## ANNUAL EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

**Name of institution examined:** INTO University of East Anglia

**Faculty/School** INTO

**Course Title(s)** International Yr 1 in Psychology

**Academic Year:** 2020-21

**External Examiner Name:** Dr James Adie

**External Examiner's home University / College or Other Professional / Institutional Affiliation:** Coventry University

*NB – External Examiner reports are widely circulated, therefore students and staff should not be individually identified. Course Teams will respond to the recommendations made by the External Examiner in the boxes provided. The response should be counter signed by the Head of HE or equivalent within ten working days.*

An electronic copy of this report should be emailed to the Head of HE (or equivalent) at the partner institution, to arrive no later than one month after the main assessment board meeting.  You will receive a copy of the report with the Course Team's response completed.

### Sufficient Evidence Checklist

Please can you confirm the following:

### Programme materials

Did you receive:            **Y N N/A**

a. Programme handbook(s)? Y

b. Programme regulations (these may be in the programme handbook)? Y

c. Module descriptions (these may be in the programme handbook)? Y

d. Assessment briefs/marking criteria? Y

### Draft examination papers

a. (i) Did you receive all the draft papers? N/A

  (ii) If not, was this at your request? N/A

b. (i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? N/A

  (ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your

comments?  N/A

c. Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? N/A

| Marking examination scripts |
|---|

a.   (i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts? N/A

(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection
Satisfactory? N/A

b. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate? N/A

c. Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the
reasons for the award of given marks? N/A

| Dissertations/project reports |
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a. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? N/A

b. Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate? N/A

| Coursework/continuously assessed work |
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a. Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment?  Y

b. Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency
Satisfactory? Y

| Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements |
|---|

a. Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or
moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?  N/A

| Final examiners' meeting |
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a. Were you able to attend the meeting? Y (via MS teams)

b. Was the meeting conducted to your satisfaction? Y

c. Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board of
Examiners? Y

| Maintaining Threshold Academic Standards |
|---|

**Please provide feedback on whether:**

| **The programme and its component parts are coherent with learning outcomes aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor and subject benchmark statements where applicable** |
|---|

The academic standards of the current INTO Yr. 1 Psychology programme are aligned with appropriate benchmark statements of the QAA framework, and the component parts of the programme are coherent with its learning outcomes.

The programme also provides mapping of wider transferable skills/attributes (e.g., digital literacy, communication, critical thinking skills, etc.) students can develop on programme useful for progression of studies, and for employability. The range of formative and summative assessments of the programme was also a key strength.

Overall, I found the curriculum, assessment components, and intended learning outcomes of the programme to be equivalent to the academic standards expected at my own and other UK HEIs.

**The programme reflects appropriate PSRB requirements where applicable**

The INTO Psychology programme offers an excellent programme for international students attempting to gain access into stage 2 (Level 5) of a full BPS accredited UG Psychology degree within the UK.

**Assessments in modules of the same level are of a comparable standard to those in other UK HEIs**

The assessments used were contemporary, appropriate for the level of the programme, and they were commensurate with that of my own and other UK HEIs. The weighting of the assessment across both modules was also evenly balanced (e.g., 60% portfolio and 40% essay/report). To this end, I found the assessment to be designed carefully with a range of oral (e.g., presentations) and written coursework (e.g, reflections, essays, research reports, and proposals) that not only captured the learning outcomes across the two modules ('Self and Society', IYOSS; 'Psychology of the Individual', IYOPI) but also tested knowledge and understanding of academic (core areas including research methods) and applied psychology. A measure of good practice was the formative assessments used to help students' development and subsequent performance on summative assessments. In some instances, the students could resubmit the same work they had prior feedback on (e.g., portfolio on IYOPI) and in other instances, the formative assessments were different. What would be really interesting is to monitor improvements levels from formative to summative assessment to test the effectiveness of this scheme?

