

## 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 Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	French
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
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](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*

No urgent attention required

**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*

I have been highly impressed from the beginning of my appointment in Leeds with the French programmes. The curriculum is of the highest possible quality. The diversity of modules offered at both Second and Final Years, reflecting the research expertise of colleagues with a wide range of interests and specialisms, is truly exceptional; there is a consistent emphasis throughout the programme on fostering both the language and the broader intellectual skills of the students; and there is a high degree of continuity, with later courses clearly building on the work done in previous modules, exposing the students to increasingly demanding material as they progress. The pedagogy is equally excellent, with clear evidence of research-led teaching and excellent feedback systems. Assessment is fair and appropriate in every respect. The only area I feel may merit further discussion concerns the fact that some Final-Year modules require students to write part of the assessment in French while others do not. Colleagues may wish to consider the purpose of this requirement and, especially, to clarify if it is formative or summative, since, if the former is the case, it would make more pedagogical sense to insist on it earlier in the programme. Overall, the students demonstrate a high level of achievement with some truly outstanding work, easily comparable with the best being achieved nationally, being carried out at the higher end across a range of modules.

I am pleased to be able to report that all the substantive recommendations I made during my period of office were implemented by the Department initially, and more latterly the School. I particularly applaud two changes. Firstly, the move away from requiring External Examiners to conduct orals rather than moderating them brings Leeds into line with practice in comparable institutions. This change provides a mechanism for ensuring that the performance in this module of any candidate with a failing mark, or with special circumstances of any kind which may complicate the assessment of oral achievement, can now be

moderated should the need arise. It thus extends to the assessment of the oral component of the programmes in French the same transparency and rigour which characterize the procedures in place to assess the students' written performance, and means that the marks allocated can be justified with confidence.

Secondly, I welcome the move to make available marksheets giving the breakdown of marks for each course. This enables the relatively short period of time for moderation at the disposal of the External Examiners to be used more effectively, in that an impression of the overall distribution of marks can be formed very quickly. This is particularly helpful in terms of verifying the comparability of standards across modules. During my period at Leeds, the specification of the job of the Externals changed, in that the emphasis shifted significantly away from assessing the performance of individual (and especially borderline) candidates to ensuring parity across modules as well as checking that procedures are appropriate and properly implemented. The fact that the External Examiners now have access to statistical information available about the breakdown of marks means they can target their attention more efficiently at courses with anomalous distributions. It is important to recognize that different courses may allocate different ranges of marks for very good reasons; it would absolutely not be appropriate to standardize performance across all modules. But a marked difference in distribution can and should be a signal for extra vigilance to ensure that standards are comparable. This year, the French Board adopted the policy of noting the average mark in each module. I would recommend that this policy be continued in future years, and that Externals be encouraged explicitly to consider, when scrutinizing the scripts, whether the students' performance in modules with outlying averages is indeed commensurate with the relatively low or high marks.

As the above comments suggest, in my view the provision in French is on a par with the best makes Leeds an excellent institution in which to study the language.

## 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.*

Both the programme aims and the ILOs were entirely commensurate with the level of 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.*

Yes

### 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.*

Consistent with best practice, assessment methods are varied and well adapted to the material taught in both language and content modules. The only other comment I would add is to repeat the observation made above that requiring students to write in the target language is typically considered an important aspect of formative, rather than summative, assessment and as such might be more effective if timed earlier in the students' 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

### 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 welcome the introduction of a moderation sheet which helpfully showed the examiner the results of internal moderation.

**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 teaching in French at Leeds is particularly research-led; the size of the Department means that colleagues have the scope to offer courses relating directly to their area of specialization at undergraduate level.

**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**

I served as mentor to <>. Arrangements were clear and while the mentoring was not extensive, I can see that in certain cases having such a system in place would be very useful.

**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 had timely access to all necessary information.

**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, comprehensive documentation was made available.

**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.

**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. The full range of the students' work was available for inspection and I could examine whatever I liked. With very few exceptions, the paper trail from the initial marking and internal moderation was clear.

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

N/A.

**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

**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**

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

From:

Sent: 09 July 2013 10:23

To:

Subject: External Examiner Report - BA French

Dear

Many thanks for your final External Examiner's report and for all your excellent and constructive comments. We are delighted that you commend our teaching and assessment procedures so highly. We set great store by the range and quality of research-led modules we offer, and it is encouraging to see precisely these aspects being validated externally.

Thank you for raising the point about the requirement for finalists to write part of the assessment in French on some modules, but not on others. We have moved, in recent years, from a position of requiring all finalists to complete part of the assessment in French, to a more flexible arrangement where certain modules which present particular conceptual difficulties for the students (e.g. 16th century literature, 17th century theatre, Modern French Thought etc.) allow students to complete all of the assessment in English. The dissertation module which is a research-led, independent module has always been assessed in English. These differing requirements tend to reflect the language in which the module is taught, with modules taught entirely in French requiring part assessment in French and those taught in English being assessed in English. We have found that our students request and also benefit greatly from teaching in the target language and our best students achieve a level of written language in their assessed essays comparable to that of a native French speaker. Students have commented enthusiastically on how final-year modules have helped to build their analytical and discursive skills in both written and spoken French. I would also add that we have a policy of asking all students to complete a piece of formative work in preparation for all components of summative work on a particular module. Students completing an assessed essay in French will therefore have had an opportunity to submit a formative piece and gain feedback on this in preparation for the summative piece.

