

Update incorporating postgraduate taught provision

The first iteration of this report covered undergraduate provision and was received by Senate in December 2019, following consideration by the Education Committee and Quality and Academic Standards Sub-Committee (QAS).

This addendum takes account of external examiner reports for postgraduate taught provision, which typically follows an extended academic year cycle, with reports received later in the year.

The scope of the report covers all reports received to date (see statistical data regarding report completion in Annex A).

1. Quality, standards and issues raised by postgraduate examiners

- 1.1. Postgraduate taught examiners confirmed that, in their view, the quality and standards of Keele awards compared favourably with other UK institutions. A number had the opportunity to meet students both in person or via video conferencing. External examiners reported these meetings to be *“valuable to hear their insights into what was working well and what could be enhanced”* (Medical Education) and meeting with students *“provided valuable insight into their motivations for taking the course and if their expectations were being met – they were”* (Analytical Science for Industry)
- 1.2. As in previous years, feedback on assessed work was seen as a strength by many external examiners, examples included:
 - *“Feedback is consistent, but tailored to the individual student, coherent and offers opportunity for future development”* (Specialist Community Public Health Nursing)
 - *“Tutor feedback given for both formative and summative assignments was thorough and constructive, and appropriate in both quality and quantity. The feedback enabled students to increase the quality of their work whether for a first or resubmission. However, disappointingly students did not always engage with the feedback”* (Community Pharmacy and Prescribing Studies)
 - *“I was particularly impressed by the level of feedback – including in-script comments and an overall summary of performance – which was given to each student in an electronic form. This surpassed the level of feedback I have been witness to in other, comparable UK institutions”* (International Law)
 - *“I found the feedback (and feed-forward) response to the coursework to be excellent. The feedback is in depth and rightly, in my view, encourages students to consider the theoretical frameworks which speak to their professional areas of interest. Feedback is supportive, honest and certainly points the student to ways in which they might consider enhancing their work going forward”* (Criminology and Criminal Justice Professional Doctorate)
 - *“Excellent feedback, detailed and helpful, but also sensitive to emotional impact on student. Always constructive”* (Child Care Law and Practice)
- 1.3. External examiner reports include a section to identify aspects of good practice. Many external examiners included feedback *“I commend the time taken by tutors to offer excellent and helpful feedback to students, irrespective of the mark achieved”* (Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations) and detailed comments as elements of good practice/ Other aspects highlighted as good practice include an *“excellent range of assessments”* (Biomedical Blood Science) and *“students particularly enjoyed the use of experts on the Physiological Measurement module and the “conference”*

style of the Bioreactors module” (Biomedical Engineering, Cell & Tissue Engineering and Medical Engineering). Staff were also praised for their role in engaging and motivating students; “The energy, dedication and commitment of the staff who teach on the modules I examined ... deserves particular credit” (Human Rights, Globalisation and Justice) and “The high level of staff/student engagement and the highly topical contemporary nature of the psychological and sociocultural issues considered by the students” (Psychology)

1.4. External examiners completing their final term of office provide an overview of their time overseeing the programme. Many were effusive of their praise for postgraduate provision at Keele, for example:

- *“It has been a pleasure to act as external examiner for Keele. The MSc programme is a vibrant and highly topical offer by the School of Psychology and I have been very impressed by the quality of education the students receive. Graduates from the programme will develop a raft of highly desirable research skills during their degree and I am confident that they will find what they have learnt of invaluable in their future careers” (Psychology)*
- *“Throughout my time as External examiner I have been impressed by the knowledge, professionalism and enthusiasm of staff who deliver and administer this programme. In my view, students who successfully complete it can be assured that they have received a thorough grounding in advanced level social science research methods and methodologies that would enable them, should they wish, to pursue careers in research on a global stage” (Social Science Research Methods)*
- *“During the time I have been external examiner at Keele the management programmes have diversified and there has been innovation in curriculum, particularly through the company reports, and in assessment methods. These changes have been carried out efficiently and with careful attention to student learning and development, and they have enhanced the student learning experience” (International Business, Management)*

Annex A: Contextual data for postgraduate provision in 2018/19

1.1. Report completion: (at the time of writing)

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences	29 out of 31 reports (94%)
Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences	14 out of 17 reports (82%)
Faculty of Natural Sciences	6 out of 6 reports (100%)
TOTAL	49 out of 54 reports submitted (91%)*

**this compares with 96% in 2017/18, 97% in 2016/17 and 97% in 2015/16*

1.2. Exam Board attendance: (based on responses on report forms indicating their attendance or participation via telephone)

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences	17 out of 25 examiners attended (68%)
Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences	12 out of 14 examiners attended (86%)
Faculty of Natural Sciences	5 out of 6 examiners attended (83%)
TOTAL	34 out of 45 examiners attended (76%)*

**this compares with 79% in 2017/18, 87% in 2016/17 and 94% in 2015/16*

NB: there are 4 MRes Humanities subject examiners who are not required to attend an exam board and not included in the above.