One thing I have found really encouraging is how the assessments have been refreshed year upon year. An example of this is the thematic report on IYOSS. Since I have been an external examiner, I have always admired the really interesting data-sets available to students choose from to write-up their reports, and this year was no different. I also like the fact that the assessments are packaged into two components (portfolio; report/essay) evenly weighted as described above. In relation to the portfolios, I found them to do a nice job in terms of providing continuous assessment over the course of the programme from semester 1 to 2. Nevertheless, I did have some observations that that the programme team may wish to reflect upon concerning parity of the assessment load across the two portfolios. On IYOSS, there are 5 tasks used with a blend of oral and written components. However, on IYOPI there are 6 written tasks in total. I would suggest losing one task for IYOPI. For task 3 on IYOSS, a 1500 word limit was used yet only a 1000 word limit was put in place for task 6 which had an equivalent module weighting on IYOPI. The course team may want to review the parity of weightings used across the tasks in both portfolios. I also question the value of a task with a weighting of 5% (e.g., task 1 on IYOPI). This component would not permit a student to move up or down a grade boundary for their overall portfolio mark. I would suggest either revisiting the weightings across all other tasks, or making task 1 formative only.

On a final note, students only chose one of the essay questions for IYOPI ('critically discuss whether academic achievement is due to nature or nurture'). Thus, other interesting questions may need to be introduced for next year.

### The curriculum is current

Congruent with my previous external examiner reports, the curriculum provides an excellent introduction to the core areas (e.g., social psychology, bio-psychology, individual differences, developmental, cognitive and research methods) of psychology. Students are also taught by themes with a blend of learning and teaching methods used to promote applied knowledge of how different core areas are used to study a range of relevant and interesting topics. As reported in the past, there is a strong focus on social psychology with a third of the programme (i.e., 40 credit IYOSS module) dedicated to this core area alone. The course management team may have their own reasons for this but something to reflect upon is whether core areas at this stage could be delivered more evenly across the programme. With that said, the curriculum strikes a good balance of delivering academic and applied psychology and provides a solid foundation for students to progress onto the next level of study (I.e., enter year 2 of a BPS psychology degree). The assessment is closely aligned with the content (and learning outcomes) of the modules, and students are tested on relevant theory and research (including research methods) used in psychology.

### Assessment criteria, marking schemes and arrangements for classification are set at the appropriate level

Assignment briefs, marking schemes and assessment criteria were used across both module assessments and set at the appropriate level. I thought the breakdown of assessment criteria of the portfolio tasks on IYOSS was particularly helpful to students, and would recommend this more tailored approach when assigning the portfolio in future on IYOPI (rather than providing only general assessment criteria to reflect the entire portfolio submission; the exception being task 6). Nevertheless, the requirements of each assignment were aligned with relevant module learning outcomes, and the assessed components themselves were appropriate for the programme level of study.

### Measuring Achievement, Rigour and Fairness

**Please provide feedback on whether:**

### The types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students, the level of study and the expected outcomes

As already stated above, the assessment was appropriate for the subject and level assessed, as well as for capturing the LO's on each module. A range of written and oral assessments were used that were innovative, contemporary and applied. These comprised varying tasks spanning the breadth of each module (and even across the programme; task 3 on IYOPI), and it was nice to see that formative feedback was

provided prior to submitting the summative work. The assessments on the programme also incorporated a test of qualitative and quantitative research methods (e.g., thematic report, research proposal) useful for helping with the progression to a higher level of study. I also liked the fact that group presentations and reflections were used in the assessments as both are key skills for psychologists. It is questionable whether such low weightings (e.g., 5%) of some assignment tasks in the portfolio make any substantial difference to a students' overall portfolio mark/module mark but the opportunity to gain formal feedback (and marks) is invaluable for a developing psychologist. Please see my previous note about this point.

**The marking scheme/grading criteria have been properly and consistently applied, and internal marking is of an appropriate standard, fair and reliable**

I found evidence of fair marking and agreed with the grades awarded. The generic (and in some cases specific) grading criteria/schemes were applied consistently across both modules, and there was evidence of good internal moderation. It was encouraging to see a full range of marks awarded across the different assessment components. On average, students performed well.

The in-text feedback was excellent with positive, constructive and feedforward comments on how to improve. The summative comments were also clear in how grades were arrived at. With respect to the latter, there was some variation between modules in whether supplementary marking schemes/grading criteria were applied. For example, for the IYOPI portfolio no marking sheets/grading criteria were used with the exception of task 6. I would recommend grading sheets/criteria be developed for all portfolio tasks on IYOPI for the next year. Lastly, the volume of annotated comments was very high. This could be streamlined to some extent with polices like commenting on grammar for the first page of an assignment only.

