

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies ARAB5004M Islam, Politics and Culture in the Middle East and North Africa, ARAB5005M Dissertation in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, ARAB5006M Research Methodology and Bibliography, ARAB5003M Arab Cinema, ARAB5009M Modern Arab Media, ARAB5008M Muslim Intellectual Encounter with Contemporary Thought, ARAB5010M Political Participation & Opposition in Contemporary North Africa
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	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

No, there is not.

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?

Being the first year of the programme, there was no history; and hence no previous exam papers.

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 essays and dissertations indicated that the aims and the intended learning outcomes of the programme are all fulfilled. Considering the awards in relations to standards, I am pleased to see that appropriate marking in relations to benchmarks was observed.

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.*

Comparing to other programmes, I found the Leeds programme more engaging with Middle Eastern issues beyond politics; and also I thought the Research Methodology module in particular prepared the students for further critical understanding.

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.*

Mainly exam and assignment together with dissertation constitute the assessment. Considering the ILOs, the assessments methods are well suited. Classification of awards as indication of assessment was in line with the ILOs. Critical thinking and creativity in particular in some of the dissertations should be commended as an indication of quality of teaching and learning.

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 standard deviation in the marks from one course to another did not show a large spread indicating the academic standards in teaching and learning; as it seems that students were helped to develop to reach a particular level at least. This should be commended. The performance of students are in line with the students in comparable courses; and perhaps in some areas further strengths in critical thinking and analytical approach is observed.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

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.

No, previous year

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.

Research methodology module is an essential module preparing students to follow the current research and also understand as to how knowledge is constructed; as the module is mainly critical thinking and deconstruction oriented. The influence of the module in terms of developing research mind and skills could be seen in the assignments and dissertations written by the students for other modules. Well informed assignments were also indication of the research influence in shaping the modules in the programme.

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.

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.*

I was provided the necessary material including regulations when my appointment as an external examiner was made.

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.*

All the necessary documentation was provided.

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 the draft examination papers for some of the modules, not all of them. I was happy with the level for which the questions were pitched; and also the questions were engaging and helping students to exert their views also.

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 given all the essays and exam scripts; and therefore I could easily observe the class average and the standards of student work. Essays and exam scripts were clearly marked; which made it easy to follow. However, I could not find the same diligence in the dissertation marking; as comments were limited and the second markers hardly commented.

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

I was happy with the subjects chosen for the dissertations; some were classical, while some were related to the contemporary issues; again some of these were in Islamic thought; while the rest was on Middle Eastern politics. Good mix of dissertation topics.

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 am happy with the administrative arrangements. I did attend the meeting on June, but could not attend the October meeting.

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

There was no such case.

Other comments

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

Overall, I am happy and satisfied with the process and procedures. The process was run smoothly by colleagues and procedures were clear enough to follow. There was slight delay in the dissertations, which, however, did not have any important consequences for me.

Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies

SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

23 April 2013

Dear

On behalf of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, I would like to thank you again for externally examining our first cohort of taught MA students in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies for the academic year 2011/2012. Thank you also for sending us the completed External Examiners Report, which we received on 18 February 2012. We are very pleased with your positive assessment of our MA programme. We are pleased to hear that our students' 'critical thinking and creativity in particular in some of the dissertations should be commended as an indication of quality of teaching and learning'. We take note of your comment about the delay with dissertations, and will make sure this does not happen again.

We are looking forward to your constructive input and feedback into our MA programme in the years ahead.

Best wishes,

Director of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies