
External Examiners' annual report template (Programme Assessment Board)

Purpose of the External Examiner's report

Please read this section before writing your report

External Examiner reports are an integral part of the University's quality monitoring and enhancement process and play an important role in the programme review cycle. External Examiners are required to submit annual written reports.

Reports should be submitted within **four weeks** following the final Programme Assessment Board. Report submission should not be delayed until re-sit boards have taken place.

The report should be linked with programme aims and outcomes, and the assessment criteria for each module, as described in the programme/module handbook(s). Reports should be objective and make positive criticism and/or recommendations where appropriate.

External Examiners' reports are the property of the University. The University will circulate reports as it sees fit, in accordance with legislative requirements. External Examiner reports are public documents, and are seen by students at Programme Voice Group meetings. **Please do not reference individual students and members of staff by name.**

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the University will provide copies of External Examiners' reports to third parties who have made a lawful request. Reports will normally retain External Examiners' names. The University will consider any reasonable request from External Examiners to anonymise their reports. Such a request should be made in writing and submitted with the report.

Full details of the procedures, and the use of the reports is outlined in [LQEH section 4](#).

Submission of the report

Please submit your report via email to the following email address:

externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk

Your annual fee will be processed once we receive a copy of your annual report.

External Examiner Report – Programme Assessment Board

External Examiner name	Dr Sarah Critten
Academic Year (period covered by report)	2024/2025
Date report submitted to Externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk	12 June 2025

Programme(s) reviewed	600X172 MEd Professional Practice in Dyslexia and Literacy (DL) 600X175 PGDip Specialist Assessment and Teaching for Literacy-Related Difficulties 600X173 PGCert Specialist Teaching for Literacy-Related Difficulties (DL) 600X177 PGCert Specialist Assessment for Literacy-Related Difficulties (DL)
Module(s) moderated	DAPP21-01 Literacy Acquisition - Underpinning Theory DAPP21-02 Specialist Literacy Teaching - Linking Theory to Practice DAPP21-03 Psychometric Assessment of Literacy-Related Difficulties DAPP21-04 Psychometric Assessment of Cognitive Processing
Name of Programme Leader/ Module Leader	Dr Gill Cochrane
Date(s) of programme assessment board(s) attended	December Board: 9/12/25 June Board: 5/6/25

Programmes/module delivery arrangements – tick all that are applicable	Apprenticeship	
	Hendon Campus	
	Dubai Campus	
	Mauritius campus	
	Collaborative partner:	Yes/ No
	Joint	
	Franchise	
	Validated	Yes
		Partner(s) name
		Real Group Ltd (trading as Dyslexia Action)

To be completed by all external examiners by ticking the appropriate box:

OVERALL STANDARDS	Yes	No
1. In your view, are the standards set for the award(s) appropriate for the qualification(s)? <i>For apprenticeship programmes, consider whether they reflect the apprenticeship standard.</i>	X	
2. In your view, are the standards of student performance equivalent to other UK institutions with which you are familiar?	X	
<i>If 'no' please add comments here</i>		

Support for the role of External Examiner	Yes	No
(For new external Examiners) Did you find the induction arrangements effective in helping you understand your role and the University's expectations of you?		
I confirm that the ACEE measures/evidence which form the body of evidence were sufficient for me to provide an overall judgement on student performance and the quality and standard of the programme	X	
The Faculty and Programme Team communicated effectively with me throughout the year	X	
I was given sufficient information concerning my role as an External Examiner	X	
I was given sufficient information concerning the modules for which I am appointed to enable full consideration of delivery, including collaborative partner provision, franchises and overseas campuses, if applicable	X	
Did you receive formal written feedback on your report for the previous academic year? (N/A for EEs completing their first report)	X	
Were you satisfied with the response to the issues raised in your report for the previous academic year?	X	
Comments (if 'no' to any of the above): <i>Type your text here</i>		

Report

Please use the following headings and guidance notes:

Programme/ Subject design, content and standards

Please comment on;

- the extent to which standards (apprenticeship standards; PSRB requirements; Professional benchmark statements) are appropriate to the qualification, or qualification element under consideration on comparable UK Higher Education programmes
- the curriculum, its aims, content, and development
- Does the course content remain relevant and up to date?
- please comment only on those modules that have strengths, weaknesses or areas of good practice that you would wish to highlight
- Where the programme has a vocational element or link, please comment on the content of the course in terms of preparing students for employment in that sector

I can confirm standards on these course(s) are comparable to other similar UK Higher Education programmes. For example, I am currently External Examiner for equivalent courses at Birmingham University and was previously External Examiner for equivalent courses at UCL: Institute of Education.

