

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

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

Faculty / School of:

History

Subject(s):

Medieval History

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MA in Medieval History

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

MA

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 Quality Assurance
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?

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 for the programme are entirely appropriate and consistent with comparable institutions in the sector. The same can be said of the academic standards applied across the programme, which are rigorous and effective in training postgraduate medieval historians.

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 meets national benchmarks and compares favourably with MA programmes offered in similar institutions, not least in the quality of skills training (in Latin and palaeography) provided and the range of options available to students.

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 programme are well designed, combining exams (for the skills modules), essays and primary source commentaries. Those modules which encourage students to devise their own essay titles, in consultation with tutors, are particularly effective in helping students develop personal research questions: a valuable skill in preparation for the MA dissertation. It is clear from the good standard of the work produced, and from the detailed and perceptive feedback received by students, that the quality of teaching is high across the programme.

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. The general standard of work was good this year, although it was a smaller cohort than usual. The quality of the dissertations was high, with two outstanding theses, and this indicates the effectiveness of the programme in training students to produce high-level independent research.

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 did not discern any significant differences in the programme 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.*

Every element of the programme integrates research. The historical modules are closely linked to the research interests of members of staff, and they all encourage reflection on and engagement with the sources for the study of the topic. The programme also includes rigorous training in the skills needed for research in medieval history, and an opportunity to practise and develop these skills in the dissertation or research project.

8. **Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

N/a

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. 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

10. 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 provided by the university and the school of history was clear, comprehensive and helpful.

11. 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.

12. 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 draft exam papers for the modules I was examining. The nature and level of questions were appropriate, although some of the essay questions were more obviously and distinctively MA-level than others.

13. 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 received all the assessed work for every module that I examined. In all cases, the scripts had been clearly and carefully marked and 2nd marked, with the 2nd marking helping to ensure high levels of consistency across the programme.

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

Yes: a range of interesting projects were devised which allowed students to pursue original and up-to-date avenues of research. The standard of assessment was rigorous, fair and appropriate.

15. 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 of Examiners was conducted professionally and the views of external examiners sought at every juncture. All the recommendations of the Board were fair and consistent with the university's procedures and policies.

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

Yes – although no complicated cases arose this year.

Other comments

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

The school's administrators have been helpful at every stage. However, I had considerable problems receiving my examiner's fee this year, and was eventually paid (after seeking assistance on several occasions) nine months after completing my report for the 2012/13 examining. Since external examiners are required to complete their reports within a fixed time after the exam board, might the university commit to paying examiners' fees within a specified time frame?

From:
Sent: 18 November 2014 12:32
To:
Subject: FW: MA External Examiner's Report

-----Original Message-----

From:
Sent: 17 November 2014 14:19
To:
Cc:
Subject: MA External Examiner's Report

Dear ,

Thank you very much writing your report as external for the MA in Medieval History so promptly, and I must apologise for some delay in responding, as pressure of business takes its toll.

We are pleased that you consider that the School's standards and procedures, and the work of our students, all remain at a high level. This was, as you say, quite a small year for the medieval MA degrees - there will be considerably more candidates next time round.

The one disturbing feature of your report is the university's inability to pay your 2012/13 fee promptly. I would agree that this is quite unacceptable, and will bring this to the attention of the central administration. Should there be a similar problem this year - something which I sincerely hope does not happen - please bring this to my attention, and I shall see what I can do to expedite the process.

With many thanks for all your help,

Yours ever,

Professor of Medieval History,
Head of School,
School of History,
University of Leeds,
Leeds LS2 9JT