

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013**

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

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

**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](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*

Not applicable

**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 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 Aims and ILOs are entirely appropriate and evidenced in the design of the programme and constituent modules
- The Aims and ILOs are appropriate for the award of an undergraduate degree in History

### 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 comparable to those in place at other HE institutions in the sector and with my own University which is member of the Russell group. Students are suitably challenged at each level of their degree and fully supported as they progress towards their final year where there is a stronger expectation that they will have honed their skills as independent learners. Much of the teaching is innovative; all teaching is research-led and at the cutting edge of scholarship in the field.

### 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.*

- Great care is taken to devise assessments that are suitable for measuring deep knowledge and understanding of the subject; there is a good balance between continuous assessment and unseen examination papers; assessments are carefully moderated and a rationale provided for the final grade awarded; the classification of awards is transparent and equitable.
- Student attainment is notably high and reflects the quality of the teaching and learning experience in the School.

### 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 in History performed exceptionally well and display a high level of Analytical And critical skill.
- In my view, the 2012/13 cohort demonstrated a high level of capability. There are no unusual indicators of intellectual weakness; as elsewhere in the sector, computer literate students do exhibit some difficulty in expressing their ideas on paper under exam conditions.

### 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 ever, the History programme continues to expand its geographical and cultural reaches and this provides a stimulating and challenging environment for students to develop their skills and knowledge. The Dissertation and Long Essay modules are particularly successful at inculcating sound research and critical skills. Supporting this work requires a major investment of staff time and effort.

**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.*

Research in History is deeply embedded at all levels of the curriculum, from the design of individual modules and the provision of reading lists to the delivery of the teaching itself. Students are positively encouraged to include primary materials in their assessed work and to embark on their own research projects in their final year.

**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.*

I have received full guidance on my role, powers and responsibilities. This has enabled me to be an effective External Examiner.

**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 all appropriate documentation relating the programmes for which I am responsible in a timely manner.

**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 scrutinized all exam papers, including resit papers, alongside the questions for assessed essay work. The nature and level of the questions set was entirely suitable. I received helpful feedback/responses to my comments and queries.

**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 am satisfied that the sampling process is sufficient to establish that marking standards are secure. The scripts were clearly marked and a rationale for the agreed grades was provided.

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

The production of a sustained piece of research is widely held to be the gold standard for degrees in History. Students prepared Dissertations and Long Essays on a wide range of topics. Although the quality of the work varied, all were well-conceived projects and actively supervised by experts in the field. Much of the work was graded at First Class and a small number of the Dissertations that I examined were of publishable 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 administrative arrangements were highly satisfactory. The processes are smooth and efficient; communication with departmental staff – academic and administrative- is excellent. Regrettably, I was not able to attend the Exam Board this year. As yet I have not received any Minutes so I am unable to comment on the Board's recommendations.

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

Yes. The procedures in place at Leeds take full account of any extenuating circumstances, and medical evidence is solicited where this is appropriate. As in previous years, these circumstances are carefully considered at a confidential pre-board meeting in the presence of the External Examiners.

**Other comments**

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

Anonymous marking of assessed work is increasingly the norm throughout the sector, although this is currently not in place at Leeds University. I have become increasingly aware that this is anomalous. It would be politic to review this practice as students are more frequently challenging their marks via internal grievance procedures and - to a lesser extent - via the OIA.

I would also urge the University to consider putting in place alternative assessments for non-native speakers. At present, overseas students are expected to tackle unseen examinations under the same time constraints as others in the cohort. I would be happy to engage in a wider discussion about this issue.

Dear

Thank you very much for sending your recent External Examiner's report. I must apologise for some slight delay in response, but this arrived while I was away from Leeds.

I welcome your very constructive and positive comments on the work you received, and especially about the dissertations, of which we are justly proud, and your approval of our procedures. It's good to know that the standards and procedures of the School of History are fully in accord with best practice at other universities.

I must, however, point out that in one of your concluding observations you are mistaken, in that all assessed essays are anonymous when marked, as is standard practice in the University of Leeds. The only assessed work which is not, and cannot, be marked anonymously are dissertations and long essays, when the supervisor, who is always first marker, would know from the subject matter who the candidate was.

