External Examiner’s Report Form
The University intends to publish the full report (or extract of) to the public, prospective and current students.

Name: DEBRA MYHILL

Your institution or Professional Association: UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Course title(s) (full course name) PGCE Secondary

Where applicable, Partner Institution examined: N/A

Progression and Award Board: 20 June 2019

Academic Year: 2019/2020 Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate ☐

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: externalexaminers@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

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Validated courses Undergraduate and Postgraduate

PVC
Link Tutor
Head of partner institution
Named contact responsible for quality assurance at the partner institution

PVC
Head of School
Director of Teaching and Learning or Board of Study
Chair of the Module Assessment Board
Chair of the Progression and Award Board
School Curriculum and Assessment Officer
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<th>Please comment on whether the <strong>standards set by the University</strong> 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</th>
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<td>The standards set are wholly appropriate, both in terms of the academic assignments and the professional requirements for the award of QTS.</td>
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<td>Please comment on the appropriateness of the published <strong>marking criteria</strong>.</td>
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<td>These are wholly appropriate.</td>
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<td>Please comment on whether you believe <strong>standards of student performance and achievement</strong> are comparable to those of similar courses in <strong>other higher education institutions</strong>?</td>
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<td>Yes, my judgment is that the standards of student performance and achievement are comparable with other HE institutions.</td>
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<td>Please comment on whether you believe existing assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended course and module <strong>learning outcomes</strong>.</td>
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<td>Yes, there is a very close match between the assessment processes and intended learning outcomes.</td>
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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).

I reviewed a significant sample of assessments, across both primary and secondary, and across subjects, and they were marked consistently and accurately. Over the past two years, there has been a significant shift in the consistency and quality of the marking on the assignments for Secondary PGCE. There is very good use of the statement banks, plus well-chosen personalised comments, both of which help to create consistency. The feedback is perceptive and critical.

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.

The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound, appropriate and fairly conducted. I am impressed by the processes for moderation across ITE and how the leadership team know in great detail about the quality and accuracy of marking by every marker.

The PAB meeting was rather long: I did wonder if it might be wiser to split the Education board from the Social work board.

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

No

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

The combination of written (APK) and oral (RPK) assessment is good, and carefully set up and moderated.
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).

The assignments invite students to draw on theory and research to reflect on practice: the combination of theory and praxis is good.

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

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.

My experience as external examiner is that issues raised previously are always addressed. This year I was given an exemplary Action Plan showing what has been addressed and how this will be carried forward.

12 Conclusions and recommendations

(a) Good practice and innovation.

The Sussex PGCE is founded upon an extremely strong partnership with schools. The schools I visited as part of this process spoke highly of the relationship. They value the way the Sussex ITE team works with them, and both schools I visited talked about Sussex as the preferred provider, with one having switched from another provider. Students are well-supported and they value both university tutors and school mentors.
Students report high levels of satisfaction with their PGCE. They single out their university tutors for particular praise, and feel supported through the course. Some students explicitly noted the flexibility which allowed tutors to adapt the course to meet their own particular needs.

The course ethos is very strongly understood by students, especially the primary students. This was not mere knowledge but it imbued the way they thought about their classroom experience. They could explain readily what the course ethos was, and one student said she turned to the mission statement, which expresses the ethos, when she felt down or under pressure 'because it provided comfort, like a favourite bible quote'. The ethos is shared by all tutors and is a distinctive aspect of this PGCE.

(b) Areas requiring attention

(i) Essential

There are no areas requiring mandatory attention.

(ii) Advisable

Continue to maintain the strong and shared sense of ethos which permeates the course; in secondary, this will mean the expression of strong subject ethos under the umbrella of a secondary programme ethos.

(c) Conclusion of tenure. (Please append an overview of your term of office if this is your final report)

This is my final year of office and I have witnessed, over the past five years, the growth of Sussex ITE both literally in numbers and in quality and strength. I have been involved with examining both primary and secondary programmes and it has been a privilege to be involved. Whilst it may be typical for external examiners to end with praise on a positive note, I would like to stress that my comments below are borne of critical engagement with the courses, and knowledge of similar programmes elsewhere. This is not simply courteous praise.

I have seen a strong trajectory of improvement from a strong initial base. The OFSTED Outstanding for primary was wholly deserved, and I think the course team should be driving towards the double, with a parallel Outstanding for Secondary. This is perfectly achievable, particularly with the new leadership in Secondary.
The course team are **highly reflective and self-critical**. The process of external examination is embraced wholeheartedly as an opportunity for dialogue, and for the chance to gain from an external perspective. I have never encountered a defensive response, and frequently anything I have observed or noted has already been picked up. There is a tangible commitment to continuous improvement, even from a position of strength.

The strength of the **course ethos**, noted earlier on this report, is distinctive. I have never been in any institution where a mission statement genuinely infuses the course, nor one where students are so aware of it. No doubt, the way this plays out each year, or for individual students, is varied: but I do think the goal to sustain this ethos is of great importance. It is a reminder that the purpose of an ITE course is making a difference to children in our schools, and not a rather technicist approach to ticking of the standards.

Finally, I would like to comment on **the strength of leadership** across ITE. I have seen this grow and strengthen over the five years I have been examining. There is now a strong, and operationally effective, leadership team in place supported by a well-functioning administration team. The two programme directors for primary and secondary understand their role, collaborate together, and work with the Head of ITE to secure some of the consistency I have seen. The whole team is driven by a desire for improvement, and a reluctance to be satisfied, even when everything is very good. The Head of ITE, Jo Tregenza, has taken a particularly role in bringing the team to this place – she has a clear purposeful vision, energy and stamina, and strategic insight. This is combined with the people skills to bring people together and make them feel valued, even if that sometimes means being challenged.

Thank you!

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Date: 23.06.19

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