

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 Programme(s) / Module(s):	Subject(s): Portuguese awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
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The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 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.

There are no areas requiring 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.*

The courses programmed are very relevant and directly linked to instructor's research areas, providing students with the opportunity of acquiring a solid knowledge basis on both canonical elements and contemporary issues. Courses are well designed, reflect both Portuguese and Brazilian variants, questions are appropriate, possibility for critical thinking is stimulated. Readers' comments on scripts were appropriate and helpful, providing ample guidance for students. Marking was fair and consistent throughout.

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.*

Based on my knowledge of similar problems in the UK and Europe I find that the programme has high standards and compares well with other similar programmes. Courses are innovative and appealing to a variety of interests. The inclusion of film studies as part of the curriculum is especially attractive as is the attention given to diverse texts from a variety of Portuguese-speaking countries.

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.*

Courses were well structured. Essay and other questions were clear and provided students with a fair amount of choice. Student performance was adequate with a small number of excellent candidates and a majority of good to very good candidates. From the results it is clear that course materials had been well integrated and that students made good use of them. Especially noteworthy in a few selected cases was the ability to compare diverse materials and even go beyond theoretical frameworks provided in courses.

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.*

Indeed, judging by student performance it is obvious that materials provided in courses had been well assimilated. There were a few outstanding students and majority performed at good or very good level, which is satisfying. Language skills were of very good quality.

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.

The programme was not changed from previous year and with good reason as it is a very good programme, allowing students to acquire a sound base of knowledge on canonical issues, while at the same time introducing them to very contemporary materials.

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.

In a few of the courses, it is obvious that there is a direct link between research interests and course contents. But this was very well balanced and indeed could be seen as a model for other programmes.

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.*

Full access to all materials was provided. Some cases were signalled out for special attention but this year there were almost no border line cases and marks from both readers were close without any noteworthy discrepancies. I certainly could carry out my function in full given the materials and the readiness of colleagues to answer all questions

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 received all pertinent documentation

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

Yes, I had full access to all scripts.

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

The administrative arrangements were very efficient and I was received with great cordiality. The final meeting is a model of efficiency and collegiality.

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

Several borderline cases, although none I was directly involved with, did call for a consideration of circumstances but the Department has sound, if a bit too strict, regulations and I am glad to say that these were invoked and adhered to after proper discussion of individual cases.

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.

n/a

Other Comments

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

The process of external examining is costly and above all time consuming and yet fundamental. The high level of efficiency demonstrated by the Department make it a joy to participate in the process and the level of collegiality also make it a very rewarding experience.

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August 2011

Dear ,

Thank you for your generous comments with respect to the quality of the Portuguese and Brazilian courses, the high level of language skills achieved by the students, and the efficiency with which external examining and the external exam board were organised. You felt that our criteria for whether borderline students could be raised was a little strict and I will make sure that this is discussed by SPLAS's "steering committee" and also – along with the comments of the other external examiners – in a SPLAS section meeting. As you know, exams are to an important degree being centralised at School level from next academic year and I will also ensure that your comments feed into discussions regarding the role of external examiners and operation of the exam board,

Best wishes,

Head of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies.