External Examiner's Report Form

The University intends to publish the full report (or extract of) to the public, prospective and current students.

Name: Sheila Nutkins
Your institution or Professional Association: University of Aberdeen
Course title(s) (full course name) PGCE Primary
Where applicable, Partner Institution examined:
Progression and Award Board: ITE
Academic Year: 2016 - 17 Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate ☐ YES

REPORT SUBMISSION

Please submit your completed form electronically to the CORRECT address as follows:

For courses delivered at the UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX: externalexaminers@sussex.ac.uk

For courses delivered at a PARTNER INSTITUTION: partnerextreports@sussex.ac.uk

University reports should be submitted no later than:

Undergraduate provision: last day of August
Postgraduate provision: 6 weeks after the Progression and Award Board
Partner courses: 6 weeks after the end of year examination board

1   Please comment on whether the **standards set by the University** are, in your view, appropriate for the **qualification being studied.**

Please relate your comments to published national subject benchmarks, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, course specifications and other relevant information as appropriate

   The PGCE programme is assessing students in a rigorous manner both in school and in academic assignments against the Teaching Standard. I reviewed marking of the APK with 2 other External Examiners (one of whom will comment in detail). I was satisfied that marking was carried out appropriately, students received good feedback and that moderation had taken place. The feedback was consistently good across a number of markers reviewed.

I observed 2 RPK oral assessments and I judged this was a particularly good assessment tool for this programme. One of the two markers was the tutor that had seen the student each week on campus and visited in school placement and the moderator was a professional tutor from school. The tutor was therefore able to steer and probe with questions so that the student was able to evidence their understanding very clearly. This oral assessment included discussion of the 'Sketchbook' compiled over the year and I can see the benefit in this process both to students'' learning as well as part of this assessment process. The student also present evidence against the Teaching Standard using their RPK file, selected lesson plans and critical incidents.

I visited students in school with tutors and again I was very comfortable with the level of support each student had from tutor and teacher mentors in school as well as the rigour of assessment against the Standard.

2   Please comment on the appropriateness of the published **marking criteria.**

   Marking criteria were appropriate. I would suggest that there could be some benefit in making the criteria for marking APK more specific so that the rubric would provide more feedback to students as well as making it easier for markers to differentiate. I discussed this at the time with Director of ITE and it is merely a recommendation to explore.

![University of Sussex logo]

3   Please comment on whether you believe **standards of student performance and achievement** are comparable to those of similar courses in **other higher education institutions?**

   I judge the standard of achievement of the students that I have seen (in school, for oral assessment and in two focus groups as well as written assignments) to be high in comparison with other higher education institutions.

4   Please comment on whether you believe existing assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended course and module **learning outcomes**.

   As above in (1) I find the assessment to be rigorous and fair and judge that APK, RPK and placement assessment is assessing against intended outcomes.

In terms of assessment supporting learning I find that the Sketchbook, where students have the freedom to compile a reflective log over the course of the programme is particularly strong. The APK equally serves to evidence students' ability in academic writing and, critically placement assessment evidences ability in teaching.

5   On the basis of the sample of assessments that you have reviewed, please comment on the appropriateness of the application of the marking and moderation processes as evidenced by the annotated scripts and **marks and feedback given.** *(For reasons of confidentiality and data protection individual students should not be named).*

   As above in (1) above marking against criteria is appropriate and feedback was consistently good.

6   Please indicate whether you are satisfied that the **processes** for assessment, examination and the determination of awards have been **sound, appropriate and fairly conducted.**

I am satisfied that the processes for assessment, examination and determination of awards have been **sound, appropriate and fairly conducted.** However, in the PAB meeting it seems unnecessary when applying the same decision across a number of borderline candidates, that each one is gone through separately. A decision made on the basis of University regulations and which the Board cannot overrule can be made prior and simply explained to the Board. It appeared a great deal of time was spent on this and then when one very 'absurd' case arose it was not discussed.

I am satisfied with the process, common across higher education institutions, to 'round up' grades to give students the best possible outcome but I felt that in the process percentages had effectively been rounded up twice. This did not affect PGCE grades at any point but one particular decision on another programme. It is important that the process is transparent and can be applied equally in all cases.

7   Do you have any comments on **resources** as they impact on student performance in assessment processes?

There is always and inevitably a degree of inequity in assessing student teachers in placement as they can have such varied experiences. However, the design of the PGCE in terms of placement is good as there is flexibility within the first long placement to move a student resulting in two more equal length placements or a short followed by a long placement. I think this is very helpful and can mitigate against students failing because of circumstances.

8   Please comment on any good practice that you have observed related to **teaching, learning and assessment**.

As above the pattern of placement and particularly the four days in school and one day on campus is a good model to support student learning encouraging reflection and praxis. The Sketchbook is also a very good tool to develop reflection, support learning and assessment.