**The assessment processes are carried out in accordance with the institution's regulations and procedures**

Yes.

**Procedures governing mitigating/extenuating circumstances, academic integrity/ misconduct and borderline performances have been considered fairly and equitably applying institutional regulations**

N/A

**Comparability of Standards and Student Performance**

**Reflecting on your experience at other institutions please provide feedback on:**

**The comparability of standards and student achievement:**
- **across the modules within a single programme**
- **across programmes within a single subject area in an awarding institution**

Student performance for both assessments were very similar across the two modules. For IYOSS, the grade average was almost identical to last year (lower 2:1 standard). For IYOPI, it was marginally lower (low 2:1 to upper 2:2 grade boundary level). It was very encouraging to see no fails on the course with most student's performing mid-range on each module. Other than individual tasks/components, it would have been nice to see more work at the top end as has been the case in the past. This could be a cohort effect, but it might also be worth discussing strategies aimed at providing students the opportunity to perform to a high-end level (e.g., reviewing feedback/feedforward marking strategies, including more detailed assessment criteria in assignment briefs, reviewing hand-in dates).

## Enhancement of Quality

**Please provide comment and recommendations on:**

**Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment you have observed**

Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment are observed in a number of ways:

- A comprehensive and contemporary curriculum covering academic core areas (e.g., individual differences, biopsychology, social psychology, etc) and applied psychology.

- Theme-based learning approaches across both modules (INTO-IYOSS/PI).

- The application of continuous assessments (I.e., portfolios) on each module. This is highly useful approach for promoting critical reflection and development of students' subject knowledge, as well as developing fundamental skills (e.g., research, reflection).

- The use of formative assessments is a key strength of the programme. Bearing in mind the cohort is year 1 and international, it is very encouraging to see students having the opportunity to gain important feedback prior to summative assessments, and as part of their ongoing development of study skills.

- The diversity and innovation of the assessment ranging from oral (and group) presentations and journal critiques to report writing and critical reflection is impressive.

- Refreshing the data used on the thematic report with a really interesting range of data options.

- The level of annotated feedback was excellent. Where used, I liked the use of the marking matrices, along with summary marking sheets.

- The design and delivery of the programme is commendable and makes for a quality learning and student experience reflected by a perfect pass rate across both modules

**Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students**

Despite the challenges of delivering both modules under the constraints of the pandemic situation, I found evidence of the programme running smoothly. Nevertheless, I have a few minor points/comments related to future course enhancement for the programme team to reflect upon (Note. Some of these reflect last year's report):

- As per previous years, I found the marking to be fair, albeit the application of marking criteria/sheets to vary. For some assessment components, only annotated and summative comments were provided, whereas for others these were supplemented with completed marking sheets/matrices. For parity's sake, please could the team agree on a standardised policy for how they mark and offer feedback in future.

- For the portfolio's, it is recommended that the number of tasks/volume of work be reviewed across both modules. Both account for 60% of the module grade but there is variation in the length of individual tasks concerning their individual weightings. Furthermore, the value of some tasks with a very low weighting (e.g., 5%) is questionable, and removal or adjustment of weighting is necessary in my view for the assignment to be meaningful.

- On average, students achieved marks in the mid-range of the scheme used for grading. Although 100% pass rates were achieved on the module, it would be useful to consider strategies (e.g., feedforward, checking hand-in dates) and reflect on how to help students raise their performance on assessment as they progress over the course of their programme. For example, at my own institution, students are asked to discuss of how they have used formative feedback to enhance their work to assess whether performance is actually increasing.

- I would encourage the course/INTO team, if they do not already, to move towards the use of Turnitin to mark students work as it has many useful functions (e.g., built in rubrics, feedback tools, and plagiarism detection)?

- In the event of documenting individual marks adjustment, it would be useful to note whether consideration of other students work not included in the sample needs to be reviewed (especially, where there is a pattern of marking too generously/harshly). I did not observe anything toward in this case, but I question whether marks at all need to be altered by 2-3 points. If it is a pattern of a whole grade boundary, then this in my opinion should evoke checking all students work for a component both in and out of the sample. Although I did not find any issues here this time around, I would recommend a pre-calibration exercise between first and second marker to gain a sense of levelness before beginning marking.

