External Examiner's report summary

Clinical And Applied Sciences

Dr Christopher Biggs

Undergraduate

- BIOMS BIOMS (Medical Biochemistry)(UG)
- BIOMS BIOMS (Medical Microbiolgy)(UG)
- BIOMS BIOMS (Molecular Biotechnolgy)(UG)
- BIOMS BIOMS (Pharmacologcl Sciences)(UG)
- BIOMS Biomedical Sciences (PW)(U)

Please indicate, 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.

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Standards Set

	Yes	No
"In my view, the threshold academic standards set for the modules/awards meet with the requirements of the relevant National Qualifications Statement's."	X	

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' who have been awarded qualifications have had the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar." *Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this statement, please note here:	X		

Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short:

Conduct of process

	Yes	No	
"In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are reliable, rigorous and fairly conducted."	X		

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.

Actions from last year's report
(This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time)

Yes

Areas of good practice/commendation

Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment:
Thank you to both academic and administrative staff for managing to get marks and External Examiner packs ready for the PAB. Given that the timetable set by the University for completion of assessment marking and submission of marks was especially demanding this year, this is an impressive achievement! 1. Blackboard sites appear to have a more consistent format than previously; 2. Module handbooks are uniformly excellent, with comprehensive and timely information for students. 3. Staff have clearly worked hard in order to meet extended assessment deadlines.

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

	Yes	No	N/A*
"In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met. *Not applicable if the course is not a professional body courseplease indicate here.	X		

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.

(a) The operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board (and/or Module Board meeting you may also have attended).

By necessity as a result of the CV-19 situation affecting the entire HE sector, the PAB was conducted remotely, with participants attending using the Skype platform. However, the PAB duration was excessive in my view (approximately five hours of near continuous contact), with much of the pre-board business that might usually be conducted prior to the event itself instead being carried out in real time. This was emphatically not the fault of LBU staff (either academic or administrative), but was due to the extremely tight marking turnaround times imposed upon LBU staff by the University. With these caveats in clear view, the conduct of the PAB itself was satisfactory, and due consideration was given to the performances of individual candidates. However, I felt that the format of the board reports could potentially be improved to aid perusal of student's details. The font size employed (clearly for reasons of space / amount of paperwork) was rather small, and therefore quite difficult to follow at times. In addition, it would be helpful for the board membership to have direct access to the L5 module marks of students being considered for conferment (in order to get a sense of students' 'exit velocity), a request that was made as part of my 2018/19 report.

(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.)

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

Student attainment metrics, which in general were readily accessible from the available documentation, appear consistent with sector averages by level. However, I have some reservations regarding an aspect of current LB academic regulations / procedures that I will expand upon in section (j). What became fairly obvious was that students who performed poorly across modules were invariably those who were also attending sporadically. Again, this is consistent with observations I made in 2018/19.

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

Staff were able to assess these aspects of student performance, due to an effective assessment strategy being in place. In most cases, module documentation was available for external examiners to peruse, although end of module feedback was largely absent from most sites, as were some marksheets prior to the date of the PAB. It was a pity also, that the external examiner team were unable to meet with any student representatives this year, and it was felt that staff may have made provision to arrange a virtual online meeting between the various parties. It was therefore not possible to reconcile the available

performance metrics with actual testimony of current student experience. In mitigation, the significant disruption to the conduct of the academic year for all concerned may have made this more difficult to arrange in a timely fashion.

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

In all cases, I received advance sight of draft examination papers, and all modules had detailed information regarding coursework assessment diets, etc. Double marking / moderation – ranged from excellent to sparse/absent with regard to some module packs I viewed. Seems to lack a consistent approach module to module.

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

All modules I was asked to view appear to be excellently conceived, adequately resourced and academically level appropriate. Module marks (where readily available) covered the whole range, with a majority of students performing from mid-2.2 to mid-2.1 level. However, a significant number of students were also able to achieve 1st class marks across a number of modules I viewed. The proportion of students achieving the highest marks appeared to be significantly higher this year, when viewed against last years' cohorts. Of some concern to me was the apparent perception of one Module Leader who seemed to view this year cohort's markedly improved performance as a cause for optimism, rather than concern that emergency CV-19 assessment arrangements may have in fact artificially skewed metrics (in the case of one particular module, it should be stated) atypically. I would rather not be more specific at this stage, since I absolutely understand that staff have been placed under a great deal of additional stress this session. The teaching team may wish to carefully assess year-on-year module metrics, and in so doing, guard against possible accusations of grade inflation. The degree programmes themselves are well designed in order to cater for the needs of both graduates and potential industrial / healthcare partners.

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

I felt that real progress had continued to be made this session, with respect to the consistency, accessibility and utility of most Blackboard module sites. In the vast majority of cases, a standard format has been adopted, with a predictable array of module documents readily available to students and external examiners alike. As has already been stated though, not all required documentation was available to external examiners prior to the PAB, with a few resources only being uploaded at the last minute, thereby not affording the external examiner team sufficient time to examine materials prior to the PAB. Again, mitigation should be considered here given the exceptionally difficult circumstances staff were working under this session.

(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.)