With regard to the second point you made in your concluding remarks, concerning those students who are not native speakers of English, I would personally not be averse to allowing them more time in exams, as you suggest. However, this would be a decision that would have to be taken, and applied, at University level, and is not something that could be sanctioned for individual schools. I shall communicate this suggestion to the relevant authorities.

Finally, since this is your last year as our External Examiner, it only remains for me to thank you for all your help, advice and guidance over the last four years. I'm only sorry that you were not (with good reason) able to be present at your last examiners' meeting, so that I might have thanked you in person. We greatly value all the work that our externals put in to assist us in maintaining, and we hope improving, standards within the School, and hope very much that you have found this a fulfilling experience.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

## The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

**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

**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*

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?*

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*

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 Intended Learning Outcomes are entirely appropriate for the modules which I have seen. I continue to be impressed with the range and scope of the medieval history provision in the school, and by the intellectual rigour of the programme.

### 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.*

Those parts of the programme that I have seen this year wholly meet the expectations of the History subject benchmarks. The programme is comparable with History programmes in other leading UK universities in terms of its quality and its expectations of students (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 employed in the medieval history modules are well-designed and appropriate. There is a greater emphasis on coursework at level 3, which helps to prepare students for postgraduate study. Judging from the work I have seen this year, and the detailed and helpful feedback given to students, the quality of teaching and assessment is high. In general, second marking has been carried out rigorously and helps to ensure comparability of assessment across modules. I noticed a number of cases this year where second markers pointed out overlap between assignments, which were all appropriately penalised following discussions with the first marker. I think that duplication of material is something that first markers might look out for more carefully, however, since not all scripts are sent to second markers.

### 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 every opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes. I was particularly impressed by the way that high-achieving students are being stretched and developed through detailed feedback and well-designed assessment tasks, which encourage them to think and write at a more sophisticated level. The standard of the cohort is high, with the large majority of 3<sup>rd</sup> years achieving 1sts or 2.1s.

### 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.*

I was glad that the department was able to act on my request that a minimum of 4 scripts be sent from each module, and as a result I have felt better able to assess the quality of larger and smaller courses alike this year. I am not aware of any major changes to the programme over the past 12 months.

### 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 clear. 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. 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

## 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 information sent to me this year (including the External Examiner Handbook) has been sufficient for judging the quality of the programme.

**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 did not receive any information about the History programme as a whole, which would be useful for understanding further how the medieval history modules I saw fitted into the department's wider provision. It would also be helpful to receive copies of module handbooks (e.g. by email), particularly when evaluating non-traditional forms of assessment.

**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 have been sent in good time, including re-sit papers to check for overlap. Exam papers and coursework questions have all been well designed, and pitched at an appropriate level.

**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: see my comments in section 6. The quantity of work sent provides a good impression of the range of work on the module, and the way in which it has been assessed. Scripts are clearly marked, and where relevant the dialogue between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> markers in arriving at a final grade is helpfully signalled.

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

Definitely. I have again been impressed by the range and quality of medieval history dissertations, with several imaginatively designed projects which show a strong understanding of state-of-the-art research.

**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 process has again been very well managed, by the school secretary, exams officer and head of school. The Board of Examiners was carried out professionally and its recommendations took careful account of the views of external examiners.

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

Yes: this element of proceedings was performed with sensitivity and rigour.

## Other comments

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

The university's new policy to award a minimum mark of 20 provoked some concern, as it occasionally seems to produce perverse outcomes. In a small number of cases I have seen this year, students have been able to pass modules without fully engaging with the course's requirements. For example, one student passed a level 2 module without submitting a coursework essay and leaving the exam early. I also saw one case where a student submitted their work late and received a heavy penalty, thereby attaining an adjusted mark of 20 – the same mark they would have been awarded had they not done any work at all. By awarding a minimum mark of 20, I think there is a risk of disincentivising students and failing to differentiate sufficiently between low quality work carried out conscientiously and non-submission.



