

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

**PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION***Subject area and awards being examined:*

<b>School of:</b> English <b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b> English Language and Literature	<b>Subject(s):</b> English  <b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b> BA
--	--

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to [exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to:

**Head of Academic Quality and Standards,  
Academic Quality and Standards Team,  
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building,  
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT**

**PART B: COMMENTS FOR THE INSTITUTION ON THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS*****Matters for Urgent Attention***

*If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box.*

***Only applicable in first year of appointment***

*Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?*

***For Examiners completing their term of appointment***

*Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School.*

## Standards

### 1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

- The intended learning outcomes for the programme(s)/modules are entirely appropriate. However, in terms of the structure and content of the programme, BA English Language and Literature, I am struck by the fact that the structure of this programme means that students can graduate having never studied either English Language or medieval literature beyond the first year. There is a separate programme in English Language, but no corresponding programme for English Literature. I would recommend that the structure of the current BA English Language and BA English Language and Literature be revisited, with a view to having three separate programmes: English Language; English Literature, and English Language and Literature, in which the ELang and ELit components would be 50%.
- The standards are entirely appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.

### 2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*
- Broadly yes, but see comment above.

### 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;* all entirely appropriate. There is a wide range of assessments used, with extensive written feedback provided on assignments. Tutors may consider setting a word limit for their feedback, as I understand is the case for examinations, as a way of managing expectations.
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.* Overall, the quality is excellent, with the best students producing excellent first class work worthy of study at Masters level. If anything, marking at the lower end of the scale tends to be rather punitive. I would recommend tutors reward students for their effort, even if it at times their work is indicative of laziness, as in not demonstrating wider reading and/or lapses in referencing requirements.

### 4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*

The academic standards demonstrated are very high, and comparable, certainly for English Language, in relation to the UG EL programme at Aston.

- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

The strengths of the students are a high level of ability in written English and accurate expression; evidence of independent thinking and learning and synthesising of material. Weaknesses are in students who, although perfectly capable if judged by the quality of their writing, fail to perform well through not taking the time to construct carefully reasoned arguments supported by their reading.

### 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

n/a

### 6. The nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

*It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.*

Areas of good practice are: a) the widening range of assessment methods employed, particularly creative ways of setting examinations which require prior study of e.g. web based corpora; b) genuine research led teaching in sociolinguistic modules.

### 7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

*This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.*

See answer to 6 above.

## ***The Examination Process***

8. **The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?**

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

Yes. If anything, I was sent too many samples.

9. **Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks?**

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Yes

10. **Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

Yes

11. **Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

Yes

12. **Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

Yes

### ***For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements***

*If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.*

### ***Other Comments***

*Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form.*



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

10 November 2011

Dear

Thank you for your report as External Examiner on our BA programmes for 2010-11 and, more generally, for all your work for us this last year.

Your report has now been considered by the School's Taught Student Education Committee and I have incorporated that committee's response into my comments here.

We are pleased that you consider the intended learning outcomes for our programmes to be 'entirely appropriate'. On the more complicated subject of the structure of Q300 (English Language and Literature) and its minimum requirement of English Language and Medieval Literature components, it would be true to say that we are not unusual in this respect within the sector nationally. Other major institutions, including, as I understand it, the University of Oxford, have similar requirements. In some respects, these are a legacy of the original UCAS entries when they were devised some decades ago rather than being conscious decisions on the current structures. That said, you may be interested to hear that we have recently re-considered our undergraduate offerings and, from 2013, we will be inaugurating an English Literature degree scheme alongside a new version of Q300 which would meet your preference for something like a 50/50 split between the two subjects. At the same time, however, we have made a strategic decision to withdraw our English Language scheme.

We very much welcome your suggestion that a word limit be set for feedback – not least as a way of managing student expectations. You will be pleased to hear that this is already in the process of being implemented.

On behalf of the School, I would like thank for all your work for us over the last session.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John C. Whale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

John Whale  
Head of School

## The University of Leeds

### EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

#### PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

*Subject area and awards being examined:*

<b>School of:</b>	<b>Subject(s):</b>
English	English Language & Literature
<b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b>	<b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b> BA

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to [exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to:

**Head of Academic Quality and Standards,  
Academic Quality and Standards Team,  
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building,  
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT**

#### PART B: COMMENTS FOR THE INSTITUTION ON THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS

##### ***Matters for Urgent Attention***

*If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box.*

None

##### ***Only applicable in first year of appointment***

*Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?*

N/A

##### ***For Examiners completing their term of appointment***

*Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School.*

The English degree at Leeds is a rigorous, stimulating demanding course, taught with huge energy and commitment, and assessed with the proper level of attention and transparency. Students at Leeds are very fortunate: they have plenty of choice about what they read and write about— increasingly so as they progress through the course—but they also have sufficient grounding in critical thinking and literary history to underpin the variety of routes through the course that they eventually choose to take. They are exceptionally fortunate in the kind and degree of written feedback they're given.