Specific modules I was asked to view, where materials were all, or partially available:

Medical Pathophysiology MEDO-512

At the time of review, I wasn't able to access some materials in the EE area for this module site, so am unable to comment on these further. I was able to view some examples of exam scripts and essays, with a variety of different attainment levels represented. Marking appears to have been fair and essay feedback was clear and comprehensive.

Pharmacological Treatment of Disease – BIOS-503

Module handbook was concise and informative, clearly detailing module syllabus week by week, assessment diet and how feedback could be accessed and reviewed. I like the 'feedbackpack' initiative , held on My Beckett.
Module metrics and reflective statement: Mean=62.3%, SD=17.4, N=39 registered. Students scoring >70%=17. 18/19 stats: Mean=51.1%, SD=18.5, N=39 registered , Students scoring >70%=9. 2019/20 students appear to have performed significantly better this session.
Module leader included an extensive reflective statement in the pack. ML noted that tutorial attendance this year was particularly poor (43%), citing timetabling of sessions for 16.00 on Fridays as a probable explanation. All sessions were pre-CV-19.

Some exam script examples provided in EE folder. Appear to have been hand marked, rather than using Turnitin Studio (TS). There were therefore similarity reports available for these scripts. I'm assuming that this examination must have been sat 'pre-COVID'?
Marks appear to have been fairly and appropriately awarded. Answers generally of a good standard (some excellent) in the sample I viewed.

Transfusion Science – MEDO-514

A newly validated module on its first run. Module handbook appeared comprehensive and informative.
Exam scripts: Some examples provided in EE folder, with a representative selection of all performance levels. Exam was 24 hour timed release and examples showed no evidence of second marking or moderation.
Module metrics and reflective statement: Some basic summary stats and reflection available at the time of writing, but again, no mention of moderation process or examples of where this had been applied. Mean=78.16%, SD=13.68. No 18/19 data, since new, but 75% of students achieved a mark of >70%, which seems rather excessive [n=128, 8 withdrawn]. The ML states that (as a result of online exam rollout)…" This will have compromised the assessment as it became, effectively, open book." Whilst I agree to some extent, this can be partially mitigated via application of the Turnitin Similarity Index plagiarism tool. No evidence that it had been employed with respect to the exam here, which seems a little unsatisfactory. Again, as I have stated throughout this report, I'm cognisant of the exceptional pressures placed upon staff this session.

Res Methods MEDS-526

Module handbook was a very well presented and extensive document, detailing all necessary information for students.
Module metrics were available: Mean=59%, SD=14, Max=78%, Min=4%. N=103. Results were highly comparable (almost identical) to 18/19.
Module mark sheet was excellent and indicated where samples for moderation had been taken in a separate column.

ML report/summary was provided, with useful reflective statements throughout. ML noted minimal COVID-19 related impact upon performance, but also notes very poor engagement (especially with module discussion board) once delivery went to 100% online. ML also notes the importance of highlighting the importance of session attendance.
Coursework examples: Internal moderation forms provided – the first I have seen thusfar.
Focus group – four moderated items. Marking /feedback seemed fair and appropriate.
Critical evaluations – good range of moderated items provided. Again, marks/feedback all excellent and appropriate.
Protocols – again, a good range of samples provided, all with evidence of marking and extensive feedback.
Overall, a very wide range of achievement from excellent to very poor in evidence.

UG Project Module MEDS-601

Module handbook was a very well presented and extensive document, detailing all necessary information for students.
A ML report form was provided: Mean=65%, SD=10, N=118 registered, N=86 submissions. Students scoring >70%=34. 18/19 stats: Mean=61%, SD=11, Students scoring >70%=25.
Report contained very little in the way of reflection, although there was a brief COVID-19 impact statement.
Module metrics table was detailed and informative. Marks were fairly consistent across all three assessed components.
Assessment examples: Separate folder detailing examples of where markers had conferred regarding double marking / moderation – excellent example of good practise. I viewed a range of example courseworks, project dissertations, process logs and posters. All appear to have been rigorously and appropriately marked. Feedback (via comment boxes and TS rubric) was generally extensive and informative.

Drug Development and Toxicology MEDS-602

Module handbook is a very well presented and extensive document, detailing all necessary information for students.
ML provided separate assessment overview and ML report documents. Module metrics were available: Mean=60.47%, SD=11.16, N=36 registered, Students scoring >70%=6. 18/19 stats: Mean=62.47%, SD=7.08, N=51, Students scoring >70%=11.
Minimal COVID-19 impact, given semester 1 run, although ML states that this may have had an impact upon resubmissions.
Useful reflective statements from the ML, with this module running out this session (to be replaced by Advances in Pharmacology next session).
Assessment samples (Essays and practical reports): ML provided an extensive selection of both assessments, covering a representative range of attainment levels. Marking was consistent, fair and appropriately applied. Feedback forms were excellent, and clearly provided a breakdown of mark allocation and high quality written feedback for students.

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

Some modules, where information is readily available, show evidence of flipped classroom teaching approaches.

(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.

I have detailed my concerns regarding the use of a 'rounding up' algorithm that the Records System appears to apply to module marks at 58% and above, and don't propose to reiterate these further.

(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