

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION*Subject area and awards being examined:***School of:****Programme(s) / Module(s):**

Spanish & Catalan
SPPO 3360, SPPO 3094, SPPO 3540, SPPO 2630,
SPPO 2631, SPPO 3280, SPPO 2640, SPPO 2620,
SPPO 2621, SPPO 2391, SPPO 2390, SPPO 2590,
SPPO 2591, and other in BA Spanish, Hispanic and
Latin American Studies, MA Latin American and
Iberian Cultural identities, and Catalan

Subject(s):**awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)****BA**

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.

None

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?

N/A

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.

I am delighted to say that I found the organisation of exams of the highest order. <<<>> organised the whole process to perfection, being able to answer any question and acting promptly if any changes were needed. Conflictive cases were immediately addressed and solved. Method of assessment is transparent, consistent and accurate and reflects equitable and fair classification of candidates. The contribution of all concerned in the examination process throughout the year was of the highest order, and standard is consistent with peer institutions. I was kept well informed and well advised about the whole process of examination. All documents were sent on time. An appropriate range of ways of assessment is used and properly implemented. I was sent drafts of examination papers and my comments were taken into account. Difficult cases were pointed to me immediately for my examination and comment. During the board of examiners, conducted perfectly by <<<>>, anonymisation should be implemented more in depth, as it is during the examination process. This would be fairer to candidates, and making names available only in student advantage if needed. Anonymisation could cause some technical problems but I do not think they are not easy to solve.

I am delighted to comment that in its quality of teaching and examination Leeds rates alongside the best institutions in the country. The aims and objectives of the department are realised with precision, accuracy and the excellence in teaching and evaluation underlines the prominence of this institution in national terms.

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 applied are entirely appropriate for the award. Aims, structure and content of courses are entirely satisfactory for the level of BA. Nevertheless, Percentages of coursework and exam vary from course to course. In my modest opinion, this should be unified and/or discussed at departmental level in order to keep a similar structure in all courses. Another minor problem is the application of moderation, and should be connected to the percentage assigned. Numbers in Spanish are high and marking demands could be excessive. I recommend that a very low percentage in coursework should not be moderated and only revised by another member of staff, excluding final year. Curriculum is very well balanced and covers a wide range of skills in Spanish and Catalan culture, history and language.

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. Only anonymisation seems to be in a minor discordance with other institutions. In spite of this, I have to say that the system is fair and does not influence board of examiners decisions.

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.*

Rigour of marking is consistent with the marking criteria, well awarded First and marking is consistent and transparent. Exam scripts come with a descriptive feed-back form that is very useful and informative. Some disparities appear between in a couple of modules between presentation/coursework and exam but this depends on the nature of the exercise probably. In other cases/modules very consistent marking between both components. Catalan modules spreadsheet could be simplified, big amount of minor components and excessive number of small percentages. Material very well prepared and planned in this subject. Year abroad component in last year should be revised and perhaps replaced by essays instead of the present practice that is very taxing in terms of time allocated by members of staff and only weights Pass or Fail and used in boundary cases.

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.*

Student performance was consistent with other UK institutions, and shows the high standards of teaching at Leeds. Department provides suitable feedback and advice to students to improve their skills during their period of study. Students are able to show their analytical skills and some of them even exceeding it.

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.

Catalan courses are perfectly prepared but require a lot of work. Interesting new approaches to teaching language. Year abroad should be revised. It is original in essence but does not reflect quality of candidates and is very time consuming for member of staff. Curriculum design, in general, as well as assessment methods and student performance provide clear evidence of highest quality of teaching.

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.

Curriculum and course design connects with members of staff specialization, which encourage them to include ideas and class discussions in their own research that in the long run will benefit students. Wide range and originality of topics and approaches is interesting and provides the student with a very broad, as well as rigorous, perception of Hispanic world in several areas asuch as Literature, History, Gender Studies, Sociology, Cultural studies, etc...

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.*

Sufficient material. Being able to have all scripts during my visit to Leeds works faster and is very good practice instead of sending samples over the mail for approval.

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.*

Yes. I was kept informed and well advised during the whole process of examination, receiving all explanatory documents on time.

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

I reviewed a large number of scripts, almost the totality of every module, and I am entirely satisfied about the evaluation process and the classifications awarded. I was always able to form a complete picture of the different parts of which I was responsible. That all material is collected in a single location is a very good practice, especially when room provided is of higher standards.

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

Board was perfectly conducted and I thank <<<>> and <<<>> for their impeccable organisation. Displaying and confirming results on screen works perfectly, especially when changes can be introduced to see other possibilities. Screen displaying is a very good practice and very environmentally friendly. I find a bit strange the fact that students names are made available during the board when in other institutions only candidates number are available encouraging anonymisation of the whole classification process.

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

Minutes were available and clear

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.

Other Comments

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

August 2011

Dear

Thank you for your generous comments with respect to the quality of SPLAS Spanish and Catalan language programmes and “content” modules, the care taken with respect to marking, standards achieved by our students, and the organisation of the examination boards. I am also pleased that you prefer the system operated by SPLAS whereby external examiners are asked to come up to Leeds a day in advance, rather than being sent out a percentage of the scripts of each module. I also think it is a more effective system, which allows externals to concentrate more on borderline and other difficult cases.

If I have understood correctly, there are four areas in which you would like us to look out our procedures:

1. Full anonymisation of student identity during the final exam board.
2. Whether there should be variations between modules in the percentage of the final mark given to coursework and exams. In your opinion this should be standardised.
3. The operation of moderation when the percentage of the final mark attached to coursework is low. In these cases, given the heavy marking load, you feel that the coursework could be “reviewed” (that is to say, a second person would simply look at the overall set of marks to ensure consistency with other similar modules) rather than actually moderated.
4. The assessment of year abroad. Given the heavy workload this entails at present you suggest that we ask students to write an essay during the year abroad.

Your comments will be 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 make sure 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.