

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of History
Subject(s):	<i>History</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to 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

There are no matters for urgent attention.

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

I have served as an external examiner to the School of History for only two years but will stand down at the end of this academic year. I have been consistently impressed with the School, in its very high standards of teaching, in the care with which it examines the work of its students, and in its efficiency and scrupulous fairness in its examining procedures. I have seen a broad range of students' work from modules from all three years and these were comparable with scripts I see in the Cambridge Historical Tripos. There is a good sense of progression over the years of the BA, with very high expectations of scholarly endeavour in the third year. Some of the dissertations I have read over two years, though especially this year, have been outstandingly good.

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 were entirely appropriate to the School of History's modules and for the degree of BA .

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.*

Yes, very much so. The expectations of the Cambridge History Faculty are very much the same as those in the School of History at Leeds, though they are in fact much less clearly and formally set out in the Cambridge Tripos than they are at Leeds.

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.*

The methods of assessment in the School of History are consistent across modules and are clear to both students and examiners. Course handbooks set out to students with exactness the methods, modes and standards of assessment for each module.

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.*

Yes. This appeared to me a strong year demonstrating the kind of consistently good performance I would expect at any excellent university.

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. Please comment on 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.

The two years are comparable and no great changes stand out. But last year's practice was excellent; and the feature that stood out for me most then – the care and quality of how examiners marked scripts and communicated their thoughts and judgments to their students – is as strong this year.

7. Please comment on 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.

There is clear evidence in the modules taught by the School of teaching led by research, both in those 'conventional' modules on periods or historical problems and in modules like 'Students as Scholars' and the 'Historical Research Project', where students practise their critical skills in historiography and collaborative work. The research interests of teachers are shown most clearly in third-year special subjects.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. 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

9. 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. The *Handbook* is excellent. The School, too, is an excellent source of information on practice.

10. 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, marking criteria?

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

Yes. I received everything I needed to have in order to make a proper assessment of the examining process.

11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes. The questions were appropriate. Where I had comments to make on the shape of papers or on specific questions set in draft, the School recognized them properly and efficiently.

12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes. I saw a good range of scripts from the School's modules. Examiners' comments are generally excellent, though in some cases those by a second examiner were a little thin. The School should encourage its examiners to give typewritten comments.

13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Yes. Some dissertations this year were of publishable quality. A notable strength of the School is its encouragement of students working on projects fairly close to Leeds with good archives. The University should note how important it is in the teaching of history to have serious research libraries with excellent resources. Reading the dissertations submitted by students in the School is one of the pleasures of the external examiner's task.

14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

Yes. The Board was conducted with care and efficiency. Indeed the School of History operates overall in a formidably efficient way. I attended both the meeting on special circumstances (on which see question 15) and the meeting to class students. It was heartening to see so many members of staff attend the classification meeting.

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

Generally yes, though the medical evidence that the School has is often thin; it may be a GP's letter of a line or two. The challenge was more obvious this year than last because of the much higher number of difficult cases we were presented with. Some, clearly, are profound. Our meeting on special circumstances felt its way very carefully through each case, though I hope that the University is aware of how difficult it is for examiners to make strictly academic judgments upon the work of students whose careers are affected so seriously by circumstances wholly pastoral or medical. It is particularly difficult for examiners to assess how far a medical condition has or may have affected academic performance over a long period of time; sometimes this can be one or two or even three years. At times in the meeting we felt, I think, the weight of our *in*expertise. In <<>> examiners are spared this responsibility by having all such cases go automatically to a Committee on Appeals appointed by the University's Council.

Other comments

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

The Leeds BA in History is in robust good health and it has been, as it was last year, a pleasure to help to examine it.

From:

Subject: external examiner's report

Date: 23 July 2012 11:03:11

Dear

Thank you for your external examiner's report for our BA honours undergraduate programme. We are pleased that the way the examinations process was run, the standards our students reached, and the manner in which we assessed them have all met with your approval. You raise an interesting and important point in section 15, about the difficulty facing external examiners (and School committees) in making academic judgements on candidates whose work has been seriously affected by medical or pastoral conditions. You mention that at this responsibility is taken on by a University Committee. Since this involves university practice, I imagine it is a matter which the Academic Quality and Standards Team may wish to consider.

May I thank you most warmly on the School's behalf for your very close attention to our examinations over the past two years, and your perceptive judgements on the difficult cases that inevitably arise. You have made a most valuable contribution.

Best wishes,

Professor of Modern British History and Head of School

School of History
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT

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The University of Leeds**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	History
Subject(s):	<i>Medieval History</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Undergraduate History (including Institute for Medieval Studies and Joint Honours)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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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?

I received a copy of the report of my predecessor as External Examiner for the medieval history modules.

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

N/a

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 medieval history modules which I saw were stimulating and challenging, and entirely appropriate for levels 2 and 3 of an undergraduate programme. A wide range of modules are available to students and the programme is carefully structured to ensure intellectual progression.

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 programme fully meets the expectations of the subject benchmarks, and is comparable with other similar programmes (including that of my own institution).

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.*

The assessment methods used in the modules I examined were robust and well designed. There was also some welcome flexibility in assessment, so that it could be tailored to the intended learning outcomes of individual modules. Judging from students' work, and the detailed and perceptive feedback offered to them, the quality of teaching and assessment is very high. The second marking was also thorough in the majority of modules which I have seen.