Over the past four years I've been sent for moderation runs of work from a number of modules and in a variety of forms for assessment (exam scripts, coursework essays, and dissertations). I also saw, in borderline cases I was asked to decide, a very wide range of work across all the modules. The following are the things that strike me most forcibly about what the best candidates are good at, and what the School persists in asking less able candidates to get better at:

### *Thinking critically*

The best English students at Leeds are exceptionally sophisticated in their critical and theoretical thinking. I've remarked several times on some of the modules I've seen (Stories of the Eye, Introduction to Psychoanalysis) in which getting to first base with complex theoretical material is a tall order, and which foster at the top end really outstanding work, some of which would not look out of place in a Masters programme. Across the board too, teaching staff don't let students get away with uncritical work—with lazy or thoughtless approaches to texts. So whether the operative term be 'patriarchy' or 'realism' or 'otherness' or 'postmodernism', or simply 'character' I've noted patient insistence that students understand the freight they have to handle with any such abstraction, that they switch off the autopilot, and that they widen and deepen the range of things it is worth saying about texts.

### *Making arguments*

The able students know how to make arguments, to answer questions, to provide evidence for assertions, to get the right balance between engagement with primary texts and wider critical and contextual material. This is the area in which I have noticed feedback making an immediate difference: feedback from essay 1 might ask a student to offer more detailed textual analysis, and in essay 2 they would do just that.

### *Making sense*

Feedback to students insists that they make sense, that they apply standards of logic to the claims they make, that they think about their own critical prose, and write clearly. When weaker students don't present their ideas clearly, their marks suffer, and this is as it should be.

### *What are Leeds English students less good at?*

Some mid-range candidates are less well equipped than they might be to analyse literary form. I commented in detail on this matter in my report for 2009-2010, and add here that in the course of my time as an external I did not see many brilliant pieces of undergraduate writing about poetry; I did, however, read from otherwise able candidates quite a number of pedestrian commentaries on verse extracts. This is not just a matter of noting rhetorical devices or counting up metrical features—indeed confining the issue of form to those technical elements sometimes has a 'tick box' effect in a student's thinking. Rather, it is a matter of understanding that verse makes its meanings in numerous oblique and complex ways, and in ways other than those evident in narrative prose, or film, or drama. External examiners are not asked to look at Level 1 work, but it may be that a review of the foundation course in 'Poetry: Reading and Interpretation' would be beneficial.

### **Feedback**

Leeds students receive a great deal of detailed written feedback; an enormous amount of labour is involved in writing individual commentaries on assessed essays. A limit of 100-150 words is suggested for feedback on exam scripts, but there is, I think, no suggested length for feedback on assessed essays. Some comments run to a page. The School could probably afford to give less feedback, particular in the second semester of the final year.

### **Recommendation 1:**

The school introduce a guideline word limit for comments on assessed essays.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Feedback on exam scripts include the marks given for individual questions.

### **Recommendation 3:**

The guideline word limits for final semester work be reduced. It would be acceptable, in my view, if feedback on final exam scripts consisted of *only* the marks awarded for individual questions.

## Monitoring

I raised some concerns in 2008-2009 about variation in practice regarding the role of second examiners. Because statistics showed that double marking rarely made a difference to a candidate's class, a monitoring system has been piloted in 2010-2011. This is an important, and in my view very successful innovation. The detailed documentation on the new process makes it absolutely clear what monitoring is for, and what the monitoring examiner is meant to do. Two roles are clearly distinguished: the first is to provide a second opinion where it seems, to the first examiner, to be required, and so to participate in the assessment of particular pieces of work (I saw this in action with two of the sample runs I was sent from this session, where a query from the first examiner had been resolved in discussion). This is quite distinct from the other role of the monitor, which is in effect to scrutinize the practice of the first examiner, and to call for a remark of the whole batch of scripts or essays if there is any doubt about standards. The monitoring process as a whole seems to me much preferable to the double marking system it has replaced because of the clarity of the roles involved.

## Standards

### 1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

- *The appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The ILOs are fully commensurate with the level of the award.

### 2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The English Degree at Leeds is comparable with English Degrees at other institutions. Those candidates performing at the highest level would be first class candidates elsewhere.

### 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

see comments on completing term of appointment

### 4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

see comments on completing term of appointment

### 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N/A

### 6. The nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

*It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.*

see comments on completing term of appointment

### 7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

*This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.*

The optional modules offered at Levels 2 and 3 are research-driven, and taught by outstanding scholars in the relevant fields.

## **The Examination Process**

**8. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?**

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

I was given sufficient access to the material needed to make judgements as an external examiner. When I requested additional information (on the new monitoring process, and on an issue of mitigating circumstances, for example), the response was exceptionally timely and efficient.