Dear

Thank you very much for so speedily sending your report as external examiner on our B.A. I must apologise for a slight delay in response, since I was away when your report was sent on to me.

We welcome your very positive comments on the quality of the programme and the rigour and fairness of the assessment, and in particular we note with pleasure your high opinion of our 3rd-year dissertations.

With regard to the other points you made: I shall ask the office staff to ensure that you are sent all the relevant module handbooks, and information as to the programme as a whole, and please do not hesitate to contact us if there is any further information which you require during the course of next academic year. You also had some reservations on the policy of awarding a minimum mark of 20. I think that many of my colleagues would share these, but as you are clearly aware this is a university policy, over which we have no control. I shall, however, ensure that your concern is passed on to the appropriate authorities.

With many thanks for all your efforts, and best wishes,

School of History  
University of Leeds

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
 ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

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

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

**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*

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?*

**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 Intended Learning Outcomes were wholly appropriate to the IHP programme. Ditto the standards in place for 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.*

I believe that the aims and ILOs are in line with comparable programmes elsewhere, and also with national benchmarks and FHEQ.

**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.*

I was entirely happy with all the aspects mentioned above. The quality of the scripts I saw points to highly effective teaching.

**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 academic standards of the scripts I saw of an appropriate level and certainly comparable with those at the University of <> (whwre lw as teaching during AY 2012-13). However the marking was consistently 2/3 marks higher than the norm at <>. The cohort was generally sound on analysis, but I had some concerns about the standard of written English.

**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.*

N/A

**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 modules and scripts reflected the deep expertise of members of staff.

## 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.*

Yes to both.

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 documentation was fine.

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?

Arrangements were fine. Second Q: v happy with arrangements.

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?

1. Yes.
2. Some handwritten comments on marksheets were difficult to read.

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

Yes & yes.

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 of the process was first class. I attended the meeting, which as well run and extremely useful. I concurred with the Board's recommendations.

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

I thought this aspect was covered extremely thoroughly and fairly.

## Other comments

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

The IHP programme is an excellent mixture of politics and history topics. Once again, I came away from the final meeting thinking that it is an impressive course.

Dear

Thank you very much for your very positive report as External Examiner, which has recently been forwarded to me. I am pleased that you approve of our programme and of the examination arrangements, and that the quality of work you received was in accordance with that expected at a Russell Group University.

You raised only two points. I shall draw the attention of my International History colleagues to your comparison of the marking here with that at \_\_\_\_\_ and ask them to reflect upon it. I shall also remind them (sadly not for the first time) of the importance of ensuring that their comments about essays and exam scripts should be easily legible. I am extremely sympathetic about this second issue, from which I have suffered as a personal tutor, but all that I can do is to re-iterate the point until it finally sinks in.

With thanks for your work and for your helpful advice during the examination meetings.

Best wishes,

Head of School  
School of History  
University of Leeds

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013**

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

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

**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*

There are no matters that should preclude the programme being offered again but note the substantive comments on assessment in answers to Qus. 3, 4 and Other Comments

**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*

N/A

**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, I found these to be entirely consistent with expected national standards and my experience teaching at the Universities of <> and <>.

**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.*

I found the criteria laid out for module objectives, skills and knowledge outcomes, and assessment methods, to be admirably clear. These seem in early all cases to be entirely and mutually appropriate. Indeed, I was impressed with the obvious care with which these were delivered and how, in some cases, they were carefully tailored to non-standard methods of assessment. It was particularly refreshing to see in HIST 2550 the course handbook explicitly dealing with issues arising from previous years and student feedback. I would, however, like to raise the appropriateness of assessment in one case, that of HIST 2535 where 50% of the final mark is assessed on the production of a webpage (wiki). This assessment used, 'standard criteria' for assessed work in school, with some consideration under the theme of presentation as whether the material was adequately adapted for the web. I find this unsatisfactory for two reasons. Firstly, the challenges of producing web material as opposed to more standard essays or gobbits is so distinct that it seems inevitable that the structure of argument, and indeed analysis, must differ significantly. Secondly, it is unclear in the marking scheme precisely what proportion of the marks is allocated to web design, or indeed what characteristics are considered especially desirable in that design. I suggest that the assessment criteria in this case require some further reflection, possibly with a separation of marks for content and design, or some clearer statement of the relationship between analysis and design. The assessment details indicate that the webpage must have 'a serious historical point to it' – an odd comment for 50% of assessment for a course in a History BA! – but I feel that the balance between reaching a wider audience, analytical strength and design is inadequately set out.

