

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 Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in Medieval Studies
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

No.

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?

No – but I was sent the previous external's report for the BA in History, for which I was also newly appointed external examiner in 2011/12.

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 aims and intended learning outcomes were wholly appropriate for a Masters level programme. The academic standards of the programme are high, particularly the component which provides training in research skills.

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 is comparable to those at similar institutions. I was particularly impressed by the way it combines international coverage (and recruitment) with full use of local resources (such as the Royal Armouries museum).

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 were in general well designed. Most modules made use of a varied assessment package, including both essays and primary source commentaries, and this worked well. The feedback provided to the students was also enriched by the addition of some of the 2nd marker's comments.

Student performance was extremely good on the programme and no doubt this is a reflection of the quality of the 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.*

Yes, there was adequate opportunity for students to demonstrate their achievement through a range of assessment tasks, culminating in the research project. Some of the assignments had a relatively low word limit, and I felt that some of the students undertaking the 6,000 word research project could have written considerably more. I therefore fully support the decision to replace the research project next year with a 10,000 word dissertation.

The overall standard of the students' work was unusually high, with several achieving Distinctions.

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 – this is my first year as external examiner for this programme.

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 aspect of the programme is heavily influenced by research. The modules are all taught by experts in the field, and good use was made of the medieval collections of the Royal Armouries museum. The high standard of the students' research projects indicates that the research training provided on the programme is very effective.

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 – I was provided with all the information I needed, either by correspondence or access to materials about the programme on the university webpages.

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 was provided with information about each module, and the taught MA postgraduate handbook provides guidance about marking criteria. There is full information about the programme on the university website.

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?

The assessment for the programme was generally well designed. On one occasion I recommended that marks should be re-scaled for a particular assignment, and this was done efficiently and entirely to my satisfaction.

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 have seen the large majority of the work submitted for the programme. All of this work had been carefully and appropriately marked and second marked.

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

The students' research projects covered a wide range of topics, all of which provided the opportunity to make a genuine contribution to scholarly knowledge. These projects were all carefully and rigorously assessed.

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, all communication was conducted with efficiency and courtesy. The Board of Examiners was also efficiently run and the external examiners were fully involved in discussions about the Board's recommendations.

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

Yes, this was handled sensitively and with the full involvement of external examiners.

Other comments

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

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject: MA Examiner's Reports
Date: 29 November 2012 10:37:37

Dear

I write to thank you for your reports as external examiner for the MA in Medieval History and the MA in Medieval Studies, both of which I have read with great attention and which I shall submit to the School's Taught Student Education Committee in due course. I am pleased that you approve of the programmes, teaching and assessment of these courses, and that you feel that they embody appropriate research skills and training.

While you very kindly praise the efficiency of our administrative processes, on one issue I can only apologise, that you were not sent copies of the reports submitted by your predecessor as MA external examiner, We ought to have done this, and will ensure that this is done for our next new external examiner.

We very much appreciate all your work as external examiner, your careful moderation of the examination process, and your advice about the often complex special cases which arise each year. We look forward to working with you again next year.

With best wishes,

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