

External Examiner Annual Report: 2018/2019

Examiner's Name	John Vaughan		
Report for Programme(s) / Subject Area	Bloomsbury Institute / BA Business Management		
Lead Faculty Please tick appropriate box			
Faculty of Arts, Science & Technology (FAST)			
Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)	x		
Faculty of Education & Humanities (FEH)			
Faculty of Health & Society (FHS)			

Modules covered – please insert module codes, e.g. ART4321

LSBM201	LSBM202	LSBM203	LSBM204	LSBM302
LSBM305	LSBM306			

Delete **YES** or **NO** as appropriate below

Collaborative partnership provision

This report covers programmes or modules delivered by support providers/delivery organisations/partners other than the University of Northampton.

YES/x

Professional recognition

This report covers programmes subject to accreditation by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body **/NO**

Other awards

The report covers awards delivered under licence from Pearson Education Ltd (e.g. HNC/HND)

/NO

Section A - Threshold Academic Standards

Please indicate [X] your level agreement with each of the statements in each section and comment in more detail in the space below.

A1. Maintaining Academic Standards	Strongly agree	Broadly agree	Broadly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
1.1. The outcomes of the programme(s) and/or component modules are well-aligned with the relevant FHEQ descriptors and applicable subject benchmark statements.	x				
1.2. The curriculum is coherent and remains current.	x				
1.3. The programme reflects any additional PSRB requirements. <i>(also see question A5 below)</i>					x
1.4. Assessments in modules of the same level are of a comparable standard.	x				
1.5. Assessment criteria and marking schemes are set at the appropriate level.	x				

Comment on Academic Standards:

The standards set are appropriate. At times I have queried whether the College has set the bar too high and there have been more occasions when I have queried the strictness of marking than the leniency. The level of marking does though seem to me appropriate.

A2. Measuring achievement, rigour and fairness	Strongly agree	Broadly agree	Broadly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
1.6. The types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students (taking proper account of the diversity of the student body), the respective level of study and the expected outcomes.		x			
1.7. The marking scheme/grading criteria have been properly and consistently applied such that internal marking is of an appropriate standard, fair and reliable.		x			
1.8. The assessment processes are carried out in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures.	x				
1.9. Procedures governing mitigating/extenuating circumstances, academic integrity/misconduct and borderline performances have been considered fairly and equitably applying institutional regulations.	x				
1.10. The quality and quantity of written feedback to students on their assessed work is consistent and appropriate.	x				

Comments on the assessment strategy, processes and procedures:

To take the last point, first, I have been impressed with the quality and volume of feedback. Students get immediate comments on their submission and a more reflective piece of written feedback in addition. As far as I can tell, University Regulations are followed. In some instances I have queried why things are done in particular ways but have been pointed at the Regs.

I have raised a couple of issues about the nature of some assessments. While I think they are at the right level, I do query whether students can usefully undertake them. I have had some interesting discussions with module staff on this and the matters in question are under

review. I think though these are broader issues for parts of the Business sector whereby we insist that students critique billion dollar companies and make recommendations without access to the required data or the time or skills to sensibly do that.

A3. Comparability of standards and student performance	Strongly agree	Broadly agree	Broadly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
1.11. Based on my experience of other institutions, standards are comparable with other UK HEIs.	x				
1.12. Based on my experience of other institutions, student achievement is comparable with other UK HEIs.			x		
1.13. Standards and student achievement are comparable across the modules within my remit.	x				
1.14. Standards and student achievement are comparable across all cohorts and delivery sites. <i>(For multiple site delivery and/or delivery by different collaborative partners only - also see question A4 below)</i>					x

Comments on the comparability of standards and student performance:

There is an obvious issue with Bloomsbury and progression. While this is at one level an issue of academic standards, I don't believe that standards of awards are being compromised by this problem. The reality is that they progress fewer students. But they take on large numbers of marginal students and provide opportunities to achieve. My disagreement in 1.12 is based on fact. Students who progress do indeed achieve at benchmark standards. A lot of time and effort goes in supporting students. That they don't progress as required is a function of entry

which in turn is based on mission. In 1.14 I have only reviewed one year so cannot comment on this.

A4. Off-campus provision

We attach particular importance to the standards and quality of our modules and programmes delivered off campus.

4a. HE Provision – working in partnership with others

If you are examining provision involving total or partial delivery at a partner organisation(s), please comment on any trend, from year to year (where possible), or between centres, and on the comparability of the quality of learning opportunities, standards, marking practices and internal moderation across sites where appropriate. **Please specify which delivery site(s) you are referring to**, and distinguish between centres where relevant.