The curriculum, aims and content of these courses are entirely appropriate for the professional standards that students are required to demonstrate as set out by the SpLD Standards Committee (SASC) for SpLD assessors and practitioners. As guidance from SASC is regularly updated, the Course Team ensure that module content, assessment and feedback is developed/amended accordingly so graduating students are able to successfully apply their training in the workplace, e.g., schools.

The Course Team ensures the courses are up-to-date and react quickly to any changes in the SASC guidance. For example, last year new guidance required that summative reports should now be marked against the APC renewal criteria. The Course Team addressed this issue and the new marking criterion has been successfully applied this year's cohort of students.

Student achievement (please avoid reference by name to individual students)	Yes	No
Are you satisfied that the level of student achievement is comparable across all locations of programme delivery (e.g. overseas campuses, franchise programmes)	X	

Please comment on:

- *standards achieved by students*
- *student performance in relation to their peers on comparable courses*
- *student performance in modules taught at overseas campuses (Dubai, Mauritius) and modules on franchised and joint validated programmes at UK and overseas sites*
- *student performance in relation to clinical/professional practice (if applicable)*
- *student performance in relation to PSRB requirements (if applicable)*
- *the effectiveness of employer engagement (if applicable)*
- *foundation degrees: Are there sufficient and effective opportunities for work-based learning and work-related learning?*
- *strengths and weaknesses of the cohort*
- *factors that the External Examiner is aware of that have positively or negatively affected student performance (e.g. resources, field trips etc.)*

Generally speaking, the work produced by students on these courses is very good and comparable to that by peers on other similar courses that I have been External Examiner for.

In last year's report I commented that while an appropriate range of grades are usually shown, the number of students achieving grades at the upper end on some modules (esp. Module 1 Literacy Acquisition - Underpinning Theory) were perhaps fewer than might be expected. I worked with the course team to identify strategies that may improve this, e.g., new guidance to markers that a piece of work doesn't have to 'perfect' to achieve a Distinction. I am pleased to report that Distinction grades have been awarded more frequently this year and reflect the quality of the work that students are producing.

As previously mentioned in this report, for several of the modules, students are graded according to professional standards criteria required by SASC. Students are required to achieve 77% to meet those standards which is much higher than the current University pass mark. This evidences the very high level of performance the majority of students on the courses are demonstrating.

Assessments: structure, design and marking	Yes	No
I was given the opportunity to see samples of marked work (including written assignments and examination scripts) covering the full range of marks	X	
I saw evidence of internal moderation in the assessment process and confirm it was used effectively and consistently	X	
See evidence of adequate student feedback being provided to students?	X	
I saw samples of work from across all programme sites of delivery including overseas campuses and franchises where applicable	X	
<i>Please comment on:</i> <i>appropriateness of assessment for measuring achievement of standards</i> <i>The appropriateness and rigour of the course assessment strategy and methods of assessment;</i> <i>standards of marking and moderation (please comment on all overseas campuses and sites)</i> <i>procedures for assessment and examination.</i> <i>effectiveness and quality of feedback to students</i> <i>Are the processes for assessment, examination sound and fairly conducted in line with the University's/ Collaborative partner's (where applicable) regulations?</i>		
I think the assessments on these modules are very well-designed, appropriately rigorous for postgraduate study and address the learning outcomes of each module and where necessary, the SASC professional standards criteria. Generally speaking, I think the standard of marking and feedback is of very good quality. I am happy to agree grades for the samples of work provided. Markers take great care to highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in their feedback and the marking criteria is very clearly structured to show what is expected to achieve a given grade. The course team have continued to update their Internal Moderation processes according to the new University regulations provided last year. The number of samples that have been moderated and have been made available for me to view are generally appropriate and if I require extra they are provided for me. For example, at the December 2024 Board I asked that Fails should be provided in my sample (if relevant) for all modules and this was done for the June 2025 Board. There is still some work for the course team to do in the thoroughness of the sample provided for me as internal moderation should be completed for each assessment part on a module, for each Board and these samples should be provided for me to view. For example, for Module 3, moderation for the December 2024 Board focused on the short essay but not the report whereas for the June 2025 Board the focus was on the report but not the short essay. Procedures of assessment seem to be running smoothly. All work is submitted online and markers complete bespoke feedback forms for each module that show all marking criteria and how students have performed in relation to them. All assessment processes appear sound and fairly conducted in accordance with both University regulations and Dyslexia Action regulations.		
Programme Assessment Boards	Yes	No
Did you attend the Programme Assessment Board (this could include attendance via Microsoft Teams)?	X	