I explored TS5 (differentiation) with a focus group and students felt very comfortable with the timing of inputs on this on campus and felt it was an aspect they need to explore very much in school. They would like more on SEND and EAL and to include this felt that other inputs on curriculum could go or come later e.g. on play therapy (they felt this was less relevant and SCRATCH. They felt the ICT 3 hour session could be made optional extra for those who felt they needed it as for some prior experience meant it was unnecessary. One student on a specific SEND route felt it should not be offered if not able to offer discrete SEND curriculum support sessions. The whole group felt that differentiation was best 'taught' when threaded through in curriculum inputs as it had been in the maths sessions with 'Claire'. They felt these were excellent taking a 'low threshold/high ceiling approach'.

I also explored TS6 (assessment) with the group and they were happy with inputs on this. They felt there was 'lots of input on formative and emphasis on the importance of this over summative'. The track child task in school was effective and moderating with other students when back on campus looking at a piece of work of one child was very helpful. They like that tutors emphasise that assessment is not about ticking boxes.

Both focus groups really enjoyed their year and their days on campus.

9	Please comment on the quality of **teaching and learning methods and learning opportunities (**based on the standard set of materials sent, not observation of teaching or access to teaching resources).

Learning opportunities in placement vary as above in (7). Students in focus groups were very aware of this and the fact that assessments me of them in school are inevitably subjective. They understood why this was inevitable and appreciated that the tutor support mitigated against this. Some commented that the teachers in school needed more guidance when making a judgment against the Standard. One also commented that schools need more guidance regarding non-contact time.

10	Have you had **sufficient access to and the power** to call upon any materials needed to make the required judgements? If not, please give details.

Yes, however, access to APK assignments via Turnitin was not easy. It is important that systems do not impede academics. It often appears to be the case now that too much emphasis is put on the functions of the IT system and standardisation across the whole organisation which often leads to an impediment or a lot of extra time and work for the individual.

11	Are there any **other issues** on which you wish to comment? Please consider if issues raised in previous reports have been addressed satisfactorily and/or if you are required to comment on any issues related to a PSB.

I enjoyed both my visits to Sussex and found the team very open to discussion, the students equally were open and honest. I could see that good relationships were under-pinning a strong programme.

12	**Conclusions and recommendations**

(a)	Good practice and innovation.

In terms of assessment supporting learning I find that the Sketchbook, where students have the freedom to compile a reflective log over the course of the programme is particularly strong.
Tutor support across the year in school and on campus culminating in the RPK oral assessment was also a strength.

(b)	Areas requiring attention

(i)	Essential

(ii)	Advisable

Explore processes that will better support the tutor team and particularly the Director in managing students who are clearly failing and unsuitable to continue re-sitting. This is detrimental to the smooth running of the programme, to relationships with partners and I believe to the individual student. It is a problem across institutions, where mechanisms set up to safe-guard students and allow re-sit opportunities which are often appropriate, actually allow an individual to continue to eat up time, energy and resources to the detriment of all.

(c) Conclusion of tenure. (Please append an overview of your term of office if this is your final report)
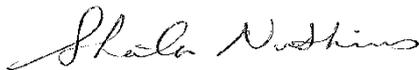
Name   Date: 05/07/2017

e-mail address (for acknowledgement)   s.nutkins@abdn.ac.uk

Appendix 1

Statement of Compliance (provided at the Progression and Award Board)

External Examiners are asked to complete this checklist stating whether or not the relevant examination and assessment procedures and policies have been adhered to in a satisfactory manner. External Examiners are reminded that a report must be completed in addition to completing this statement of compliance and that the report will be made available to students. The statement of compliance is for internal use only.

Course materials

Did you receive:

a)	Course handbook(s)?	Yes /
b)	Exam and assessment regulations?	Yes /
c)	Module descriptions (these may be in the course handbook)?	Yes /
d)	Assessment schedule/marking criteria?	Yes /

Draft examination papers

a)	Did you receive all the draft papers?	N/A
	If not, was this at your request?	N/A
b)	Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate?	Yes
	If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Yes

Marking examination scripts

a)	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts?	Yes /
	If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?	Yes /
b)	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Yes /
c)	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Yes /

Dissertations/project reports

a)	Was the choice of subjects for dissertations/projects appropriate?	N/A
b)	Was the mode and standard of assessment appropriate?	N/A

**Coursework/continuously assessed work**

a)	Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment?	Yes /
b)	Was the mode and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory?	Yes /

Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements

a)	Were suitable arrangements made for you to moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?	Yes /

Meeting to consider Classification (Undergraduate Progression and Award Board)

a)	Were you able to attend the meeting?	Yes /
b)	Was the meeting conducted to your satisfaction?	Yes /
c)	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Award Board?	Yes /
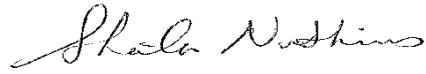
Signed ……………

…………………………………………………… Date …05.07.2017…………………………..

Name (please print) …Sheila Nutkins…………………………………………………

Note: *if you have answered 'No' to any of the questions above, please include comments (as appropriate) in your written report*