

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION*Subject area and awards being examined:*School of: **Modern Languages and Cultures**Subject(s): **German**

Programme(s) / Module(s):

awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) **BA****SH German and JH programmes in German**

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**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.

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

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.*

Standards were absolutely in line with other institutions and appropriate for the BA honours degrees offered. The ILOs were appropriate for the modules offered and the programmes were coherently structured.

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. The programmes offered are comparable with other similar programmes at my own institution & other similar institutions with which I am familiar, and are consistent with the national subject benchmark.

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.*

Assessment methods are appropriate to the ILOs with some examples of innovative assessment and best practice in language modules as well as in modules on literature and culture. The use of posters as part of the assessment for one non-language module (Shock of the New) was highly innovative and engaging. Some excellent work was produced across the range of modules offered, demonstrating the students' productive engagement with the assessment tasks. Coordination of language modules was excellent and student performance indicated a highly engaged language teaching team. One slightly anomalous exercise in a final year paper (German for Professional Purposes) could be more consistent with the exercises otherwise deployed at this level. This module offers students excellent learning opportunities, however, and is overall to be commended.

Clear feedback is provided to students with a well designed feedback sheet. In the case of the final year dissertation there could be an extension of the feedback sheet to allow for additional comments on the standard of written German, which is an important part of the assessment.

There was a transparent system for recording the dialogue between first markers and moderators. The marking was fair and scrupulous. Modules are carefully moderated, though there is no second-marking. However, where the first marker is a postgraduate student I would urge the Department to consider introducing second-marking to protect the students involved (PG and UGs).

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 demonstrated very high standards overall, with a number of excellent performances awarded first class honours, as well as a very strong number of 2.1 results. The cohort was in line with similar institutions with some very impressive work across the range of language and non-language modules. Students responded very well to carefully designed modules, research-led teaching, and innovative and challenging assessments. Students showed a range of noteworthy strengths: in language work, the handling of register was particularly good. In cinema and cultural modules, they showed particular strengths in their analysis of primary materials. In some cases students could be encouraged to develop a more critical engagement with scholarly material, especially in the final year.

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. 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 – first year as external examiner, and have not seen 2009-2010 reports/responses.

7. 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 modules that I moderated, especially those at final year level, were clearly informed by the research of the colleagues offering them. Students producing dissertations in German demonstrated a great deal of initiative and presented some impressive work based on their own investigations.

The Examination Process

8. 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 external examiners' handbook is very helpful and was provided during the first semester. Student handbooks were also provided, though I received more information about individual modules in the second semester. I was not provided with the previous year's external examiners' reports and the Department's response.

9. 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?

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Module handbooks were provided in the second semester, which helped me to comment on examination papers and coursework exercises. On the whole, members of the Department responded promptly to my comments on essay questions and exams. The overall schedule for communicating with external examiners on exam and essay questions could be looked at; there was not time in every case to amend questions in the light of comments, and it was not clear to all colleagues that both <<<>> and I had been asked to comment on all the papers.

10. Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?

Yes. The system of inviting external examiners to work intensively in a 'base room' was extremely beneficial in terms of gaining an overview of how the whole programme operates. In addition it allowed me to work in close co-operation with my co-external. The process was also very efficient: I was able to read a wide range of scripts and essays with focused attention, rather than receiving individual packages at an extremely busy time. Indeed, our own external examiners at Nottingham have strongly requested that we move to such an efficient 'base room' system. The opportunity to talk to colleagues about their modules is invaluable.

11. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?

Yes. The administrators were extremely helpful in explaining how the presentation of candidates would work and demonstrating the software used.

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

I was not asked to comment on these procedures, nor was I involved in consideration of individual cases, as this is dealt with confidentially in advance of the Board (this is how ext. circs. are dealt with at my own institution). My impression from the way such candidates were presented at the Board was that they were treated humanely and fairly.

For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements

If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.

Prof. Carol Tully provided excellent guidance in her role as mentor. In addition, members of the German Department, particularly the Head of Department, <<<>>, explained procedures and structures during my visit.

