

RC HL/336/25/28
Year 11 1984-4

Bedford College

(University of London)

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Dr. Jenny Boore,
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14th June, 1984.

Dear Jenny,

Enclosed please find two lots of scripts for two courses: S281, Nursing of the Adult Sick, and S280, Issues in Mental Health.

I understand from the departmental secretary that Professor Burton, head of the department of Social Policy and Social Science of which Nursing Studies is a constituent part, has sent you the external examiner's guide to marking - so you were forewarned if not exactly forearmed! Just in case, I'm enclosing another set of instructions.

London University, as I explained to you before, operates a unit system. This stipulates that, in order to qualify for a degree, students will have had to take a required minimal number of units, each of which is an entity to itself. In other words, an external examiner is merely required to pass judgment on the quality of the actual scripts. As far as the Nursing course is concerned, this system is not too ideal an instrument to develop a coherent course with serial progression and external critique, and had the course remained, I would have pushed for a separate constitutional examination board for nursing where the whole course could be examined. However, as you know the tale of the course, there was little point in pushing for an institution which ultimately would only have served ritualistic purposes - hence no meeting. The purpose of the department's examination meeting where externals participate is only to clarify final students' examination scripts.

As you will notice, student 2162 could not be agreed upon by Liz and me - so therefore definitely requires your outside judgment as the "final arbiter". However, as is pointed out in the examination literature, you are entitled to change any student mark and please feel free to do so following your own judgment.

On the whole, Nursing of the Adult Sick papers are none too exciting. From my point of view, my general critique is that students forget that behind any of these questions there lurks a human being who might have pretty detailed and overt and/or covert concerns in relation to the nature of their hospitalisation. They discuss that, of course, within the context of other courses and they presumably find it difficult to transfer from one course to the next. I feel also that when they write on actual nursing, they have what they do in hospital in front of their mental image where the human being is only considered in very general terms. The students have done better, I thought, on the "physiological" dimension - but as you know only too well, my knowledge on that side is limited and I am inclined to compare it to the SRN examinations which (for my sins) I examine regularly as ENB's examiner. The course, Nursing of the Adult Sick, is also only a second-year course and students so far have only a limited understanding of the totality of their vocation.

Re Course No. S280: you might well ask how is it that these two courses are examined by one and the same person. The fault is mine as when I constructed Nursing Studies' curriculum during my first year of appointment I did not really understand London University course unit system and, additionally, I was anxious to remain within the EEC directives for Nursing which stipulated seven specialties of which one was psychiatric nursing. I was then under the impression that all those specialties should be examined by the university and I felt half-heartedly that the psychiatric specialty should be attached to general nursing as seen through EEC Nursing Directive eyes. Had the course remained, that would have been changed - alas! As for those papers, the purpose of which was to underpin their psychiatric experience, here are my comments:

Again, none too exciting but no-one failed - one or two did very well. On Question 1, I felt not sufficient debate had gone on in the papers between the interplay of Mental Health Services and society's changing attitudes towards the mentally ill. There was too much description and too little analysis and too little made of giving examples of actual changing attitudes. On Question 3, which was on the whole adequately answered, again students had difficulty in documenting the nature of the interplay between illness and the use of the services, and very little mention was made of how gender affects the use of services differently.

The reason why you don't have to appear at the examination meeting is that the purpose of that meeting is only for classifying final students.

Thank you very much for doing this one-off examination.

Yours sincerely,