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.*

The programme allows ample opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding and ability, particularly through a full and varied pattern of assessment. The standard of work which I have seen has been high, and is certainly comparable to that of other leading history departments. The best work was extremely good and the average standard encouragingly high.

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. Please comment on 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.

This is my first year as external examiner at Leeds.

7. Please comment on 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 influence of research on teaching is very evident. The modules which I have seen relate directly to staff research interests and expertise, and this expert and up-to-date knowledge is evident in the curriculum, reading lists and dialogue with students (as evinced in student work and feedback). Students are encouraged and directed in their own research through longer essays and dissertations.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. 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

9. 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, the information I was sent (particularly the External Examiner Handbook) was helpful and sufficient.

10. 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, marking criteria?

- *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 handbooks for all the modules I examined. I did not receive any wider information about the history programmes, however, and this would have been useful for understanding further how the medieval history modules I saw fitted into the wider history provision.

11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes. All draft assessments were sent in good time, and all exam/essay questions were appropriate and considered.

12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes. In general, I received just the right amount of assessed work to attain a clear impression of student work on each module. In some smaller level 3 courses, however, I saw scripts of only two students, and would have liked to have seen the work of a third candidate for balance.

13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Yes, very much so. I was impressed by the sheer range of medieval history dissertations, as well as their high quality.

14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

The administration was extremely efficient, with excellent communication from <<>> throughout the year. The Board of Examiners, which I attended, was also very well managed and its recommendations were all carefully considered and appropriate.

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

Yes – the preliminary board was handled with diligence, and external examiners were fully briefed and consulted in every case considered.

Other comments

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

From:

Subject: external examiner's report
Date: 23 July 2012 10:33:08

Dear

Thank you for your report as our external examiner for the undergraduate modules in medieval history, which covers the Single honours, Joint Honours, and Medieval Studies programmes. We are glad that the running of the examination process, the quality of our students, and our assessment of them all came up to scratch.

You have raised two points that we need to consider. In section 10 you made the point that, while the module documentation has been satisfactory, we did not have information available for you at programme level that would have enabled you to see how the medieval modules fitted into the wider history provision. In section 12 you recommend that where a module (as sometimes happens at level 3) has a small number of candidates you will like to see the materials for at least three students.

We very much appreciate your careful moderation of the examination process, and especially your advice about the often complex special cases which arise each year.

Best wishes,

Professor of Modern British History and Head of School

School of History
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT

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The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	History
Subject(s):	History
Programme(s) / Module(s):	International History & Politics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Completed report

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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

N/A

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?

Yes

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 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 appropriate, as are the standards.

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 Aims and ILOs are broadly comparable with those of courses at other institutions of which I am aware, and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

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.*

The assessment methods are sensible and effective. Overall, I was impressed by the material that I saw, which indicated highly effective teaching, learning and assessment methods were employed.

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.*

Judged by the material that I saw, academic standards are high. Students' performances are comparable to those at my own institution. The student cohort was of a good standard academically, but some demonstrated weakness in use of written English. The latter point should be addressed.

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. Please comment on 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.

As I am in my first year as examiner, I am unable to comment.

7. Please comment on 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.

Some of the dissertations made good use of original research – some were very impressive indeed. The fact that the Department contains some leading scholars was clearly reflected in the subjects that were under examination and the depth of knowledge and analysis displayed by students.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. 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

The Examination/Assessment Process

9. 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.*

The material was sufficient in the main. A couple of less-than-clear points were cleared up over the telephone by <<<>>>.

10. 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, marking criteria?

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

Yes, the material was very useful.

11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

I received all the relevant papers. I approved of all but one question, and my comments were taken on board.

12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

The amount of work made available was sufficient. In some cases marking was very thorough; in others rather minimalist. I would encourage markers to write at least a short paragraph per script, and give clear indications of why each questions received a particular mark (can be a brief comment). I would ask that comments on the cover sheet are TYPED – I found it very difficult to read some of the comments.

13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

The choice of dissertation subje3cts was highly appropriate, as was the method and standard of assessment.

14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

The admin arrangements were exemplary. I attended the Board, which worked very smoothly, I was happy with the recommendations.

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

Yes.

Other comments

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

Overall, the whole process was conducted very efficiently. I commend the effectiveness of the admin team.

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject: Your Report as External Examiner
Date: 17 September 2012 16:28:20

Dear

Many thanks for your report as external examiner for International History and Politics. We are very pleased that you formed a good opinion of the quality of the students' work and of the School's administrative arrangements.

You raised two points in your report, with both of which I wholeheartedly concur. The poor standard of written English of some, albeit a minority, of our students is something that we are already trying to address, not least in adding a category about this in the feedback sheet for examinations. You also rightly draw attention to the need for all internal examiners to produce adequate, and legible, comment on the scripts they mark, both to assist you, and to aid the process of feedback carried out by the students' personal tutors. I shall ensure that these points are brought to the attention of the School's Student Education Committee, and that all colleagues are reminded of good practice in marking essays and exam scripts.

We greatly appreciate your careful moderation of the examination process, and your assistance and advice about the often complex special cases which arise each year. We look forward to welcoming you back to Leeds next year.

With best wishes,

School of History,
University of Leeds,
Leeds LS2 9JT

0113-3433601