**9. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks?**

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

I received full and appropriate documentation.

**10. Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

From the 2009-2010 session I sampled exam scripts in contemporary Literature (Level 3 core module); a whole module (essays and exam scripts) from the Shieldmaidens, Matriarchs and Monsters module; assessed essays from the Motherhood and Matriarchy option. I also saw, from the 2010-2011 session a sample of exam scripts from the modern literature core module, and full sets of work done on Arthurian Legend, and on the Lost in Fiction course. I therefore have full confidence in my evaluation of the standard of student work.

**11. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

The administrative arrangements were faultless.

**12. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

As far as I am aware these procedures were in place. External examiners did not participate in them.

### **For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements**

*If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.*

N/A

### **Other Comments**

*Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form.*

I strongly recommend that the university review its policy regarding plagiarism. It was drawn to our attention this year that the penalties for cases of plagiarism are significantly more severe, including exclusion from the university, for a 'second offence', following a warning. In effect, this means that the two offences must occur in different semesters. In cases where more than one instance of plagiarism is discovered in *the same* semester (one candidate submits two pieces of plagiarised coursework, say), the penalties are much less severe. Even in an extremely serious case, the candidate can score 0 for the module in which they have cheated, but *carry the credits* for that module, with the result that their class of degree is lowered, but that they graduate even so with an Honours Degree from the University of Leeds. This seems quite wrong, and likely to encourage rather than deter potential plagiarists.





**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

10 November 2011

Dear

Thank you for your very helpful report as External Examiner on our BA programmes for 2010-11 and, more generally, for all your extremely valuable work for us over the last four years.

Your report has now been considered by the School's Taught Student Education Committee and I have incorporated that committee's response into my comments.

We are extremely grateful for your very positive overall view of the degree here in the School which you describe as appropriately rigorous and challenging. We are also pleased to read that you think our teaching is energetic and committed and that our students are 'exceptionally fortunate' to receive the kind of feedback which we offer.

Under your three headings of 'Thinking Critically', 'Making Sense', and 'What are Leeds students less good at?', you offer some more detailed observations which we note with interest. We shall certainly follow up your observation that our mid-range students are not as good as they might be in dealing with literary form and poetic form in particular. In this regard, we will take up your suggestion that it might be wise to review our Level 1 module 'Poetry: Reading and Interpretation' to see if it offers the kind of formal foundation it should.

Your three specific recommendations on guidelines for comments on assessed essays, feedback on exam scripts, and the guideline word limits for final semester work to be reduced, have all been warmly welcomed and are in the process of being implemented.

We are also grateful for the confirmation you offer on our transition from a process of blind double-marking to a system of double-marking which you describe as a being a 'successful innovation'.

I am glad that you have enjoyed your term of office as External Examiner. We have certainly valued and benefitted from your rigorous and perceptive responses over the last four years. On behalf of the School, I would like to thank you for all your excellent work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "John C. Whale".

John Whale  
Head of School

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011**

**PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION***Subject area and awards being examined:*

<b>School of:</b> English	<b>Subject(s):</b>
<b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b> English Literature	<b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b>
	<b>BA</b>

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to [exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to:

**Head of Academic Quality and Standards,  
Academic Quality and Standards Team,  
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building,  
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT**

**PART B: COMMENTS FOR THE INSTITUTION ON THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS*****Matters for Urgent Attention***

*If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box.*

none

***Only applicable in first year of appointment***

*Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?*

n/a

***For Examiners completing their term of appointment***

*Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School.*

This is my fourth year of external examining. During this time, there have been a number of significant changes, including the introduction of a double-weighted (40 CAT) dissertation and a move from double-marking to a process of moderation in the marking of assessments. In both cases, the external examiners were very fully involved in discussions, and we had a shaping role in the decisions that were made. I have seen evidence, in other words, of a department that reflects in an open and constructive way about its curriculum and assessment practice, and which seeks to improve its provision continually despite, in recent years, some tough financial circumstances. It has been interesting and positive to observe the increase in students taking a year abroad, and the ways in which it benefits their final year work on return.

My experience of the department and the programme has been very positive indeed, and I have never felt that my role was merely to rubber stamp, but that my views were actively sought and, if useful, acted upon. The department is very efficient, and, in particular, the role of the DLT works very well in relation to the assessment process. The current DLT accepts a very wide range of responsibilities, and takes personal

oversight of the process. This is certainly very demanding, but it gives me a very great deal of confidence in the care, fairness, and level of attention to individual cases applied to the assessment and classification of Leeds English degrees.

## Standards

### 1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

- *The appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

Standards are commensurate with the level of award, and all students gaining good honours degrees demonstrate a breadth of knowledge and range of skills that would be expected at this level.

