

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:	Business School
Subject(s):	<i>Economics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Various Economics and combined honours degrees
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA/BSc

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 items for this category

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?

Yes.

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.*

I am responsible for the Quantitative Economics (Maths and Stats) modules, plus the Business Economics modules. I believe that the design of these modules, both in terms of content and assessment methods, is a very strong asset in the School. The modules' quality is very high and certainly in each module the ILO are met comfortably: the variety of assessment methods ensures that students with different backgrounds can profitably engage themselves in the learning of these subjects, and perform excellently.

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.*

There is no doubt in my mind that the quality of these modules is perfectly in line with the best tradition for similar courses the best Institutions nationwide.

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 scripts I have viewed showed clear examples of consistent marks, so that, in each module, a nice distribution of marks was obtained, where each performance was allocated in the correct marking slot. In other words, the assessment methods were capable of "separating the wheat from the chaff". Assessment methods are varied and depend on the ILO of the module. For instance, there is something akin to "continuous assessment" in one Econometrics module, while other modules are more reliant on essay writing at the end of the year. The latter is a case where the course is fundamentally developmental in nature.

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.*

Each module is accompanied by an extensive set of information, so that students are given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the necessary requirements, which I am sure are also reiterated in the classroom by the module convenor.

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

NA

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.

There is clear evidence that the administrative process has continued to perform as effectively as in the previous years; Marks are generally drawn from the full range of zero to one hundred; The role of the second marker has been enhanced, but probably needs to be more fine-tuned.

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.

NA

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

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.*

No quarrel in this area: I was adequately supported.

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.*

Extensive info were provided for each module.

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 particularly pleased to notice the high quality of the questions asked, some of which required a technical ability in quantitative subjects higher than that found elsewhere. Exam scripts were changed promptly following my requests, which were however motivated by the need to correct some typos or to make the questions clearer to the reader.

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?

The samples of scripts contained enough items to allow me to make an idea of the approach in marking that was followed.

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

I did not read any dissertation, but the Applied Economics scripts (which are essays on economic issues) were very interesting to read.

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 Boards were managed excellently; documentation was clear and up-to-date.

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

Yes, there is ample evidence that the MC are carefully recorded and taken into account in the analysis of specific cases.

Other comments

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

I found the use of the rescaling of marks (from 0-100 to 2-9) pretty odd, but overall not drastically relevant.

Overall, the possibility to apply discretion follows rules that are similar in nature to the ones we follow in my Institution, although we do not have a limit similar to your "0.05" boundary.

Other externals, and I concur, suggested that more evidence of the intervention of the second marker is provided: this might not be essential for some of my modules (especially the quants ones), for which a large proportion of markings is done through optical recognition (Multiple Choice).

Leeds University Business School

Maurice Keyworth Building
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



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13th August 2012

Reference: External Examination Report 2011-12

Dear

Thank you for your report as external examiner for the academic year 2012-13 in respect of the Economics programmes.

I am pleased to note that the quality of the modules is very high and that Intended Learning Outcomes are comfortably met. It is a pleasure to note that you feel the variety of assessment methods ensures that students from different backgrounds can perform excellently.

With regard to your comment about the role of the second marker having been enhanced, the School will be fine-tuning this role and better articulating the second marking process to our externals, next year.

We are considering the ways to improve the experience of being an external examiner in the School and we are considering inviting our externals to the School on the day before the Examination Board to allow you dedicated time to consult the scripts and marks. We would of course cover your expenses and accommodation costs for this and would appreciate your comments on whether you feel this would be a sensible proposal. We hope that it will help to alleviate some of the issues with the tight turn around experienced this year.

On behalf of the Division may I again thank you for your suggestions and for you positive comments on our modules, our programmes, and our examining. We greatly appreciate the assistance you have given to us, and I look forward to meeting you once more at this year's examination board.

Yours sincerely,

Dean, Leeds University Business School

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:

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

LUBS2040 Theories of Growth, Value & Distribution

LUBS3505 Advanced Macroeconomics

LUBS2610 Intermediate Macroeconomics

LUBS3925 The Political Economy of Work

LUBS3010 International Trade

LUBS 3011 Issues in Economic Growth

LUBS3570 Current Topics European Integration

Sample of Economics Dissertation

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

Completed report

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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

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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

n/a

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 ILOs and the structure and content of the modules are appropriate for the award under consideration.

