

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:

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Faculty / School of:	
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Philosophy and Thai and South East Asian Studies BA Asia Pacific Studies and History BA Asia Pacific Studies and International Relations BA Management and Thai and South East Asian Studies BA Management and South East Asian Studies BA International Relations and Thai and South East Asian Studies BA International Relations and South East Asian Studies (no longer recruiting) CertHE/DipHE/BA(Ord)/BA(Hons) Thai and South East Asian Studies CertHE/DipHE/BA(Ord)/BA(Hons) Asia Pacific Studies
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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

None

Only applicable in first year of appointment

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

n/a

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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

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.*

By comparison with similar or partly similar programmes taught at SOAS, I am convinced that these programmes are entirely appropriate to the ILOs and commensurate with the level of the awards under consideration.

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

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

I am not familiar with national subject benchmarks for these subjects; rather I am comparing like with like as far as possible between Leeds 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.*

Meticulous assessment design and rigorously and appropriately applied.

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 – students were indeed able to demonstrate their achievement of aims and ILOs both in the form of assessed essays and coursework and written examinations.

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 am not aware of any significant changes.

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.

As before, influence of recent research into environmental issues in SEAsia clearly present in the curriculum.

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 - though the proliferation of regulations is rather bewildering.

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.*

No. No doubt such things would have been provided if I'd asked for them.

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 - and I made changes where I saw fit. In particular to the wording of essay question titles.

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 most cases, though a few packages of exam scripts and essays were presented for moderation by the external examiner where

- there was no spreadsheet indicating the spread of marks in the group
- there was no evidence of 2nd marking or how 1st and 2nd markers had arrived at an agreed mark.

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

Yes - some very strong dissertations on engaging and appropriate topics.

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 statistical overhaul of the marking system, introducing a 20-90 scale to avoid very high and very low marks skewing middle marks is something I approve of in principle; I have been recommending a similar change at <> for some time.

However, at the Board of Examiners meeting which I attended the recording of a mark of 20 for non-attendance or non-completion of a module caused many problems. The statistical implications of this change from last year seemed not to be understood by everyone in the meeting: the allocation of marks of low-achieving students bounce back and forth over the passline, with possibly serious implications for the outcomes of the students concerned. And with all data anonymised there is no possibility of understanding a particular student context.

External examiners were asked to sign off list of Level 1 marks without sight of the exam scripts or essays. If the University does not require externals to look at Level 1 scripts, then neither should it require our signature to confirm such marks - this is pointless box-ticking.

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

I have no idea - the degree of anonymisation made discussion of such things completely impossible.

Other comments

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

Nothing.

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12 September 2012

Dear <>,

Response to External Examiner's Report, 2011-2012

I would like to thank you for your detailed Examiner's Report for the academic year 2011-2012. We are very grateful for your very useful and also encouraging comments and have carefully considered them.

Your comments will allow us to improve our assessment process. What you mention in section 12 is very helpful and we will make sure that all colleagues provide you with a clear spreadsheet that contains all relevant marks and also makes it transparent as to how a mark was agreed on. We will discuss our marking practice (and the rationale for it) with regard to the recording of a mark of 20 for non-attendance and non-completion of assessed essays, oral and written exams and other coursework (as pointed out by you in section 14) both within our section and on a School level. The issue is also being taken up with AQST by our School Exams Committee. As you rightly pointed out this is a serious issue and has caused some confusion. We need to make sure that students are assessed fairly while keeping up our academic standards. I will pass on your comments about the signing off of Level 1 marks without having had a chance to look at them (also in section 14). Your concern about the discussion of mitigating circumstances (in section 15) is noted, and we need to ensure that we clarify this procedure next year to ensure that external examiners are informed about the procedure that takes place within the School (by which a mitigating circumstances committee discusses all cases confidentially prior to the external boards, the results of which should then be fed into the exam boards), and consulted where appropriate. We will raise this issue on a School level and find ways of dealing with marks efficiently, appropriately and fairly while making sure that mitigating circumstances and medical evidence are given due consideration.

We are very grateful for your contribution to our exam procedures and for your attention to detail and look forward to working together with you again in the coming years.

Warm regards,

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Director of Asia Pacific and South East Asian Studies (during the academic year 2011/12)