**Also, please:**

| **State whether you received sufficient evidence to enable your role to be fulfilled.  If not, please provide details** |
| --- |
| Yes, advanced confirmation was sent, and all documentation was provided with sufficient time to carry out my responsibilities. |
| **State whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to your satisfaction** |
| All my comments were acknowledged and to my satisfaction. |
| I received metrics of past cohort performance on modules for comparison with the current group of students, as well as copies of minutes pertaining to course evaluation/student forums. This was appreciated as it helped to understand not only issues reflected upon at the end of the programme but also during it, where applicable and necessary. |

**Use this space to address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body**

N/A

**Give an overview of your term of office if this is your final year**

During the course of my tenure, I have found the programme to run smoothly and offers its international students an excellent first introduction into studying psychology in a UK HEI. Student performance has been very good as indicated by exceptional first-time pass rates, and above average scoring. This is a testament to the teaching team (and supporting INTO staff) who have demonstrated quality delivery of a sound curriculum, particularly in with managing the difficulties of teaching under the constraints of the pandemic situation in the past two academic years. In essence, the programme provides an excellent learning experience for INTO year 1 students to successfully transitioning onto stage two of a BPS accredited psychology degree programme in the UK.

There is not much in the way of enhancing the programme (curriculum) I can comment upon as INTO follow UEA's lead on curriculum design, other than the potential imbalance of social psychology in the programme is proportion to the other core areas. Nevertheless, others may view this as a strength, and this balance maybe readdressed when students enter stage 2 if continuing to study psychology. With respect to other learning, teaching and assessment issues, I have only previously reported minor issues. When I first started, I found a high volume of assessment components to be bunched together at key periods over the academic year, and there was a heavy emphasis on written coursework. In recent years, this has been repackaged into one large written piece of coursework (40%), and the one form of continuous assessment (weighted at 60%), per module. The portfolios makes more sense to align the assessment with testing and developing learning that takes place over two semesters. Overall, the workload seems more manageable for students.

I still think there is some work to be done on how to increase student performance, particularly at the top end. Although, this could be the result of a cohort effect in that students are still adapting to the UK HEI system, which is the very function and purpose of the programme. Nevertheless, I do believe there is scope to put in place provisions to provide students the opportunity to achieve first class work overall as this occurs on individual assignments but not overall on modules. The programme team may want to review strategies of how they could help students go further.

Looking back, I believe that the course was already running well when I first started this appointment and continues to do so with a more focussed and balanced range of assessments in departing as EE. I would also add that student attainment rates have always been excellent, and even though the course is relatively small, it attracts engaged students that hugely benefit from entering this transition phase into the UK higher education system.

I would also like thank the INTO team for their professionalism (in particular, Jeremy Moyle, Dawn Wilkinson and Natalia Ponomareva), help and support during my time as external examiner, and running very efficient assessment boards. My thanks also goes out to the course team (Dr Diane Parkin) for assisting in programme related matters. In terms of my replacement, I would be happy to make the following recommendations:

1) Dr Sarah Critten, (Senior Lecturer, Coventry University)

2) Dr Andrew Holliman (Psychology Lecturer, UCL)

3) Dr Ian Mundy (Psychology Lecturer, Birmingham City University)

**RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN**

**Please list your recommendations for action by the course team:**

| External Examiner's Recommendations for action *(to be completed by External Examiner)* | Course Team's Response (action to be taken and measurable outcomes) *(to be completed by Course Leader)* | By whom *(to be completed by Course Leader)* | By when *(to be completed by Course Leader)* | Progress as of February 2022 *(to be completed by Course Leader)* | Progress as of end of Year *(to be completed by Course Leader)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Review the number, relevance and weightings of the tasks across each portfolio to ensure parity across modules (IYO-SS/IYOPI) | Team to discuss and standardise across the two portfolios | DW & DP | Dec 2021 | Reduced no. Tasks on IYOPI as suggested. Portfolios adapted on both modules to include presentation but 5% initial task retained. | Reduced number of tasks on both modules worked well: adjustment to essay length and grades on Self and Society module also gave parity. |
| On IYOPI, develop several essay titles that would be engaging for students to choose from | Team to discuss adding additional essay title as option | DW, DP and PA | Dec 2021 | No additional title added, however students have selected from both titles. | Essay titles on IYOPI worked well in 21/22: they are now under review to reflect changes being made to syllabus |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Include specific marking criteria in the assignment briefs. This point mainly relates to the IYOPI portfolio, but can be reviewed across all assessments. To help students perform to a higher level they need to know how their work is being judged, and not only via the generic assessment criteria/schemes. | Team to discuss strategies around helping students understand expectations and improve to perform in the higher grade brackets | DW, DP and PA | Dec 2021 | Feedback consistent across 2 modules – IYO criteria for all tasks. | Students received and engaged with feedback clearly as evidenced in IYOPI reflective tasks |
| Internal moderation practice. I found the internal moderation procedures to be good but questioned whether these may be revised in some instances. For example, if adjusting individual scores outside a grade boundary then would this trigger action to review the work of all students on a component regardless of whether they were included in the moderation sample or not? It may also be worth introducing a policy before marking an assignment to run a pre-moderation/calibration marking exercise between markers to ensure levelness, consistency and parity of marks between first and second marker. | Our internal moderation policy states that if marks in the sample are moderated by 5% or more (ie grade boundary) then indeed the other scripts should also be checked and any consistency addressed. DW ensure team aware. | DW | Feb 2022 | All students reviewed in 2nd marking (n=4). | With the small cohort all student work was second marked. Advice will be carried forward to 22/23 |
| I thought the feedback was generally excellent but could even be reduced certainly in terms of the volume of annotated comments. Students may have trouble trying to | Team to discuss and implement marking sheets and criteria across the modules | DW and DP | Dec 2021 | Feedback reduced and consistent use of criteria | Annotated comments were reduced this year and marking |

| | | | | across modules. 2<sup>nd</sup> marker not adding additional comments. | sheets with grading criteria were used across all tasks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| synthesise the key messages on how to improve when there is too much feedback. In terms of summative feedback, I would recommend that the use of marking sheets (with specific grading criteria) be used across all tasks/assignments if it is not already (e.g., portfolio on IYOPI) | | | | | |

**Report completed by:**

**Signature**          J.Adie                                        Date:   18<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

**COURSE TEAM'S GENERAL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

> We thank James for his really helpful constructive feedback and suggestions over the last few years, it has been a pleasure working with you!

**Responses and Action Plan completed by:**

Course Leader: Date: 25/10/21

Dawn Wilkinson

*(Please print name and sign)*

**Countersigned by:**

Head of HE (or equivalent) Date: 25/10/21

Jeremy Moyle

## MID-YEAR REVIEW OF ACTIONS (FEBRUARY 20___)

**To be completed by Course Leader:**

| Mid-Year Review of Actions Completed: | Signature: Diane Parkin | Date: 25/02/22 |
|---|---|---|
| External Examiner Notified: | Signature: | Date: |

## YEAR END REVIEW OF ACTIONS (MONTH 20___)

**To be completed by Course Leader:**

| Year End Review of Actions Completed: | Signature: Diane Parkin | Date: 15/06/22 |
|---|---|---|
| External Examiner Notified: | Signature: | Date: |

**To be completed by the Academic Partnerships:**

| A | No action identified | |
|---|---|---|
| B | Identified action and picked up appropriately | |
| C | Identified action and not picked up appropriately or action not identified | |
| | | |

**To be completed by Academic Director of Partnerships:**

| A | No action identified | |
|---|---|---|
| B | Identified action and picked up appropriately | |
| C | Identified action and not picked up appropriately or action not identified | |
| | | |

**DOCUMENT OWNER:**   **Academic Partnerships**

**DOCUMENT TYPE:**   **Form**

**APPROVED BY:**    **Academic Partnerships**

**VERSION NUMBER:**   **2**

**DUE FOR REVIEW:**   **June 2020**

**VERSION LOG:**

| Date | Version no. | Summary of changes | Author | Approved by |
|------|-------------|--------------------|--------|-------------|
| May 2019 | 2 | Updated to include table for mid-year review of action plan | Academic Partnerships | Academic Partnerships |