

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:	Faculty of Arts - Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies
Subject(s):	<i>Arabic language, Middle Eastern politics, Islamic studies modules</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
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 found that there were no matters for urgent attention.

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

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.*

Overall, the ILOs for the programmes/modules and the structure and content of the programmes are appropriate. The programme ILOs were generally commensurate with the level of the award in the modules. Overall I have found that the content of courses offered are excellent in terms of the depth and breadth of their content.

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 Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies at Leeds provides an excellent coverage of subject areas related to Middle Eastern studies. The breadth and depth of the material covered in modules offered and the excellent quality of teaching and research in the Department are of a very high standard in the context of the UK higher education sector. I believe that the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

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 are appropriate to the ILOs. Assessment is varied and covers a range of specific competencies. Each of these competencies is considered in the assessment of the students, and details are provided on the feedback provided by instructors. Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods are excellent, and the students have clearly benefited from these.

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.*

Overall, students were given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs. The students were in general of a high calibre, which is reflected overall in the strong performances shown by many of the students. The good performance of many of the students showed a strong level of engagement by the students with the content of the modules.

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.

The level of detail provided in feedback has improved in various modules has improved since last year. I think that the development of the Islamic history modules have made a good improvement to the overall offering of the Department, and complement the politics and Islamic studies modules 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.

The curriculum design for the modules offered is in general informed by current research in the subject areas dealt with, and prepare students for undertaking research in these areas later. This can be seen in the fact that in language-focused modules such as Arabic Stylistics and Media Arabic, the approach taken in the curriculum design incorporates recent approaches to the study of language and linguistics. In Islamic Studies, the modules generally strike a good balance between dealing with classical Islamic concepts and modern Islamic thought. Modules dealing with more traditional areas such as The Art of Tajweed provide a suitable level of depth and rigour. Middle Eastern politics modules, such as Zionism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, provide students with a solid and balanced background to issues in contemporary Mid-Eastern politics, drawing upon a wide range of sources covering different perspectives.

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

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.*

All of the necessary material was provided to me to make the required judgments. During the process of examining the material for consideration I had access to relevant members of staff, who provided responses to any queries I had or requests for further details.

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.*

I received all of the necessary documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which I have responsibility. This was made available to me throughout the process.

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?

I was provided with all draft examination papers/assessments. In general the nature and level of questions were appropriate. Adequate arrangements were made to consider my comments, which were provided by me through email.

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?

Sufficient assessed/examined work was made available to me to have confidence in my evaluation of the standard of student work. The scripts were clearly marked. I had some queries regarding some papers, but members of staff provided suitable guidance to me in these cases.

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

The choice of subjects for dissertations was appropriate, and the methods and standard of assessment were appropriate.

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 attended the meeting and was consulted throughout the whole process. Through discussion and consultation I believe the recommendations of the Board to be adequate.

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

Appropriate procedures are in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence.

Other comments

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

The Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies at Leeds is to be commended for maintaining high standards in their provision of modules in the different subject areas covered. I am particularly impressed by the commitment of Leeds to providing a diverse coverage of subject areas and the commitment of staff members to providing excellent quality tuition to students. I raised a number of minor issues concerning areas for improvement. These were mainly related to the nature of comments provided to students in some modules and their correlation with grades given. Members of staff were receptive to my suggestions and comments.

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12 September 2013

Dear <>,

I am writing to thank you for your very positive report. We are very pleased indeed to read that you were very impressed by the 'the commitment of Leeds to providing a diverse coverage of subject areas and the commitment of staff members to providing excellent quality tuition to students'. We are also very pleased that you found the content of our courses 'excellent in terms of the depth and breadth of their content', and that 'our students are of a high calibre'.

Thank you again for your report, but please do not hesitate to contact me should you like to add anything further regarding our programmes.

With best wishes,

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Director of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies
School of Modern Languages and Cultures