

University Centre Leeds

Foundation Degree in Policing

External Examiner Report 2020/2021

I have been provided with full access to all moderation documents and module guides relating to both level 4 and level 5 of the above course. I have also been allowed full access to 'Turnitin' where I am able to sample the work of students relating to the moderation documents for this semester.

The team at Leeds have been very helpful and attentive to ensure that I have everything I need and I thank them for their patience whilst I begin the evaluation process for the first time. I particularly want to thank them for the empathetic way in which they understood the impact of a recent cyber-attack on my home university which had left me (and others) unable to communicate or access work for some considerable time.

In line with the guidance provided by UCL the external evaluation takes a look at the following areas;

- Marking and Grading
- Classification of student performance
- Standard of student achievement
- Good practice during moderation and any areas for improvement
- Sampled student work (anonymously) for;
 - Interpretation of assessment criteria
 - Parity across the cohort

Marking and grading

Four pieces of written work were chosen from each module over both level 4 and level 5 of the programme. These samples included low grades, borderline grades and high grades, selected as a result of commentary provided within the moderation documents for each module. Some of these samples included audio/video capture as well as written text.

A total of 24 pieces of written assessed work have been sampled across the programme together with 8 audio/video examples.

It is clear, from these samples, that the teaching team display a very robust moderation process whereby assessor and moderator give and receive frank feedback concerning both marking style and grades provided. This process is indicative of sound verification processes across other HE organisations.

Feedback is honest and there is a collaborative approach to deciding upon the final grade for the student. Care is taken to ensure that there is clarity of assessment commentary

before it is released back to the student. This safeguard includes suggestions to remove contradictory comments, missed opportunities for feedforward (things to improve for next time), and spelling and grammatical errors.

This assessment regime appears to be a highly organised and timely process, ensuring that the marking and grading process is sound.

Classification of student performance

The module guides provide me with the classification outcomes for measuring the students' performance leading up to the grading decision. The assessment takes account of this and the interpretation of the assessment criteria shows evidence of it being monitored through assessment feedback to students and internal moderation feedback processes.

Tutors correctly identify well written text and high achieving students together with advice for improvement through a feedforward process for all levels of performance (see advice below for suggested areas of improvement).

Standard of student achievement

Examining the grades awarded through 'Turnitin' Student achievement appears comparative to other students who undertake policing studies. From my recent experience at my home university, policing students at both level 4 and level 5 are generally achieving at a similar level. The standard of achievement shown here, in my view, is therefore comparative.

Good practice during moderation and any areas for improvement

The assessment process reflects a robust, well organised assessment and moderation regime which is being undertaken by all of the teaching staff. There are a variety of assessment methods within each programme, which is positive and no doubt provides a nice and varied mixture for student engagement and achievement.

There are observed opportunities to further develop the programme as follows;

1. Wider Reading With a few exceptions at both level 4 and level 5, the main source of student reading and research are through online internet web sites. The providence of some of these sites are difficult to assess. It would be useful to see a co-ordinated push from the outset at level 4 and through level 5 for students to widen their reading to include both books and journals within the tutor feedback assessment narrative. Wider reading and different sources will allow more credibility within student's written discussions and assertions moving forward. This will also set them up correctly for a top-up level 6 full degree, as recently proposed.
2. Moderation Forms The moderation process is very robust with good honest feedback for the assessor. Some forms provide a follow up within the action field which is helpful, but some do not. It would be useful from an evaluation perspective to see the process completed and 'signed off' on all forms.
3. Similarity scores (Plagiarism) There are some high awards being made to some students with high similarity scores and on closer look the main issue appears to be about

directly quoting sources rather than good academic practice of paraphrasing which helps to show better understanding of the text. This has been rightly identified by some tutors and it might be beneficial to hold a group study and writing skills tutorial with students, moving forward. Clearly this will be easier once students are back in a classroom and could be undertaken in conjunction with point 1 (above) concerning wider reading.

Sampled student work (anonymously) for;

- Interpretation of assessment criteria
 - The assessment criteria appear to be interpreted fairly over all modules at both level 4 and level 5.
 - The feedforward pages identify the expected assessment criteria where achieved, providing feedback and feedforward along the way, where necessary.

- Parity across the cohort
 - It is clear that good standardisation takes place within the department from the samples observed.
 - Both level 4 and level 5 cohorts appear to have parity of assessment and expectation and as such the given grades and annotated commentary reflect a cohesive approach from the teaching team.

Conclusion

The FD in Policing is a well-run course which has a unique variety of assessment. This variety is a strength and allows students the opportunity to perform in different ways. The diversity it offers can only improve achievement and progression.

The content of each module is valid and links to contemporary policing very well. Successful students will have a very good grounding of interpreting policing practice on successful completion of the course. This is something which is still unique to policing as an entry qualification and will improve a student's opportunities in successful application and their future within the service or similar organisations within the criminal justice system.

The feedback and feedforward process through assessment and moderation is very strong and clearly further ensures parity across the student cohorts and tutors. The team appears well run and have done very well considering the remote learning that has had to take place in recent times, which is not always easy.

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