External Examiner's Report Form

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

Please use tab key to move from field to field.

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<th>Name: Jeremy Burke</th>
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<td>Your institution or Professional Association: King's College London</td>
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<td>Course title(s) (full course name): PGCE</td>
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<td>Where applicable, Partner Institution examined:</td>
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<td>Academic Year: 2014-15 Undergraduate [ ] Postgraduate [✓]</td>
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REPORT SUBMISSION

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

For courses delivered at the UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX: externalexaminersreports@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

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
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 standards being set for the qualification are appropriate following the Bologna Agreement setting level 7 for post graduate qualifications. However, level 6 for the professional aspects of the course are appropriate too. The levels set are sector wide practice. The only point, mentioned below, is whether the SKfS module is level 7.

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

   The generic marking criteria and the assignment level guidance given seem appropriate and clear.

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?

   The standard of performance evidenced in the written assignments and school visits seem in line with other institutions although, as I said last year, the marks given are higher, on average, than I would have expected.
4 Please comment on whether you believe existing assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended course and module learning outcomes.

The assessment for Curriculum Studies 1 and 2 are assessed rigorously and fairly. I have concerns about PKfS which I commented on last year and was reinforced in that view this year looking at the videos of the vivas. My point is that I think the viva is a really good way of assessing this, but not at level 7.

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 awarded. (For reasons of confidentiality and data protection individual students should not be named).

There were plenty of comments on the scripts but these did not always square with the grade given at the end. For example in one assignment the student spoke about "belief" that pupils had learned something rather than providing evidence for that judgment. The marker commented on this advising the student "to argue for a case or position". This I agree with completely. Where I disagree is that this comment is indicative of an assignment which is not a pass with distinction. The mark given was 72. I would have given 65. It was a good essay, but not outstanding for the reason the marker noted.

Another essay tried to make an analogy between a brawl and the Peasants' Revolt, the argument for which is difficult to sustain (better might have been the summer riots of 2011) and was claimed successful because pupils had "engaged well". There was no empirical data to support this assertion, and no detail of the recognition rules for pupils' engagement. There is unproblematised reference to "the true course of events" (my emphasis), strong/weaker students, VAK and so on. This is 'teacher' rhetoric rather than a sound analytical base. Again I would have said this did not constitute outstanding analysis. The mark given was 72 and I would have given 65. A good essay, but still lacking some important elements.

A third example was a somewhat weaker essay about literacy and something called a 'Clicker'. The essay on literacy was ironically an indicator of a lack of literacy on the part of the student. No definition or description of "clicker" was given, so I still have no idea what it is. There is substantial repetition in the text. There were unevindenced claims made for the success of the 'clicker'. It was very light on references, and the citation list was not organised alphabetically. A very weak piece of work and probably not M level.

The message here is not that students are working to a different level from other institutions, but rather that the marking is about half a grade high. The comments by the markers, which are largely as I would also have commented, do not quite match the grade descriptors for the grade given.
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 process for assessment and examination are sound, appropriate and fairly conducted. The viva at the end of the Professional Knowledge for Schools assignment is particularly good. The question remains whether it is appropriate at level 7. The determination of awards are generally sound, but there is a potential double-rounding effect which was discussed at the Exam Board. For example, two pieces of work could be submitted: a written piece marked at 52 and a viva marked at 85. The mean of these two marks is 68.5 which is rounded to 69 and then 69 is rounded to 70 (E&A Regs 1.5.5). In this case 16 marks were above the distinction grade boundary and 18 marks were below the 70% boundary. The double rounding gave an exaggerated grade in a number of instances.

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

There appear to be no resource problems

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

The PKfS viva was good assessment practice for this aspect of the course.

9 Please comment on the quality of teaching and learning methods and learning opportunities.

There is clear evidence of opportunity to learn and much of what was evidenced in assignments and certainly in the school placements showed thoughtful and committed students. I have not been able to see any teaching and I have no idea what is meant here by a "learning method", but the students I have met have been alert, imaginative and analytical about what they were doing.
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.

Following my criticism of the ‘viva’ for PKIS I have been invited to attend some of these next year.

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.

1. Generally very impressed with the course, partnership schools and the students
2. What is the use of the term ‘theory’ on the course? Marking comments include “good application of theory and practice” but what does this mean? Theory might describe the reading brought to an empirical text, whereas practice might describe the production of a text from either the theoretical or empirical fields. What does it mean, here, to apply a practice?
3. What is the word length for this assignment? There seems a substantial variation which is not necessarily reflected in the marks given.
4. Focusing on CS1, this assignment is focused on a student’s reflection on their practice, which is typical on PGCE courses. However, there was a frequent assertion of pupil engagement with the topic rather than an analysis of data. Assessment criterion refers to “argument with reasoned conclusions”. It is difficult to say this is achieved when students say “I strongly believe that students developed a more sophisticated understanding of the text…”. We thought that the marking might be slightly overstated, which means grades at the margins might be high, but that this is significant at the F/C boundary.
5. Turning to the Professional Studies course it seems that this is rather long, adopts teaching strategies which would not be acceptable in school classrooms, and when practitioners are invited in, there is a tendency to provide a reflection on an individual’s practice rather than making a generalisable comment. The PKFS ‘viva’ is a good end to the course, involving a defence of a student’s claim to be a competent practitioner. However, there is little general reference to research or antecedent texts which in turn raises a question about the claim to M level assessment..

12 **Conclusions and recommendations**

(a) Good practice and innovation.
The practice school in which I was left for the day showed a tremendous commitment to the partnership and to providing good quality in-school training. I saw three very good, thoughtful students and committed mentors. I think the viva for SKfS is good practice, at level 6.

(b) Areas requiring attention

(i) Essential

The double rounding of marks. In each case the 'viva' was given a very high mark (perhaps in the 80s) and the written work much lower (in the 50s).

(ii) Advisable

Review markers' comments and marks actually given. The comments should match the assessment criteria for the grade given for the assignment.

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

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