



The Open
University

**Centre for Inclusion and
Collaborative Partnerships (CICP)
External Examiner report template**

Section A: General information

Institution:	Leeds City College
Programme:	BA (Hons) International Tourism & Aviation Foundation Degree Tourism and Aviation
Subject examined:	Tourism and Aviation
Name of examiner:	Derek Robbins
Current year of appointment	Two

Section B: External examiner' s report

The reporting structure of this section is intended to help draw out issues which may require attention by the Institution or the University. It should not be seen as limiting in any way the range of issues which may be addressed or the level of detail given. The report will be considered as part of the annual evaluation process and, as such, external examiners are encouraged to be as frank and open as possible, but avoiding wherever possible references to individual staff or students. External examiners' attention is also drawn to 'The Guide for external examiners of OU validated awards', which should be forwarded by partner institutions to their external examiners.

Please comment as appropriate on:
1. The range of assessed material and information provided by the institution on which your report is based.
I had access to a full range of assignments on each Module for each year of the programme. The sample I examined reflected a good cross section the range of marks awarded by the internal examiners.
2. Whether the standards set are appropriate for the award, or award element, by reference to any agreed subject benchmarks, qualifications framework, programme specification or other relevant information.
Standards are appropriate for the awards and comparable to other Institutions of which I am aware. Marking standards are robust, second marking and moderation is transparent.
3. The quality of students' work, their knowledge and skills (both general and subject-specific) in relation to their peers on comparable programmes elsewhere.
The students produced good quality work in the difficult circumstances of the Covid pandemic and on-line teaching. They demonstrated a good range of knowledge, evidence of wider reading and a good an appropriate range of transferable skills. At Foundation degree level there was an impressive 90% pass rate with 40% achieving a Merit grade. Unfortunately there were no Distinctions awarded this year although I appreciate that with relatively small cohorts there will be variations from year to year. I hope to see more students achieving the Distinction grade in future years. At Level 6 there were more students who have results deferred to later (Resit) Boards with 64% achieving the award of a degree. However the current climate has resulted with a number of extenuating circumstances leading to deferred submissions and I expect the number of students to complete their degree successfully to increase at the September Board. A pleasing trend is the 27% of students who achieved a first. The lack of awards achieving a 2i classification was slightly disappointing.
4. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
Overall the students performed well and in line with expectations (as confirmed in section 3). The more able students show good awareness, knowledge and use of wider reading. Weaker students perhaps rely too heavily on Internet sources.

However there are 3 areas which I feel would improve the overall presentation of the work produced.

- i) First I would encourage students to pay more attention to grammar in their written work. In particular the use of capital letters is random and often inappropriate. Sometimes the grammar detracts from the quality of the work being presented
- ii) Second I would urge students to place closer attention to their referencing. There are often inconsistencies between the Harvard system used (for instance use of author initials or whole names for forenames) – not only between assignments but often inconsistent referencing within the same assignment.
- iii) Third I feel student introductions for assignments can be a little too long and generic. I would encourage them to focus on the specific question or case study a little more quickly.

I also have some specific observations on the Dissertation:

- Overall there is a danger that several of the dissertations are too broad, too generic, and therefore too descriptive. Several were unclear what the Aims and Objectives are or what the Research Question being asked is. This is an important issue as the best dissertations achieving the highest marks identified a clear issue (for example the gender pay gap) whereas others were too vague or descriptive (such as analysis of an airports use of Media).
- Most do not collect primary data (in any form). In itself this is not a problem, although students then need to reflect on how they add critical awareness or evaluation. Is the secondary data analysed (or just described)?
- The Methodologies tend to focus too much on generic issues (Research Paradigms, qualitative and quantitative approaches). This is fine to show awareness of the appropriateness of different techniques in different circumstances but additional detail justifying the research approach adopted would strengthen these chapters.

I understand that these issues are already being addressed, particularly following the revalidation of the programme and the restructuring of the Research Methods unit to link even more closely with the Dissertation.

5. The quality of teaching and learning, as indicated by student performance

As indicated in Section 3 the student performance demonstrated a good quality of teaching and learning as evidenced by a pleasing set of results.

6. The quality of the curriculum, course materials and learning resources

I was given access to the Module Handbooks for every module. These were comprehensive good quality documents with direction on further reading and resources. There were good examples of the use of specific detailed case study materials which were also incorporated into assignments.

7. The quality and fairness of the assessments, in particular their:

(i) design and structure

The diet of assessment is mixed, varied and appropriate and tests a range of different skills. There is a strong mix of reports, essays, case studies, presentations, a crises management simulation and work related tasks.

(ii) relation to stated objectives and learning outcomes of the programme

Assignments are carefully and thoughtfully defined to meet the Learning outcomes of each unit.

(iii) marking

Overall I confirm that the marking is robust and second marking transparent as stated in section 2.

Overall there will be a subjectivity involved in marking essays and reports. However I did feel at Level 6 the marking of the top of the range assignments was slightly generous. For example in an assignment marked in the mid 70s on Global Issues perhaps lacked the level of evaluation I would have expected (and I would be around 3 – 4% lower on the first borderline).

Alternatively I also found the marking of work at Level 5 particularly robust, particularly around the high 50%s and low 60%s and I may have been around 3% higher, and at times I felt the markers comments were more positive ('good work') than was reflected in the actual mark. For example in Semester 1 at both Level 5 and Level 4 – the highest marks I saw for written work were low 60%s (the only marks in high 60%s or 70%s were for a presentation in HRM) although higher marks were achieved in Semester 2. Nevertheless, as I noted in section 3 – there were no overall Distinctions awarded at Foundation Degree level.

I would encourage the teaching team to refer back to standard practices like Bloom's taxonomy in terms of their expectations of students. There is in my view scope to further differentiate the outcomes between levels. For example there is perhaps too great an expectation for critical analysis at Level 5 (for example in Airport Operations all assignments I examined made reference to critical analysis in the markers comments).

8. Where the programme has specific work-related learning outcomes (e.g. Foundation Degrees) please comment on the assessment and achievement of these outcomes, including employers' involvement where relevant.

There was a Work Related Learning Module which has proved very difficult during the pandemic. The teaching team has established a number of realistic scenario based case studies which include an appropriate reflective assignment for the students which required them to apply theory to their practical learning experience. Overall this worked well.

9. The administration of the assessments, operation of examination boards, briefing of external examiners, access of external examiners to essential materials, etc.

I attended remote Exam Boards (using MS Teams) on Wednesday 03 March and Wednesday 23 June.

The conduct of both boards was exemplary and I had access to all the materials I required.

10. Have all the issues identified in your previous report been addressed by the institution?

YES

If no, please comment

11. *(For chief external examiners or those with responsibility for the whole programme – if in doubt please check with the appointing institution)*

Please confirm that the assessment and standards set for the programme as a whole, including all its pathways, modules or individual courses are consistent and appropriate, and that the processes for assessment and determination of awards are fair and sound across the provision.

Confirmed

12. Any other comments

None

Please ensure that you sign and date below, if sending a hard copy of this report

Signed:



Date:

18 August 2021