**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.*

I found the academic standards to be high and entirely commensurate with equivalent institutions in the material I saw. There was, notably, little to see of a weak 'tail' of students; nearly all were well-informed and had some sense of producing an effective argument and the content necessary to sustain it. As a cohort this student group seemed strong, and there were some notable talents at the upper end of the range.

I would like to raise the manner of assessment in one course: HIST 2550. In this, no less than 70% of the total assessment was awarded to the group as a whole, with no scope for individual variation. It is certainly the case in this module that teamwork is an essential part of the course, and collective preparation and outputs are to be encouraged in history degrees both as a mode of working within the discipline and for employability reasons. However, this proportion strikes me as too high. In practice, it means that all students within the group must fall within a very narrow range of marks, unless marks given in the other components comprising 30% of the total are very divergent indeed. Having the course marks dominated by collective marking does not, to my mind, give sufficient scope for the demonstration of individual achievement (and in the opposite direction, raises issues of moral hazard and 'free riding' on the efforts of other students).

**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.*

N/A

**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.*

It is clear that current literature and research feeds widely into learning and teaching in this department, and that modes of teaching encourage students to undertake their own research projects, most obviously in the case of the dissertation, but in other modules too. Indeed, I would welcome in particular the 'Students as scholars' module that brings direct access to and engagement with research seminars into undergraduate work as a way of encountering current preoccupations and thinking about scholarly practice.

**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 School has been efficient and responded quickly and clearly to queries, although it would be welcome if deadlines could both be set out as far in advance as possible, and also repeated whenever relevant material is sent.

**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.

**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 nature and level of questions was in general appropriate, and adequate opportunity was provided for the suggestion of revisions in the few cases where some rewording was suggested.

**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?**

In general yes, although in a few modules the amount of 'mid-range' material was slim. The feedback was clearly set out and of high quality, although on occasion examiners might have some consideration about the clarity of their handwriting (especially if they wish to comment on that of the students). In the case of coursework, the practice of not writing directly onto the scripts probably reduces the detailed level of feedback the students receive. I understand that all of my remarks were passed on to the scrutiny committee and individual module leaders. I would have been grateful for feedback on these - not as a necessity, but an option. I would be surprised if module leaders had no feedback at all; this is normal practice in the institution I currently work in and can help clarify my interpretation of practices. Please see below for further comments on marking practices.

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

Dissertations were a beacon of good practice and excellence. I was very impressed indeed by the quality being delivered here; presentation, fluency, analysis, engagement with primary sources, level of independent research displayed. This was a serious level of expectation and achievement of which the School can be proud.

**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. I was able to attend the meeting, and that was conducted with scrupulous clarity and efficiency. I was happy with the recommendations of the board.



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

Yes, careful and due consideration was given to all mitigating circumstances according to the information available to the board.

**Other comments**

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

The question for any external to answer is whether general marking practice is upholding the standards expected in the university system and by comparable institutions. In all cases the answer in these courses is an unequivocal yes. The standard of work produced by students was good, often being very well informed and written fluently. I found the marking to be consistent and reasonable (especially in difficult cases, such as assessing work clearly written in a second language). As far as I can tell, feedback is delivered via mark sheets rather on the scripts themselves (except in one case). This rather limits the degree to which markers can deliver observations on particular issues in the essay, and especially correct the writing, but I presume this is general policy for coursework.

I have only one substantive issue to raise in regard to the papers, and that is the status of the second marker. Within this system a sample of around 20% are 'second marked', and this is conducted by passing on completed assessments from the first to the second examiner with comments and marks attached. I found this system unsatisfactory for three reasons.

Firstly, in nearly all cases there was hardly any divergence between the marks of the first and second marker. In some modules, the second marker gave identical marks to the first in all cases; in other words, they did not 'second mark' as commonly understood at all, but confirmed first marks; it would be unlikely in the extreme that any genuinely independent marking would produce such a pattern. In other words, this does not seem to be second marking at all, but moderation. If one wants to moderate, then much of the work of the 'second marker' in providing feedback is essentially wasted, because the issue is simply the general level of the marks.

Paradoxically, a second objection is that 20% of the students *are* offered the possibility of their marks varying (although this is not generally taken up by the markers), while 80% are not. This issue has no relevance on the *overall level* of marking but may be considered an issue of justice for *individual students* who might benefit (or might not) from a second opinion. It might be argued to be unjust to offer this possibility to a random selection of students but not the others.

Thirdly, it is highly likely that in the case of 'second marking' (as opposed to moderation), second markers have strong incentives to confirm earlier marks when they have all of the assessed work, marks and feedback available to them. It might be argued that this of use to second markers who are less expert in particular courses. It is also likely to bias marks towards the opinion of first markers (indeed, one could easily test this by getting markers to blind mark a small sample).

I understand that the reasoning behind current procedures is partly the constraints of time, yet other institutions seem to manage other systems quite adequately; my own conducts full double marking of exam essays (despite all exams being held in the summer term) and moderation of coursework. In most of the modules I have seen, scrutiny procedure seems to consist of, effectively, either a) moderation of all assessed work or b) second marking of a random sample. The time constraint is presumably partly created by delivering coursework and exams essays to second markers simultaneously. This, it seems to me, could be done differently, as they are presumably not completed at the same time, and would reduce the potential bias introduced by different assessments being 'read together'.

In any case, the School might consider a) what exactly the current system is aiming to achieve, and b) what exactly second markers are doing.

Dear

Thank you very much for so speedily sending your report as external examiner on our B.A. I must apologise for a slight delay in response, since I was away when your report was sent on to me.

We welcome your very positive comments on the academic standards of the School, and especially on the excellence of our 3rd-year dissertations, and on the efficiency of the examination process.

You did have reservations concerning the nature and appropriateness of the assessments for two 'non-standard' modules: HIST 2535 and HIST 2550. I have brought these to the attention of the module tutors concerned, and we shall consider very seriously the points you make during the forthcoming module review process. (We shall, however, be unable to make any changes to the assessments for the forthcoming academic year – any changes that might result from the module review process can only come into effect for the academic year 2014-15).

With regard to your remarks about feedback issued to the students, it is indeed our practice that a feedback sheet, with detailed comments, is the primary means of conveying this. However, students are encouraged to submit two copies of their essays, so that one of these can be returned to them with comments and corrections written thereon, along with the feedback sheet. It is not, however, our policy to return exam papers to the students, with or without comments. The examiners' written feedback is, however, conveyed to students during meetings with their personal tutors.

You also raised some pointed questions about the system of second marking, where a proportion, but not all, scripts are second marked. However, we are confident that this is a robust and fair system, not least in that the sample of scripts marked by the second marker is selected from across the whole range of marks, including all first-class scripts and fails and / or very low marks. Furthermore, if the second marker does disagree significantly with the marks of the first marker, he / she is enjoined to mark a larger proportion of scripts, or if necessary all of them: and indeed this complete second marking took place for one level 3 module this year where there were concerns raised about the initial set of marks. (Dissertations, as you are aware, are all double-marked). Furthermore, our system of second marking is not confined to the School, but is more or less identical to that practised in other Schools in the Faculty of Arts: and it has been formally approved by the University's Academic Standards Quality Team. Nor has it ever been suggested that overall marking standards in the School, while rigorous, are other than fair, or differ significantly from those in other History departments. In addition, the feedback provided by the second marker is certainly not 'wasted', both in that first markers are expected to read and reflect upon it, and in that it will be passed on to students when they meet with their personal tutors to discuss their academic progress. I shall, however, draw colleagues' attention to your comments, for them to consider.

With many thanks for all your efforts, and best wishes,

Head of School  
School of History  
University of Leeds