

LTC12D133

Title: *Report to LTC – External Examiners’ Reports: Taught Provision 2010-11*
Author: Lynne Ward, Learning and Teaching Manager – ECB, Assessments and Quality
Date: 3 May 2013
Circulation: Learning and Teaching Committee – 15 May 2013
Agenda: LTC12A005
Version: Final
Status: Open

1 Introduction

This report summarises points of commendation and institutional issues arising from the FLTQCs’ scrutiny of External Examiners’ reports on the University’s 2010-11 taught provision. The report identifies examples of good practice for dissemination and highlights for further discussion any considerations or concerns relating to regulations, policies and practices at a University-wide level.

2 Awards Made by the University Following the 2010-11 Academic Year:

First Degrees	UG Certs and Dips	Higher Degrees	PGT Certs and Dips
2696	369	1366	614

3 The role of the External Examiner:

As indicated in the University’s Code of Practice for the External Examiner System for Awards (Taught Programmes), the purposes of the external examiner system are to ensure that:

- the academic standards for each award are at the appropriate level and that student performance is judged against this;
- assessment processes measure student achievement against intended learning outcomes and are fair and fairly operated;
- standards at UEA are comparable with those of other higher education institutions

In order to achieve these purposes, External Examiners are expected:

- to participate in assessment processes for University awards (taught programmes);
- to arbitrate or adjudicate on problem cases;
- to contribute to the evaluation and consideration of the impact of extenuating circumstances upon students’ performance;
- to evaluate assessment policies and procedures, including those with regard to professional practice, where relevant
- to comment and give advice on the design of courses, on module content, balance

and structure, on the appropriateness of learning outcomes, on standards of achievement and on professional practice placements, where relevant

4 The Consideration of Reports

The process for consideration of reports requires Schools to draft a reply to each External Examiner for consideration and approval by FLTQC, and production of a Faculty-level report by the Associate Dean identifying any University-wide issues or examples of good practice.

The FLTQC reports have been reviewed by the Learning and Teaching Service and the following summarises areas of good practice for dissemination across the University and institutional issues which may require further consideration.

Points of commendation:

HUM (UG)

- Schools across the HUM Faculty were commended for their provision of innovative curricula and high standards of teaching at UG level
- The Schools' high standards and the quality of the students' work was praised
- HUM Schools were commended for providing detailed and constructive feedback on student work

HUM (PGT)

- Schools across the HUM Faculty were commended for their provision of innovative curricula and high standards of teaching at PGT level
- All Schools were praised for the provision of coursework feedback. HUM intended to share examples of feedback sheets and formative assessment strategies to help address the challenges set by the NAM
- HUM was commended for support given to students whose first language is not English. HUM intended to increase intake of international students and LTQC will review support at School and Faculty level.
- HUM intended in 2012-13 to introduce 'LTQC' mornings to provide opportunities to informally discuss teaching practice across the Faculty

SCI (UG)

- The Faculty was commended for very good marking at UG level
- Access to good Blackboard information for External Examiners was noted

SSF EDU

- Comment was made about the amount of relationship-management needed for developing effective placements in high practice-oriented courses such as PGCE and how well EDU had managed this.
- EDU's continued maintenance of a high quality PD course was noted
- Innovations in peer-assisted learning, such as with PE PGCE, were commended
- The PGCE SY programme has a 'uniquely strong professional Development programme'. With the increased emphasis on employability, the PGCE SY programme may have useful lessons to offer other courses.
- EDU's feedback was described as 'a model of professional practice'. EDU should continue its central involvement in promoting good practice in this area across the UEA.

CCE

- Depth of constructive assessment feedback given to students was noted
- Internal moderation procedures were commended
- Opportunities for tutors to critically reflect on their teaching and the module content and design

SWP (UG)

- Use of a wide range of assessment methods
- Timetabled team meeting to agree marks and resolve any discrepancies for final year dissertation
- Assessment methods which especially encourage the application of theory to applied cases, including for Year 1.
- Effective use of short answer questions
- Maintaining several coursework reports for research methods
- Requiring students to frequently design their own study in small teams
- Seminar systems, personal tutor system and individual progress meetings periodically through the year

University-level Issues for Consideration:

- **Issue** - Expression of marks to two decimal places is idiosyncratic and sometimes counter to fair and/or sensible awards to students
Response - Current NAM proposals include a recommendation for integers for all marks and classifications
- **Issue** - Restatement of the purposes and process of moderation in shared documentation
Response - Discussion paper on new Internal Moderation/Double-marking policy submitted to TPPG on 2 May for onward transmission to LTC on 15 May 2013. New policy for implementation in 2013-14.
- **Issue** - More detail of examination results such that data can be scrutinised and performance compared across cohorts and between years
Response – A University-wide initiative to provide exam feedback for 2013 exams was approved at LTC on 24 October 2012 and endorsed by Senate in November 2012
- **Issue** – Module level evaluations should be available to External Examiners
Response – TPPG to be asked to consider the merits of this approach
- **Issue** – More familiarity with marking criteria and better use of the full range of marking
Response – Revised Senate Scales were approved by LTC on 25 July 2012. The revised scales are intended to promote full use of the marking range and encourage consistent application of scales across the 4 faculties. Feedback to be reported through FLTQC and further revisions considered, if necessary.
- **Issue** – Complaints about errors in SITS exam board paperwork
Response – A Data Warehouse project has recently been launched to replace Discoverer which should result in improvements to exam board paperwork. This should be in place for the next academic year (2013-14). For this year, exam board training for LTS staff has been enhanced to include a section on 'common errors' with problems for staff to work through in workshops.
- **Issue** – The short time period between the end of the examination period and the meetings of Boards of Examiners does not provide much time for External Examiners to scrutinise work.
Response – The University is working towards a reduced volume of assessment under the NAM. However, the need to provide timely data for Congregation and for the release of the reassessment timetable may restrict what can be done in this area.
- **Issue** – Lack of Merit classification at PGT level
Response – On 30 January 2013, LTC approved the introduction of a Merit classification for PGT students registering from the 2013-14 academic year onwards

- **Issue** – EDU course teams to give consideration to how projects and dissertations are disseminated across the institution to inform future institutional policy and strategy. The CSED team to consider encouraging excellent candidates to present their work in other places, such as Learning and Teaching Days.

Response – SSF FLTQC/TPPG to consider

Conclusion

Schools and Faculties continue to scrutinise External Examiner reports and respond to the issues raised, implementing improvement where this is deemed necessary or desirable.

At an institutional level, developments have been implemented or are in the process of implementation in the following key areas:

- Coursework and examination feedback
- NAM UG Regulations
- Senate Marking Scales
- Moderation and double-marking

The External Examiners' reports provide evidence of satisfactory teaching, learning and assessment across the University, with excellent practice in some areas.

In addition, the reports confirm that our academic standards are comparable with or exceed those of other UK Universities.