### 2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The Leeds English degrees are comparable with elite English degrees elsewhere in the UK, and fully compliant with the national benchmark.

### 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance*
- .

Assessment methods are appropriate, if occasionally a little conservative. I welcome the more diverse and approach to (particularly non-examined) forms of assessment in some of the more innovative modules, alongside the firm insistence on close reading and detailed analysis in a number of exams and written assessments. There is room for further diversification, but the degrees are firmly anchored in a rigorous examining of core modules (particularly in earlier periods and in language modules) in year 2, and this lends weight and credibility to the process as a whole.

### 4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate a wide range of knowledge. I commented at the meeting, and have commented in previous years, that while the best students have every opportunity to shine, some of the more average students seem to me a little under-stretched by the degree. Students take three modules per semester (whereas in many institutions it is four), but don't always demonstrate (at least in the assessments) the breadth of reading and engagement one might expect from a relatively light module load. And they don't always make connections across modules or convey a sense of cumulative knowledge across the 3 (or 4) years – I recognise, however, that this is an endemic feature of modular degrees and not peculiar to Leeds.

### 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

n/a

### 6. The nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

*It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.*

Enhancements include the introduction of a 40 credit dissertation – undoubtedly an opportunity for students to demonstrate independence and breadth in their learning, and one that produced some very high marks, but which will require careful monitoring in terms of the risk to students who take this option. Also the introduction, over the last four years, of some innovative, often highly contemporary modules. Leeds English Department is very well able to modernise, and assimilate new approaches and exciting new areas without compromising its core, period-based curriculum, and this is greatly to be commended.

### 7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

*This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by*

*research; students undertaking research.*

The curriculum is clearly informed by staff research but (correctly in my view) not to the extent that modules are overly specific reflections of staff specialism. Staff in new and emerging research areas are able to reflect their work in their teaching, but there is no sense of eccentricity or special pleading about the choice of literary texts for study.

## **The Examination Process**

8. **The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?**

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

Yes, entirely sufficient.

9. **Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks?**

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Yes, very full documentation well in advance.

10. **Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

Yes, very large quantities of assessed and examined work.....

11. **Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

The administrative arrangements (overseen by Nicola Wildman) are an exceptionally good feature of the programme. Contact is maintained throughout the year, and examiners are consulted about a range of decisions relating to the examining process, and then the examination process is handled with exemplary efficiency.

12. **Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

The procedures are in place, although decisions about mitigating circumstances are taken in advance of the final exam board, so it is not possible for me to comment in detail.

## **For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements**

*If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.*

## **Other Comments**

*Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form.*

I commented in the exam board on a) the exemplary precision of the marking in this department b) the success of the switch to moderating rather than double marking c) the fullness, detail and scrupulous of feedback on assessments and exams. On point c) it appeared to me that staff were working extremely hard in ways that did not always register in terms of student satisfaction (NSS etc) and that there might be a case for a more targeted approach to feedback (or "feedforward" as the jargon has it) at more strategic points in the assessment cycle.

I think that more consideration needs to be given to fail marks. Externals are very properly asked to endorse all fails, but we did not endorse them in all cases, and this might be something to monitor in the future.

I think the department could make more of a feature of its successful and distinctive combination of rigorous, period-based modules, language teaching and the way it sustains teaching in some highly contemporary and developing intellectual areas, especially in American literature, twentieth-century British literature and postcolonial literature. The department achieves a good curriculum balance between these areas, and offers a well rounded literary education.





**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

10 November 2011

Dear

Thank you for your very helpful report as External Examiner on our BA programmes for 2010-11 and, more generally, for all your extremely valuable work for us over the last four years.

Your report has now been considered by the School's Taught Student Education Committee and I have incorporated that committee's response into my comments here.

We are extremely grateful for your general perception and commendation that the School is in a good position to develop new and exciting areas 'without compromising its core, period-based curriculum' and that it could do more to make a 'feature' of its distinctive combination of period-based modules alongside 'highly contemporary and developing intellectual areas'. We shall take these comments into our planning exercises.

In terms of marking, we are grateful for your comments on the precision of our assessment and the fullness of our feedback. In particular, it is helpful to have your confirmation that our switch from double-marking to moderating is a success; and that our hard work on feedback may not be best focused so as to register in terms of student satisfaction on the NSS. This last confirms our own thinking and we are taking action to address it.

We note again your comments on diversifying our assessment methods and your perceptive comments about the need for 'careful monitoring' of risk for students on the new 40-credit dissertation. Similarly, your points about consideration of fail marks are well made and need to be addressed.

I am glad that you have enjoyed your term of office as External Examiner. We have certainly valued and benefitted from your rigorous and perceptive responses over the last four years. On behalf of the School, I would like to thank you for all your excellent work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Whale".

John Whale  
Head of School