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 programmes meet (and in many cases exceed) the standards of comparable programmes, 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.

The quality of teaching and learning is (very) high.

Marking is fair and consistent.

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.*

Yes. Overall I have been very impressed with the quality of students' work.

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 have not noticed substantial changes; however, as learning and teaching have been at very high standards last year, I also did not see the need for substantial changes

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.

Course content is generally up-to-date at the appropriate level in all modules.

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 acted as a mentor (to <<>>). I have had email contact with <<>>; effectively my role was to be available for questions and give encouragement rather than substantial support.

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.

Generally sufficient.
It would be helpful to include a clearer indication of the deadlines for the return of the relevant forms.

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.

Yes

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?

Yes

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?

Yes

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

Yes

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?

Yes

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

Yes

Other comments

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

I have generally been very impressed with the student work.

[comments to the department]

The documentation of exams, answer key etc has been laudable. In some cases it would be helpful if the intended correct answer would be made clearer in the answer key.

The modules I have been responsible for are consistently high quality. Some of the modules cover standard material in an appropriate fashion; Issues in European Integration, International Trade and Labour Economics are strong, problem-oriented modules that will give students a valuable understanding of the core theories as well as an appreciation of academic and/or economic policy debates; others stand out as unique offerings, Political Economy of Work, and Advanced Macroeconomics Theories of Growth, Value and Distribution is a history of thought course. I highlight these modules as they are likely not to be taught at many other institutions and thus have the potential of contributing to a unique profile for the LUBS programmes.

In some cases I have made minor suggestions for future consideration regarding marking.

[comment to the Faculty]

The university may consider modifying the form for 2nd markers. The form presently used gives no indication of the effort that into 2nd marking and thus does not allow the external examiner to comment on the effectiveness of 2nd marking. The form might be modified to include space to indicate e.g. whether a meeting/discussion between first and second marker has taken place, what was discussed, how long the meeting lasted etc

It would be helpful if emails to the external examiners that contain form that need to be returned also include a clear statement of the deadline. Presently I receive some emails that have several weeks for reply and others with a few days, but little indication which is which.

The university use a marking scheme whereby modules are marked 0-100. The scale is then converted to a scale of 2-9. Degrees are awarded on this basis. For the transcripts of students the marks are then converted back to the 0-100 scale. This seems to be a complicated and inefficient procedure. I was informed that this conversion is regard necessary to ensure comparability between marks in humanities and sciences. I fail to see what conversion is taking places that could not equally be achieved by some non-linear mark cut offs on a 0-100 scale. I suggest that the university consider whether the double conversion is necessary and efficient.

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13th August 2012

Reference: External Examination Report 2011-12

Dear

Thank you for your report as external examiner for the academic year 2011-12 in respect of the Economics programmes.

I am pleased to note that you feel that the programmes meet (and in many cases exceed) the standards of comparable programmes, national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

With regard to your comment about the role of the second marker and the form indicating the input of this examiner, the School is currently ensuring this role is clearly articulated and well documented on marksheets and feedback. Your comments regarding the turnaround times and receiving a clearer timeline of deadlines at the start of the session have been passed onto the Undergraduate Office for action. We appreciate your comments on the 20 - 90 scale and can confirm that the School continues to challenge the mark conversion at the University.

We are considering the ways to improve the experience of being an external examiner in the School and we are considering inviting our externals to the School on the day before the Examination Board to allow you dedicated time to consult the scripts and marks. We would of course cover your expenses and accommodation costs for this and would appreciate your comments on whether you feel this would be a sensible proposal. We hope that it will help to alleviate some of the issues with the tight turn around experienced this year.

On behalf of the Division may I again thank you for your suggestions and for you positive comments on our modules, our programmes, and our examining. We greatly appreciate the assistance you have given to us, and I look forward to meeting you once more at this year's examination board.

Yours sincerely,