the role and responsibilities of External Examiners to be clear and appropriate?		
C3	What comments or recommendations do you have on the preparation process that we provide for new External Examiners?		

SECTION D: ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS			
<i>Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders</i>			
D1	Were you given access to the following? (Please make specific comment in D2 if you have answered NO to any of the questions below. If the question is not applicable to you, please indicate by N/A in the YES column)	YES	NO
	Information on the dates and arrangements for Assessment Board(s) to which you were invited;	✓	
	Programme handbooks and programme specifications for each set of units you are responsible for externally examining;	✓	
	Unit proformas for all units you are responsible for externally examining;	✓	
	Draft examination papers;	N/A	
	Assessment briefs and marking criteria;	✓	
	<u>Where appropriate</u> , details of arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?	N/A	
	Sufficient information for you to carry out your duties and responsibilities;	✓	
	University (and, where relevant, unit-specific and programme-specific) assessment regulations.	✓	
D2	What comments do you have which could improve the communication with External Examiners? (Please make specific comment here if you have answered NO to any of the questions in D1.)		

D3	Have responses, by the Programme Team, Department or Faculty, to issues raised in your previous reports been appropriately addressed, and to your satisfaction? (If this is your first report, please indicate by N/A in the YES column)	YES	NO
All issues have been appropriately, efficiently and effectively addressed.		YES	
If you have answered NO, please provide further details.			
D4	Are there any other administrative or procedural matters that you would wish to draw to the attention of the University?	YES	NO
			✓
If you have answered YES, please provide details.			

SECTION E: ASSESSMENT PROCESSES			
<i>Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders</i>			
E1	Assessment - Can you confirm that: (Please make specific comment in E4 if you have answered NO to any of the questions below.)	YES	NO
	the curriculum on each unit you have examined remains current?	✓	
	the curriculum on each unit you have examined remains coherent?	✓	
	units at the same level within a single programme are set at a comparable standard?	✓	
	the MMU procedures for the verification, marking and moderation of assessments (available on the External Examiners' Website at: http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/casqe/regulations/docs/verification_marking_moderation.pdf) provides you with a sufficient sample of scripts for each unit you are responsible for externally examining?	✓	
	MMU is maintaining the threshold academic standards for its units and levels of study in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark statements?	✓	
	the types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students, the respective level of study and the expected learning outcomes?	✓	
	the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the unit and stage of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations (or those of the PSRB where exemption/variation from MMU Regulations has been granted)?	✓	
	the method of internal marking at unit level is fair and reliable and of an appropriate standard, and that the marking scheme has been properly and consistently applied?	✓	
	the scripts were marked in such a way, and where appropriate comments added, to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	✓	
	you have been made aware of procedures governing: exceptional factors, academic integrity (professional suitability and misconduct), and borderline performances in relation to the units that you have examined?	✓	
	arrangements were made to consider your comments?	✓	

E2	Dissertation/Project <i>[for completion only if you have considered dissertation/project-related work]</i> Can you confirm that: (Please make specific comment in Q: E4 if you have answered NO to any of the questions below.)	YES	NO
the choice of subjects for dissertations is appropriate?		N/A	
the method and standard of assessment and internal moderation is appropriate?		N/A	
E3	Assessment Board - Can you confirm: (Please make specific comment in Q: E4 if you have answered NO to any of the questions below)	YES	NO
that you are satisfied with the conduct of the Assessment Board?		✓	
that you are satisfied with the recommendations of the Assessment Board?		✓	
the comparability of University assessment processes with other HEIs with which you are familiar?		✓	
that you were able to attend all scheduled meetings of the Assessment Board(s)		✓	
that <u>if you were unable to attend</u> any meetings of the Assessment Board(s), you have been involved in the assessment process? (If this question is not applicable, please leave both columns blank)			
E4	What matters do you wish to bring to the Programme Team or University's attention in relation to assessment processes? (Please make specific comment here if you have answered NO to any of the questions in E1 – E3 inclusive.)		
E5	Do you wish to raise any matters in relation to the University's Assessment Regulations that should be considered by the University Registrar?		
There are no matters that I wish to raise for consideration by the University Registrar on the issue of the University's Assessment Regulations.			

SECTION F: STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders

F1	Please comment on what you infer about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods as indicated by marks distribution at unit level.
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The distribution of marks from across the samples of each unit examined demonstrates tutors from the Partner Centres are all using the possible range of marks. Utilizing a work based unit, with a portfolio assessment, as the first unit that student study on their Foundation degree course is an excellent teaching and learning strategy. It encourages students to feel less intimidated by the idea of being at a university and thus the greater the potential for 'first assignment' success. This is because their own practical experience in their daily work is used as the basis of their first assignment and teaching develops and /or challenges their knowledge, reflection and understanding encouraging right from the start 'reflective' student practice.

