
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 name	Carla Finesilver
Academic Year (period covered by report)	2024-25
Date report submitted to Externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk	2025-07-03

Programme(s) reviewed	MEd in Professional Practice in Maths-Related Difficulties
Module(s) moderated	n/a
Name of Programme Leader/ Module Leader	Gill Cochrane
Date(s) of programme assessment board(s) attended	2024-12-09 2025-06-05

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

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?	X	
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)	n/a	
Were you satisfied with the response to the issues raised in your report for the previous academic year?	n/a	
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

This is a really exciting new programme, which I believe fulfils a very real and present need in the UK for advanced practitioners with a specialism in mathematics-related difficulties. I approve of all the programme aims, and am particularly happy with the choice of the umbrella term of mathematics-related difficulties, which come in a huge variety of forms, etiologies, effects and interactions (as opposed to, for example, a narrower definition such as dyscalculia, which would exclude a large number of struggling learners from consideration). The course content is up to date, and it is also explicitly made clear to students that this is a developing field of knowledge where the content will almost certainly change further in the future. The professional standards set are appropriate to the qualification.

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)	n/a	

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.)*

This is quite an unusual course, which does not directly correlate to other programmes with which I am familiar. However, the range of student performance seems in line with what I have come to expect of Level 7 programmes more generally. In particular, the more formal written assignments were comparable in terms of quality of academic writing with what I would expect from the first module of a Master's programme, i.e. a fairly broad range, with some students clearly more practised and confident in writing formal assignments than others (who can be reasonably expected to improve with further experience).

Although this is not a formal part of the external examiner process, as an exercise I gave all 24 assignments a grade myself, using the provided marking criteria, but interpreting the descriptors as I would in my own department. Unsurprisingly, there was not perfect agreement with the actual grades allocated, but variations were within appropriate tolerances. Overall I found the grades that were given by Cochrane and Marshall a little more generous than my own, but this may be a case of deliberately encouraging students on their first module – not unreasonable!

Although all students understood the requirements of the assignments well enough to pass, it seems that some did not understand or were not paying attention to all the criteria, although these had seemed to me to be clearly stated. Some suggestions are below.

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	n/a	
<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>		
The three assignments (case studies, poster and blog post) work really well together - I like them a lot! The inclusion of visual imagery as part of the assessment is particularly interesting, and highly relevant and contemporary in today's multimedia-heavy environment. I think it is a great idea to make visual presentation formally part of the assessment criteria. However, given that this is a programme for SEN/D specialists, I was somewhat disappointed by some students' lack of consideration for the basics of visual accessibility – e.g. one actually used an image as text background! This is perhaps something to emphasize more firmly next year. The text feedback comments were clear and helpful with I think the right amount of detail for most students. I am sure that if any of them require further explanation, they will be able to ask their tutor for it. In the assessment board meeting there was some discussion of the extent to which students might appropriately or inappropriately use GenAI for the assignments. Given the rapidly-changing nature of the technology available and its capacities, this is something worth keeping an eye on in future. There was also discussion of whether it is possible to tell if images of student work (included in the case studies) are real or not (i.e. actually created by the case study student). I would suggest that what is more important in this context is what it is that the examples convey and how well they do it.		
Programme Assessment Boards	Yes	No
Did you attend the Programme Assessment Board (this could include attendance via Microsoft Teams)?		
Did you receive relevant meeting, board, deadline dates and board paperwork in a timely manner?		

Please comment on:

- The organisation and conduct of Programme Assessment Boards and, in the event of non-attendance, whether you were fully involved in the assessment process..

Type your text here

School /Work Placement visits (if applicable)

If you attended any school/ work placement visits please provide comments below:

- Was the School/ work placement appropriate to support the students and delivery of the programme learning outcomes?
- Was there evidence of good collaboration between Middlesex University and the School / work placement?
- Was the assessment of trainees' attainment comparable with similar judgements across the sector?

n/a

Apprenticeship programmes (if applicable)

Please consider and comment on:

- 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)?
- Is teaching and learning delivered in the context of on-the-job and off-the-job training?
- Are apprentices receiving a good level of support from the University?
- Does the partner work collaboratively with the apprentices' employers?
- Does the apprenticeship include an integrated or non-integrated degree?

n/a

Collaborative Programmes

Please add any comments relating to the links between the University and the collaborative institution.

n/a

Recommendations

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.

Personally I believe it is helpful when markers make inline comments on students' work, and would recommend considering this option for all assignments apart from the final dissertation. I understand that some staff prefer the format of writing all feedback in a separate paragraph at the end. However, my view is that it can be difficult for (particularly the more struggling) students to connect the comments to the relevant parts of their work. When commenting on the positive and negative aspects of a piece of work, it helps them to see examples, e.g. of a point that was well made, or a paragraph that lacked clarity. If you decide not to use inline comments on student work, ensure to continue to make comments specific and include examples.

I would recommend giving some further thought to the assessment of visual aspects (particularly of the poster task). Visuals are traditionally not taken as seriously or given much weight in academia

compared to text, so most staff will understandably have less practice/confidence in assessing them. One aspect might be whether the purpose of an image is clear, and then how well it meets that purpose? Clearer guidelines/criteria might help - perhaps consider a rubric. This will get easier and more consistent with practice!

Case studies: They seemed to find it hard to get a balance between diagnosis, description, and theoretical background - this is understandable, as it is challenging! Case studies: Consider instructing students to start with a brief contextualisation of the school (type, size, demographic, etc.) as this would be helpful in setting the scene.

Poster: Some students took a lot of care over design and layout but others just basically pasted a short essay or a load of bullet points onto the template. Feedback indicated that you wanted them to include images - was this made clear? And does it matter to you if they are illustrative of points or just decorative? (It does to me!) Few seemed to have given any thought to accessible design principles.

Blog post: Students should be using footnotes or hyperlinks for citations - these are more in keeping with the blogpost genre than traditional full academic referencing. Only some were appropriately critical, so perhaps that aspect can be made more explicit - some blogs were only positive, and read like advertising for the resources! Maybe it would help to specify that the two resources chosen should have some point of comparison - e.g. similarities/differences?

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

See various comments above.

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