Other Comments

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

I would like to thank Ingrid Sharp and the whole Department for making Prof. <<<>> and myself welcome and facilitating the examination and moderation process.

5th August 2011

re : External Examiner Report – 2010-11

Dear,

Many thanks for your External Examiner report and helpful feedback on our modules and procedures. I am delighted that you found so much to praise in our programme and teaching. I was particularly gratified to see your encouraging comments about our language team, research-led teaching and the newly introduced module German for Professional Purposes.

I note your comments about the introduction of second marking as a safeguard in cases where PGRs coordinate and deliver Level 3 modules and will suggest this for next session. I also note your comments about the need to encourage close critical engagement with secondary sources at Level 3 and will raise this issue with all module coordinators at this level.

Your comments on our base room system are welcome, as we also believe that this system, properly managed, provides the best overview of student performance across a number of modules. It also allows for efficient comparison of marking and teaching across modules with a view to standardising best practice. We note that you were not provided with materials early enough in the cycle and that our response to your comments on our draft papers were not always sent back to you. We will ensure that procedures are tightened up in this area as a matter of priority for the coming academic year.

I note that you have not been provided with previous External Examiners' reports and our responses to them and will arrange for these to be sent to you as soon as possible.

On behalf of the whole of GRASS I would like to thank you for your high level of professionalism in your first year as External and for your supportive and insightful comments on our practice. We look forward to seeing you again next summer.

Best wishes,

The University of Leeds

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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.

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

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.*

Both programme aims and ILOs were fully commensurate with the level of award and structured appropriately. Standards were entirely appropriate.

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.*

Aims and ILOs were entirely in line with national benchmarks and in keeping with those at other institutions with which I am familiar.

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 assessment methods to be varied, challenging and appropriate. The marking procedures and classification of awards were well-conceived and inspired great confidence.

The quality of the modules on offer was very high with some standing out as being particularly innovative in terms of content and assessment (i.e. Shock of the New; Applied Language Skills). There were clear examples of best practice across the range of modules and colleagues are to be commended for this. The portfolio component of core language modules was also extremely useful in allowing students to broaden their range of linguistic skills. The students' work would indicate that the quality of teaching, often clearly research-led, is very high across the range. The same applies to the design of modules and the range of assessment methods.

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 were able to demonstrate their ability in a wide range of areas and it was clear that they had been able to develop useful linguistic, analytical and transferrable skills as a result. The resultant student work was very impressive in some cases and entirely in line with comparable courses nationally. The range of classifications clustered towards the higher end suggesting that students are carefully prepared and able to perform to the best of their abilities. There were very few weak students in the cohort but those towards the lower end had nevertheless clearly benefitted from their experiences on the course.

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. 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.

First year as an examiner.

7. 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.

Teaching in German at Leeds clearly benefits from the high level of research being carried out at the institution. There was clear evidence of cutting edge debate in the content courses in particular. Current DaF theory also informs the language syllabus. Student research, mostly in the form of dissertations but also in coursework essays etc, was clearly well-guided. Some greater critical engagement with secondary material at final year level would enhance the standard of student research.

The Examination Process

8. **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 EE handbook is clear and useful. Student handbooks were also well-set out and provided but not until later in the year. I did not receive previous external examiners' reports or responses.

9. **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?**

- *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 receive the necessary documentation by the time I arrived in Leeds but some might have been sent at the beginning of the year. As I was dealing with an exams officer in another part of the Department, it was not always clear whether my comments on papers had been received and acted upon. This can be easily resolved next year.

10. **Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

I was very happy with the arrangements in relation to the availability of work. The use of a 'base room' was central to this as it meant the examiners had the chance to review the full range of material in a coherent and efficient manner. I will be recommending the establishment of a similar practice in my own School.

11. **Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

Yes.

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

The system for dealing with such cases was in line with that at other institutions including my own and was both efficient and respectful of students' privacy.

For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements

If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.

I was allotted a mentor and could turn to her for help as required. The head of Department was extremely helpful as were colleagues.

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I was very impressed by what I saw in my first year at Leeds and would like to thank the Department, especially for making the process run so smoothly.

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