The highest marks for this unit in three of the four colleges was 70+ and the average marks 54 to 60. There were a few very low marks 42, 40 and 38. Although there was some familiarity for the student in the assessment process, in the samples I examined, their achievement was rigorously and fairly measured against the intended outcomes of the unit and marking criteria across all partner sites. Nevertheless, tutors are supportive of their emerging students and provide feedback to all students whatever the mark achieved – something students have commented upon.

Often it is those who have achieved very low marks who need more assurance and encouragement. So I identified the one student who had achieved the lowest mark in this first unit at any of the colleges. That student had achieved 38 in their work based assignment but knowing that individual tutorial / feedback focusing upon how future work could be improved in the subsequent assignment was given to all student I expected to see that reflected in the mark awarded for the next assignment. I found that student had been awarded a mark of 59, denoting that the tutor had indeed spent time addressing the individual student's lack of understanding of assignment expectations. This student stayed at the average for the cohort for the rest of the year. This is just one example, to demonstrate that it is the way in which tutors engage with their students that is part of their method of teaching which develops self-motivation to learn on the part of the students.

The first unit studied in Year 2 of the degree is also work based but although the highest marks remain in 70 + range they are closer to 79 and the lowest marks 60, 55, 50 and 45. The Level 5 standards have provided more challenge but the students, building upon the quality of teaching and learning have raised the bar too.

F2	Please comment on the overall academic standards and students achievements in relation to their peers in other UK Higher Education Institutions with which you are familiar.
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As in the previous two academic years the student achievement and performance on the Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning is consistent with and comparable to that of students studying for similarly ranked degrees in Education at other UK Higher Education Institutions with which I am familiar.

F3	Please comment on whether the standards of the units for which you have responsibility are appropriate for the qualification in this subject and address relevant Subject Benchmark statements?
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The relevant Subject Benchmark statements are addressed and the standards of the units are appropriate for the qualification of a Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning.	
F4	Where the programme has any approved work-based learning, professional practice or placement element, please comment on student performance and achievement of intended learning outcomes.
The results from these units show that there is a close parity of achievement across the collaborative provision. See Section F1 where I have used the work based units as an example of student performance and tutor teaching methods.	

SECTION G: COLLABORATIVE PROVISION (Only to be completed by examiners with a responsibility for collaborative provision)	
<i>Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders</i>	
G1	Please comment specifically on student achievement of programmes delivered by MMU Collaborative Partners. Where there is more than one provider, if your comments relate to one specific institution (including MMU) please specify to which provider your comments refer.
<p>The assessment matrix being used has been one of the staff development foci to ensure parity of understanding and agreement of assessment across those delivering the. Results displaying the grade aggregates show that the average marks for each unit of both Year 1 and 2 of the Foundation degree have been closely similar over the past three years. That does not imply any sense of complacency amongst the staff rather the opposite. The highest mark achieved in each unit has been almost the same over the past three years with Macclesfield College having a closer difference between the highest and lowest mark for each unit in Year 1. Nevertheless the average for each college across all the units is close and within acceptable and expected bands. The average difference across the colleges ranges from 14 to 33.</p> <p>In Year 2 the students achieving highest grades are in the same range (70+) across all the colleges in all units, with Macclesfield College achieving the highest average mark across all the units but all colleges achieved average marks within acceptable and expected bands. For students on a Foundation degree one would expect to see a wide range of achievement in the first year often due to factors such as being in full or part-time employment and possible long gap between being in situations where study dominates their time. So adjustment is needed and there is a need for tutors to be sensitive to these factors so as to retain the students. All teaching staff are able to do this and the improvement in Year 2 across the cohort shows the ways in which staff across the sites work together to raise standards from Year 1 to Year 2 performance.</p> <p>Increased synchronisation of the application of the marking criteria and intended outcomes across all the partner sites can be seen in the moderated marking feedback.</p>	

G2	For programmes operating at more than one site, please comment on the comparability of delivery between the sites.
<p>All the samples examined from each of the partner colleges contained work that was comparable in framework and expected content. Although individual students produced assignments in their own style the expectation from tutors as to what content should be included was apparent from the feedback and the marking. The assignments also showed more students this year were using academic journals. Some students working at L4 were submitting reference lists in their assignments that would be expected from those working at L6. These were not limited to one college but could be identified across the sites.</p> <p>Occasionally there were places where tutors marking Level 5 assignments were allowing the use of contractions and sometimes when poor grammar was evident throughout it was commented upon but not reflected in the marking, almost implying that the content was more important. On other sites tutors were much stricter about these issues. This seems to be something that the team should consider as it affects comparability between the sites.</p>	

<p>SECTION H: PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY, REGULATORY BODY REQUIREMENTS (Only to be completed by those External Examiners responsible for PSRB related units of study)</p> <p><i>Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders</i></p>	
H1	Please comment specifically on how the programme reflects any PSRB requirements, commenting specifically on relevant professional issues such as fitness to practice, and any feature that relates to the specific discipline.
N/A	

Please note that there is no SECTION I

<p>SECTION J: GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT</p> <p><i>Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders</i></p>	
J1	Please note particular elements of good practice and innovation that you have identified relating to learning, teaching and assessment.
<p>Some units are taught by one tutor but those teaching on the FdA feel part of a collaborative team and are confident to raise issues with the team leader. I first observed the cross-moderation process in 2013 and have watched it develop as tutors grew in confidence. The cross-moderation meetings are an example of very good professional practice.</p> <p>It is this collaborative teamwork which has impressed me because I am very aware of how difficult it can be sometimes to achieve this with a staff team using the same building. The success here is due to the patience and team building skills of the leaders of this degree course and the</p>	

willingness of those teaching staff working at the partner colleges being prepared to engage with the process in order to raise student achievement.

Another example of good practice is the continued dynamic with which the teaching team enthusiastically engage with their students which generally results in students reciprocating and becoming self – motivated to spend the time necessary to produce better quality academic work. This is something I have heard from students and observed. Also, it has been shown in the students voting processes and staff awards this year.

J2	Please note opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students and provide suggestions for improvements based on your experience at other institutions.
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Feedback, designed to teach students how to improve their work, was seen in samples read. There were examples of excellent practice, where tutors gave detailed and specific comment directed at the assessment criteria, which, if students followed, would be likely to lead to enhanced quality of their subsequent assignment submissions.

A little variation in the quality of the academic feedback was noted in samples from the ‘Research Study’ unit (Level 5) Year 2. This would be expected to some extent as tutors are individuals, but perhaps the range of feedback could be enhanced if tutors across the collaborative sites shared their styles of feedback by examining past assignments at a joint meeting. In this way share their good practice.

The progression of academic skills needed for success in each subsequent year of the course has been addressed particularly where skills needed in Level 5 to assist transition to L6 BA (Hons) Top up. This could be enhanced further by the enhancing the critical skills element of the last two units at Level 5. This is building upon work already done by staff i.e. the new Transition to L6 unit that is part of the BA(Hons) Top up programme but that is not part of the Foundation degree and by improving this element at L5 the Foundation degree marks would improve too.

J3	Please comment on amendments/enhancements made to provision, assessment or administrative arrangements following comments you have previously made?
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Increased time given to attending meetings to discuss the interpretation of assessment criteria grade descriptors so that more consistency and comparability could be seen in the marking of assignments was a recommendation I made. In this year’s assignment sample across the Partner Colleges I could see this was being more firmly established. However, there is still a need for *all* tutors to be given the time to collaborate with colleagues. I understand this is problematic due to employment timetables at the partner sites and the lack of finance and therefore it is an on-going recommendation.

The literature has been rationalised for individual units and clarification concerning the literature used in assignment reference lists from Level 4 to 6. More students are using the literature effectively at level 5 in preparation for the level 6 programme.

SECTION K: PROGRAMME/SUBJECT OVERVIEW

Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders

K1	Based on your involvement with the programme throughout the academic session, please provide an overview of the programme or subject including, for example, comment on the coherence of stage or programme assessment strategies or any other matters that you would wish to raise.
<p>During this academic year the team have had a number of planned issues such as the move to Birley to deal with and unexpected issues too i.e. a significant leader not being available to the programme team for part of the year. The evidence suggests that the team pulled together and have supported each other and this was possible because of the team <i>is</i> collaborative in action and have been participants in ensuring that the well-designed, and well-led course functions effectively. The range of units designated for the Foundation degree are relevant and pertinent to the educational contexts in which the students work or will work. Teaching, learning and assessment across the MMU and collaborative providers is directed at the particular needs of Foundation degree students. The ways which staff engage with students and provide feedback that is constructive, positive and practically aimed at individual needs is something students appreciate and comment upon.</p> <p>The internal marking processes of blind second marking and the collaborative cross moderation between the different provider colleges strongly demonstrates the intention to ensure that the work students submit is marked in a fair, consistent and rigorous manner. From my scrutiny of the assignments and marking I have observed consistency in the cross moderation of marking to become increasing rigorous.</p> <p>There are assignments where the level of academic writing is of a good / high and occasionally very high standard but sometimes in a few assignments with higher band marks contain features of poor academic writing that is not marked down or even commented upon. That is why agreement about what should be allowed in academic writing needs to be discussed especially when this is allowed to pass in the two units of the Foundation degree. At Level 6 it would be marked down, and so some students would find themselves with unexpectedly lower marks because they were allowed at Level 5. Progression to quality academic writing</p>	
K2	Where the programme has any approved work-based learning, professional practice or placement element, please comment on the organisation and delivery of such activities within the curriculum.
This has been comment upon in Section F1.	

<p>SECTION L: FINAL REPORT (To be completed only if this is your final report and you are completing your period of appointment as External Examiner)</p>	
L1	Please provide a summary of the way you have noted the Assessment Boards developing during the period of your appointment. Please report on whether consistency of standards and student achievement has been maintained across cohorts during your period of appointment. Please provide any recommendations you may have for their future development. Please also report on your overall experience as an External Examiner at MMU.

SECTION M: SUMMARY OF ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE PROGRAMME TEAM	
<i>Please do not mention staff or students by name as your report will be made available to students and other stakeholders</i>	
M1	<p>Programme teams are responsible for providing External Examiners with a written response to their External Examiner Report. What particular issues would you specifically wish to see addressed in this response?</p> <p>This Section should include details of all issues to be addressed, including those raised earlier in the report. Issues to be addressed as a priority should be identified as such within this Section.</p>
<p>Increasing the time given to <i>all</i> tutors to collaborate with colleagues from partner colleges by attending meetings to discuss :</p> <p>the interpretation of assessment criteria grade descriptors in order to further enhance consistency and comparability in marking;</p> <p>the standard of grammar, syntax and spelling expected from students as they progress across units at Level 4 and then at Level 5 so that this is not an issue at Level 6 and</p> <p>and explore the ways in which tutors provide feedback at Level 6 to students in order to better understand the expectations and requirements of tutors teaching the initial unit of the BA (Hons) Top up degree. This could be achieved by tutors on the top up degree providing samples of marked student work but would require time for reading and then discussion with those who teach on the Foundation degree.</p> <p>In those ways the standard of the Foundation degree would be raised further and students would be better equipped to meet the requirements of L6 work.</p> <p>I understand this is problematic due to employment timetables at the partner sites, the lack of finance and that already there is tremendous commitment from the Foundation degree teaching team which results in a high standard of work at FdA level. Therefore it is an on-going recommendation but necessary because as some of the prime movers in the leadership team will no longer be involved with the degree course and adjustments and consolidation will need to be made by those staff continuing to teach on the FdA degree.</p>	

SECTION N: RESPONSE BY PROGRAMME TEAM TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT	
(to be completed by the Programme Leader following consideration of the report at the next scheduled Programme Committee meeting.)	
Please provide a detailed response to all issues raised within the report	

SECTION O: <i>(For office use only immediately upon receipt of report)</i>	
Date report received:	30-07-15
Date report acknowledged:	03-08-15
Date forwarded to CASQE, Programme Leader(s), Dean(s), Head(s), Programme(s) Officer(s):	03-08-15
Date forwarded to Partner Organisation(s) (if applicable):	03/08/2015
Date formal response (Section N) sent to External Examiner:	

<u>SUBMISSION DETAILS</u> <i>(Please submit your report to the appropriate email address below)</i>		
Manchester School of Art	Mr V Fitzpatrick	artdes-eereports@mmu.ac.uk
Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Science	Mr V Fitzpatrick	hlss.eereports@mmu.ac.uk
Hollings Faculty	Mrs M Austin	hollings.eereports@mmu.ac.uk
Faculty of Science and Engineering	Mrs M Austin	se.eereports@mmu.ac.uk
Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care	Ms S Sharpe	hpsc.eereports@mmu.ac.uk
Faculty of Education	Ms S Sharpe	education.eereports@mmu.ac.uk
Faculty of Business and Law	Mr N Legge	buslaw.eereports@mmu.ac.uk
MMU Cheshire	Mrs H Legge	crw.eereport@mmu.ac.uk