Did you receive relevant meeting, board, deadline dates and board paperwork in a timely manner?	X	
<i>Please comment on:</i> <i>The organisation and conduct of Programme Assessment Boards and, in the event of non-attendance, whether you were fully involved in the assessment process..</i>		
The Boards were very well-organised and appropriate documentation were circulated well in advance. They were conducted appropriately and completed all the necessary processes as expected. Members of the Board from Dyslexia Action and the Middlesex link tutor work very well together and actions set during the previous Board are referred back to and implemented (where possible). External Examiner views and suggestions are sought and there is a clear openness to learning from practices in other institutions, for example there is currently a great deal of discussion around GenAI and how to guide staff and students on its usage.		
School /Work Placement visits (if applicable) <i>If you attended any school/ work placement visits please provide comments below:</i> <i>Was the School/ work placement appropriate to support the students and delivery of the programme learning outcomes?</i> <i>Was there evidence of good collaboration between Middlesex University and the School / work placement?</i> <i>Was the assessment of trainees' attainment comparable with similar judgements across the sector?</i>		
N/A		
Apprenticeship programmes (if applicable) <i>Please consider and comment on:</i> <i>Do the programme and module learning outcomes mirror the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) set out in the apprenticeship standard and prepare apprentices for end-point assessment (EPA)?</i> <i>Is teaching and learning delivered in the context of on-the-job and off-the-job training?</i> <i>Are apprentices receiving a good level of support from the University?</i> <i>Does the partner work collaboratively with the apprentices' employers?</i> <i>Does the apprenticeship include an integrated or non-integrated degree?</i>		
N/A		
Collaborative Programmes <i>Please add any comments relating to the links between the University and the collaborative institution.</i>		
As mentioned above, the Dyslexia Action team (managerial, academic and administrative members) work very hard to ensure their courses are delivered in accordance with University criteria and standards and respond rapidly when any amendments are needed. They are developing a good relationship with the new Middlesex link tutor (as of this year) and communicate effectively.		
Recommendations <i>Please use this section to provide the programme team with suggestions that you would like them to consider, arising from the comments within your report matters where, in your opinion, there is potential for enhancement.</i>		
As I mentioned earlier all the suggestions I made to the course team last year have now been implemented. Moving forward I think the only thing I would like to see is more complete moderation samples, e.g., samples from each assignment on a module across the fullest range of grades available. All of the samples of work I am provided should also have been internally moderated so I		

can see how grades and feedback were arrived at. Most of the modules are already doing this but there needs to be consistency across the programme.

Following the June 2025 Board I also promised to include here a brief overview of how the Open University is approaching guidance for Gen AI for staff and students. Each assessment on a module is categorised by the module team as one of the following:

Category 1: Gen AI must not be used beyond very low-level help such as Grammarly for example.

Category 2: Gen AI can be used but is not compulsory. Then follows examples of how it can be used, e.g. to help understanding of a concept and how it must not be used, e.g., putting any copyrighted OU module materials into it and asking for a summary. Students are told not to over-use it but if they do they're expected to reference information they have got from Gen AI in the same way as they would reference other sources.

Category 3: Gen AI must be used and this is written into the assignment guidance.

I hope this overview is helpful but do please contact me if you'd like anything further.

Actions

Please use this section if you require the programme team to take further action relating to issues which have a serious impact on academic standards or academic quality.

N/A

Commendations / Good practice

Please comment here on any particular strengths, distinctive or innovative features of the programme(s)/ modules

1. The way the teaching and learning activities across the course have been designed to encourage independent working and reflective practice within the students. I think this is really important, as graduating student will be applying what they have learned in professional practice, i.e., working with children with SpLD.
2. The specificity of detail provided in the feedback to students re; meeting professional standards is very impressive and reflects great time and effort by the course team.

Final Report – only applicable if you are completing your term as an External Examiner

Please consider and comment on:

- *Your overall experience of being an external examiner*
- *The overall development of the Programme/Modules during this time.*

N/A