

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 Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	Portuguese
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All programmes involving Portuguese modules/ All Portuguese modules
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

Changes in policy seem to have caused confusion. All staff should be aware of what to expect during the Exam Process. Staff should be aware of the criteria involved in awarding prizes and come to the Exam Board with a list of candidates, in order to avoid unnecessarily prolonging the Board Meeting.

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. I read the comments made at last year's Exam Board Meeting by the previous Portuguese External in the Minutes circulated this year.

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

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 found the Aims and ILOs appropriate for the programmes/modules and for the structure and content of the programmes, and standards appropriate for the award under consideration.

Students are taught intensively and assessed in a way to ensure that they are constantly improving. They know what they should be aiming for and are taught how they might achieve such outcomes. The excellent marks awarded this year are proof of that.

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 did find the Aims and ILOs comparable to those of other institutions with which I am familiar and to 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.*

In my opinion the means of assessment of both language skills and cultural awareness (content modules) were appropriate and effective for the marking of modules and the classification of awards. I liked the use of track changes to comment on essays and I particularly liked the feedback forms and feedback action plans.

Marking descriptors would be useful not only to staff in order to attribute marks, but also for students to know what staff are looking for. I was glad to hear that a set of descriptors is being prepared for next year.

Language capabilities are tested by a range of assessments, both coursework and exams: translation into and out of the language, composition and summary, two oral assessments, grammar tests, class presentations. I noticed that the finalists' exam compositions covered ambitious topics and showed that they had lots of ideas. Overall in language work I observed that at the weaker end students showed the common problems of Spanish interference and a lack of Portuguese vocabulary with which to express themselves fluently. At the stronger end, results were excellent and showed confidence and eloquence in Portuguese.

Literature/culture courses are tested via a combination of coursework and exams. Students choose from a range of options involving literature and film, and have access to material from across the Portuguese-speaking world (from Angola to Timor), from Renaissance literature to contemporary film. This variety helps the students understand that Portuguese is a global language with centuries-old cultural traditions.

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.*

The students reached high standards in both language skills and cultural appreciation, performing well in relation to students on comparable courses.

This cohort performed extremely well in final year exams. Eleven out of twenty achieved distinction in their oral exams.

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 interested to learn that for the first time this year students were allowed to use dictionaries in translation exams – after they had specially requested this. The results for this exam were high, but having access to the dictionaries did not guaranteed that students chose the appropriate word for a particular circumstance, nor that their English was correct, nor that they achieved the right register or tone for the passage. Colleagues should make sure that their experiences with this new procedure are discussed with other colleagues, and maybe standardised, in case students perceive there to be an unfair advantage for those studying Portuguese.

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 was impressed by the variety of material covered in modules, from Renaissance poetry, through short stories from the former Portuguese empire, to contemporary film. Modules clearly reflect colleagues' research interests but make them accessible to undergraduate students. Students showed awareness of secondary critical material and there was plenty of evidence of them doing their own research.

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 have been asked to mentor <> next year but will be unable to do this because I will be <>

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.*

The External Examiner Handbook provided clear guidance as to my role, powers and responsibilities, enabling me to act effectively as an External Examiner.

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.*

Documentation relating to programmes which I was asked to moderate and observe was available for me to consult when I arrived in Leeds.

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 draft examination papers and found the nature and level of the questions to be absolutely appropriate.

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?

I was provided with all coursework and examination scripts. I looked at samples of top, middle and bottom marks, as well as any borderline cases, and was happy with the way that marks had been resolved between markers. There was clear evidence of double marking and useful comments to show how marks had been awarded.

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

I was not asked to look at any dissertations.

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 administrative arrangements were satisfactory. I was unable to get to Leeds until the afternoon before the Board Meeting and therefore had only just enough time to look through a good sample of papers. I did attend the meeting, which took longer than it could have done due to confusion about a) new policies and b) the criteria by which to award prizes (and appropriate candidates for those prizes).

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

The mitigating circumstances and medical evidence had been dealt with at a previous meeting and was mentioned during the Board when necessary. This seems to me to be correct procedure.

Other comments

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

It would have been useful to receive the oral examination recordings in advance (on cd), since listening to them is time-consuming.

**Department of Spanish, Portuguese
and Latin American Studies**



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

30 August 2013

Dear

Now that all External Examiners' reports have been received, I would like to respond to both the general comments from all Externals in their reports and the specific recommendations which you made in relation to the academic session 2012-2013.

I would first like to thank all Externals (yourself,) for the positive comments about the overall quality of the unit's work, the diversity of modules we offer supported by a strong research culture, the high level of student achievement, the variety and rigour of the assessment procedures, and the efficiency of the marking, feedback and exams administration. I would also like to thank all Externals for their work and support both during the year (approving draft exam papers) and during the Marks Meeting period in Leeds before the Classification and Progression Boards.

All your comments have been noted and will be discussed within the unit. A number of specific points which you noted were as follows:

A handful of issues during your stay in Leeds in June arose as a result of continuing lack of clarity following the centralisation of the School of Modern Languages as regards the procedures to be followed when discussing marks and degree classifications. Please accept our apologies for these problems, and rest assured that these will be avoided in 2013-2014. In our next unit meeting and the first Staff:Student Forum in 2013-2014, we will draft and publicise both the criteria for the award of prizes and marking descriptors, and discuss the use of dictionaries in exams.

Congratulations on your supervision for Our incoming Exams Officer, will ensure appropriate as well as cover for you as our Portuguese External Examiner next year.

Finally, I wish to thank you for your work and support and for much useful and constructive advice. We are most grateful for the professionalism and sincere interest you have shown in your role with us over the last year.

Kind regards

Senior Lecturer in Spanish
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