4b. Provision delivered by University of Northampton staff at other venues

If you have examined any provision delivered by the University at other locations, **please comment on the comparability of standards, achievement and the student experience between different cohorts.**

I do not see University based modules so cannot comment on comparability directly. The staff at Bloomsbury seem to me thoughtful and fully aware of the challenges they face. They have robust assessment systems and spend time discussing learning and teaching issues. I have queried why these aren't brought to the Assessment Boards to 'join up' but they feel unable to do this due to University Regulations. It might be worth discussing this as I think discussions at the Board with External's present is helpful. I have separately been sent details of discussions held in other forums so do know these are being done but the formulaic nature of the Boards does, I think, inhibit some discussions.		
<i>For modules delivered at more than one location</i>	YES	NO
I confirm that I received an adequate sample of work from students at all delivery sites		

A5. Professional, statutory & regulatory bodies

We attach specific importance to the standards and quality of our provision regulated by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. If you are examining this type of provision please comment on standards in relation to assessment of practice, supervision of practice and support for practice assessment.

Please specify which PSRB(s) you are referring to.

--

n/a

A6. HNC/HND Awards (delivered under the Pearson HE Licence Agreement)

If your remit includes work leading to HNC/HND awards *in addition to* University of Northampton degree programmes, please comment here on the comparability of standards, achievement and the student experience between different cohorts.

n/a

SECTION B - Quality and Enhancement

Please comment and/or provide recommendations (*the text boxes will expand as you type*)

B1. Identification of good practice relating to learning, teaching & assessment that you have observed

The assessments issued to students are excellent. Generally detailed with adequate guidance notes provided.

Feedback standards are excellent.

B2. Opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students

The biggest challenge relates to progression and from my discussions is the single biggest focus. This was the case pre their OfS issues. The problem seems to me really one of mission. If you accept these quite marginal students then you cannot expect good progression rates. We do though also have processes which prevent us removing them quickly. I suspect that any improvements will therefore only be marginal but there are also additional things to be provided by way of support.

B3. Please comment on any meetings you have had with students on the programme(s) / modules in your remit during the year (including 'virtual' meetings, if relevant)

None this year.

B4. Please note any issues requiring attention **by the Faculty and/or University**

A lot of time is wasted at Boards reading out names of failed students. I suspect at Northampton that doesn't take long but where there are large numbers it does. Perhaps some thought needs to be given as to how, in these circumstances, Boards can be made more efficient. I think too some broader discussion of issues in the Board is also helpful but this appears to be contrary to Regulations. Perhaps some discussion with Bloomsbury about Assessment Board's would be helpful.

B5. Your previous report (where applicable). Please state whether issues raised in your previous report(s) have been / are being addressed to your satisfaction.

This is my first report.

B6. The University does not wish to limit the issues on which an external examiner may comment. If you wish to raise any points other than those listed above, please do so in the section below. In particular, if during the academic year you have been asked to consider minor amendments to the curriculum, you may wish to comment on these in this section.

None.

B7. Please indicate here if you would like to be forwarded a copy of the Annual Review Final Rolling Action Plan for the provision for which you are appointed as external examiner when it is produced.

Yes

No

B8. (For external examiners in the final year of their period of office)

The University is grateful for the contribution of external examiners to the ongoing work of the institution. Please provide here a brief overview covering your term of office.

N/a

Checklist

Programme materials - Did you receive:	Yes	No	n/a
A. Programme handbooks	x		
B. Programme regulations (these may be in the programme handbook)	x		
C. Module descriptions (these may be in the programme handbook)	x		
D. Assessment briefs / marking criteria	x		
Draft exam papers	Yes	No	n/a
A. (i) Did you receive all draft papers?	x		
A. (ii) If not, was this at your request?			
B. (i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate?	x		
B. (ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	x		
C. Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	x		
Marking examination scripts	Yes	No	n/a
A. (i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts?	x		
A. (ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?	x		
B. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	x		
C. Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	x		
Dissertations / project reports	Yes	No	n/a
A. Was the choice of dissertations appropriate?			x

B. Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?			x
Coursework / continuously assessed work	Yes	No	n/a
A. Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment?	x		
B. Were the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory?	x		
Orals / performances / recitals / appropriate professional placements	Yes	No	n/a
A. Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?			x
Final examiners' meeting	Yes	No	n/a
A. Were you able to attend the meeting?	x		
B. Was the meeting conducted to your satisfaction?	x		
C. Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board of Examiners?	x		
Please add any further comments on administration and communication:			

Date completed: 21 Aug 19