

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:	Modern Languages and Culture
Subject(s):	<i>Japanese</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Japanese
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA & 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

I believe that it is totally inappropriate that the minimum marks for an assignment is 20% and that the maximum is 90%. I raised this last year and was not satisfied with the response. I am really surprised that the 20-90 system is being used and that it meets UK Equality & Diversity Laws. I assume that it has been impact assessed, but given the gender and racial differences that are usually seen across degree schemes, I am surprised that the 20-90 scheme was not found to be a problem in discriminating those who could otherwise have obtained higher marks. That it has been allowed this year (but did it actually happen?) for components to be scored on 0-100 for language modules (and 20-90 only applied for the final module score) but not for non-language modules is another inconsistency that further undermines this crazy and unacceptable system.

The 20-90 system is academically unjustifiable and is unfair on the majority students. This rule has to go immediately.

I remain concerned about how and when extenuating circumstances are being dealt with. The only list that I saw appeared to indicate that all appeals are upheld or referred to the final exam board. I sincerely hope that another list of rejected appeals exists as otherwise a culture of appealing is bound to become more widespread. Speaking to some lecturers, it would appear to already becoming so. There was inconsistency at the module board about notification of extenuating circumstances – although better than last year. I would recommend that no notification is done at this stage and that notification & action only be taken at the final exam board when a complete picture for the individual student can be seen.

Given that the module board is merely concerned with confirming marks & considering fails, I would recommend that the lists are done by mark order rather than alphabetically by name, so that it is easier to spot the fails.

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?

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

Overall I have seen evidence of high quality work by the lecturers and by the majority of the students. However, I have been concerned from the beginning by the lack of support from some parts of the university to the staff and the introduction of the 20-90 and tardy and poor response to external examiners comments about this has done nothing to reassure me. Academics are frustrated by the 20-90 system and are also having too much of their time being taken up by dealing with other bureaucratic issues such as the poor implementation of penalties for late submissions (and how appeals are handled). The system needs a major overhaul.

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.*

- I believe that everything has been conducted appropriately and that standards are of the appropriate level.
- However, the 20-90 means that many students are either not getting a score that reflects their engagement and output, or marks of some are meaning that the marks of other are not an accurate reflection of relative differences in engagement and performance.

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.*

- There is no national benchmark as such, but on the whole I would say that the level is comparable to what I would expect at our institution and others.

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.*

Generally I believe they are appropriate.

There was one module, EAST3265, where students appeared to be able to get a very high score in the exam for writing very little. I believe some time is needed to consider this module – and perhaps others – to ensure comparability of expectations given the level of exam, length of exam, etc.

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.*

Generally, yes, but the 20-90 means that many students are either not getting a score that reflects their engagement and output, or marks of some are meaning that the marks of other are not an accurate reflection of relative differences in engagement and performance.

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.

This year there was further improvements in the design of exam papers so that there is greater consistency in fonts, consistency in the usage of macrons, and improvements in how vocabulary lists are presented. I hope that these areas will continue to be looked at to ensure that the appropriate standards are adhered to. I would like to see further attention given to trying to improve the quality of the scanned Japanese scripts in exam papers as the quality is not always that good – the fonts are sometimes small and not aligned well.

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.

Based on my knowledge of some of the staff at the centre, I can see evidence of research-led teaching in a number of the modules.

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

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

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. It would be helpful to have more notification for each module about what is to be looked at in particular. The summary sheets by moderators is to be commended.

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

For the ones I looked at, yes.

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?

No. See earlier comment.

Other comments

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