I would also like to thank you for the positive contribution you have made to improving our degree programme, particularly with your recommendation that we draw on the skills of our lecteurs/lectrices in the oral exams, rather than using our external examiners and this arrangement has worked very well and has allowed us to draw greater benefit from our externals while they are in Leeds. Your vigilance on the question of comparability of performance across final year modules has been extremely helpful and we will certainly continue

the practice of monitoring grade averages across our modules in exam boards, as you have suggested.

Finally, I should like to thank you for the care you have taken in monitoring our procedures and for the invaluable way in which you have shared your knowledge and experience with us. My colleagues and I have found it a real pleasure to work with you and we wish you the very best for the future.

With best wishes,

Director of French Studies  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures  
University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT

## 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:	Arts; School of Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>French</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single and Joint Honours including French
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](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

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Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building  
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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?*

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 Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes of the programmes examined are completely commensurate with the standards appropriate for the award of a BA including French

**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

**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 reviewed both language modules (FREN2010/2015 & FREN3010) and a range of social / political / cultural studies modules. In both cases, the assessment methods were entirely appropriate to the Intended Learning Outcomes. In terms of language, students were appropriately stretched in terms of their grammatical accuracy and fluency of expression over a range of exercises. In the 'content' modules, the coursework essays produced were on the whole highly analytical in nature and well versed in academic conventions. The best performances in the examinations for the content modules were outstanding in terms of their structure, detail and referencing.

**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. Particular strengths in relation to students on comparable courses include (i) the performance of final year students in their translation into English examination. Students produced work of very good quality, translating complex texts into very readable and precise English (ii) the performance of students in examinations for content modules (see 3 above).

**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 not made aware of enhancements to the modules which I reviewed. The modules continued in the high standards that I had seen in the previous 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.*

(i) I reviewed FREN3641, FREN 3641, FREN3621, FRE2090/5 and FRE2190/5 which were all well informed by up-to-date scholarly work as evidenced by the material used by the students in their assessments (ii) The Leeds French department has one of the widest range of 'content' modules informed by leading researchers in their respective fields that I have encountered in the country (iii) I reviewed work by students undertaking a dissertation module (FREN3790). The preparation for this research work provided by the department was extremely well structured and comprehensive. The dissertations that I read were of appropriately marked and the highest performance of very good quality.

## 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 documentation was very comprehensive and the examinations officer, <>, extremely helpful in <> guidance by email and in person on my visit to Leeds. However, more guidance on which modules and which scripts to focus on in the rather tight time limits that we had to moderate the work would have been useful. Thought might be given to sending some work out to externals for moderation during the year.

**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. I had on the whole very minor comments to make on the assessments sent to me which were fully considered by colleagues.

**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. The scripts were very well marked. In particular, the language marking was meticulous. All marking was clear and fair. There was good evidence of exchange between first markers and moderators in most cases. Marks sheets weren't available for every module on the during the moderation process. These are very useful in gauging the overall standard of work. The moderation sheets were very useful particularly when they had been filled in in detail.

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

Yes. See 7 above. In addition, the system whereby the module convenor acted as second marker for all the dissertations provided an excellent degree of consistency in the marking process.

**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?**

I was able to attend the Board of Examiners for French in which module marks were reported and discussed which was run entirely satisfactorily. I did not attend the Classification Board. The Board is not run on an anonymous basis as is the case in some institutions. As last year, I commend this practice and encourage its continuation.

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

Yes – a separate Mitigating Circumstances committee had taken place prior to the Examination board and its recommendations reported at the Board.

**Other comments**

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

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From:  
Sent: 09 July 2013 10:19  
To:  
Subject: External Examiner Report - BA French

Dear ,  
Many thanks for your External Examiner's report and for all your excellent and constructive comments. We are delighted that you commend our teaching and assessment procedures so highly. We set great store by the range and quality of research-led modules we offer, and it is encouraging to see precisely these aspects being validated externally. Your comments about the outstanding performance of some of our students on the 'content' modules, on the performance of students in their 'Version' paper and on the excellent organisation of the dissertation module are very gratifying. I also welcome your helpful comments about the meticulous marking of the language papers.

Thank you for your suggestion that we provide more guidance to our external examiners about which scripts and modules they should focus on, when they are working within such tight schedules when in Leeds. Next year, we will ensure that the module convenors for modules that are under scrutiny by the externals, select a sample of scripts that cover the full range of marks and make these available at the top of the pile of scripts. We will also endeavour to provide clearer instructions to our externals, so that they can maximise the use of their time when in Leeds. I will ensure that mark sheets and moderation sheets are used systematically for all modules in French and are made available for scrutiny by the externals. Thank you for commending our continued use of student names (rather than ID numbers) in the exam boards.

Finally, I should like to thank you for the care you have taken in monitoring our procedures and for the invaluable way in which you have shared your knowledge and experience with us. My colleagues and I have found it a real pleasure to work with you and we very much look forward to working with you again next academic year.

With best wishes,

Director of French Studies  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures  
University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT