

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:

LUBS / Business School

Subject(s):

IB

Programme(s) / Module(s):

LUBS0050	Introduction to Inter Business
LUBS1100	Personal Tutorials for IB
LUBS1140	Principles of IB
LUBS1145	Current Topics in IB
LUBS2400	Intn'l Economic Environment
LUBS2860	Managing IB
LUBS2875	Research Methods for IB
LUBS3250	Transnational Corporations
LUBS3320	IB Dissertation
LUBS3805	Int Business Management
LUBS3810	Managing Across Cultures
LUBS3840	European Business
LUBS3860	International Strategic Mgmt

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

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

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?

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 comfortable that the standards of the programme outcomes and the structure and content of the programmes were commensurate with the level of award.

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.*

This is difficult to assess as there is not consistent practice in articulating module learning outcomes and linking them to assessment instruments and learning/assessment outcomes. How the assurance of students achieving intended learning outcomes is fully evidenced is an area of development for the team

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.*

On the whole this is fine. However I have three concerns

1. The adequacy of the multiple choice instrument to assess students at the appropriate level. Very high marks in the module using this instrument suggests an imbalance
2. It is not clear that there is a systematic scrutiny of assessment instruments across the programme to ensure;
 - a) a well balanced portfolio approach (some assessment had close similarities).
 - b) that assessment instruments are well balanced in themselves across questions and have the level of clarity necessary for the diverse student body LUBS has.
3. The quality of some of the assessment instruments sent to the external examiner (grammar etc.) suggest a lack of robustness in the scrutiny process

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.*

see 2&3

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.

12/13 my report commented :

1. *The marking schemes were content based. It was difficult to see from the marking scheme how LO's were assessed*
2. *Where LO's were assessed wasn't clear in the marking schemes. The alignment of learning outcomes to marking schemes, the actual feedback and marks awarded is an area where further development would improve all the modules under consideration. It was difficult to evaluate whether the students were given the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of LOs due to this.*

I am not clear there has been substantive progress on either of these issues

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 think this is particularly strong in the division. The programmes are closely aligned to the international business research centre and research active academics are heavily engaged with the teaching and management of 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

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.*

I think the university processes are excellent

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.*

I think the service offer from the central quality team is a model of best practice

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?

As item 3. I do have concerns regarding the robustness of internal scrutiny processes for assessment and examination instruments

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?

Sufficient sample. However I do have concerns as to the level of engagement with the moderation process by some academics. Forms are signed but only on a few modules is there an evidenced audit trail. The problem is one of inconsistency across the portfolio. There are pockets of good practice, however in some modules there is a clear absence of engagement.

There is some good practice in annotating scripts, however again, there are gaps and inconsistency of practice. This makes it difficult to understand why marks have been awarded and why there is a differentiation of grades sometimes. Annotation does help the external to build a richer picture of the module and the rationale behind the award of grades so it is very helpful. It also acts as an indicator to the moderator and provides a vehicle for written confirmation of, or divergence of views which is also helpful in evidencing the audit trail to the external assessor.

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

I think some of the dissertations were excellent. However there could be better consistency of marking across markers. I would suggest there needs to be a more systemised approach to moderation so that it is carried out across a wider cross section of the team, rather than academics simply working in pairs and swapping 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?

I think the boards are very well run and the students given due consideration.

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

I am happy that all students with mitigating circumstances were given due consideration and that appropriate procedures were in place

Other comments

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

I thought the approach this year of the externals coming the day before to carry out the moderation was really helpful to me personally. It enabled me to meet and talk through any issues with the module leaders which is a more conducive to partnership working.

30th August 2013

<>

Reference: External Examination Report 2012-13

Dear <>,

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

I am pleased to note that you comment positively on the standards of the programme outcomes, and you are satisfied that the structure and content of the programmes is commensurate with the award. I am especially encouraged to see that you believe our programmes to be closely aligned with, and informed by, the research activities of the International Business (IB) Division since this is a key strategic objective for us, and that you particularly commend the involvement of research active staff in the teaching and management of these programmes. I was also encouraged to read your positive comments about the processes of the university, the support services provided by the administrative team in the Business School, and the management of the examination boards, especially concerning the treatment of students with mitigating circumstances. I am also pleased that you appreciated the moderation day prior to the examination boards, and the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with individual module leaders. I think this aspect of the event worked very well, and it represented a significant improvement on last year.

You do raise a number of issues for the International Business division to consider, however. While we have already begun an internal discussion of them in light of the observations you made on the day, I would like to respond to these points individually here.

Firstly, you comment that it is difficult to assess whether or not the programme aims and learning outcomes meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark, primarily because there is inconsistent practice in articulating module learning outcomes and linking these to assessment methods and outcomes. You also mention later in your report that you cannot see substantive progress which deals with the comments you made last year about a disconnect between the module learning outcomes, the marking schemes used by colleagues, the feedback given to students, and the final grades awarded. You raise an importation issue, and I can comment as follows. During the course of 2012/13, I have been working on a project as part of the Business School's application for accreditation by the AACSB to improve this aspect of the BSc International Business programmes. The programme aims and objectives have been redrafted and now connect much better to the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Business and Management. This has been approved by our external reviewer, <>, <> University School of <>, in respect of the new BSc International Business and Marketing which was introduced for 2013/14. I am now working with colleagues in the IB Division and the Business School to map module level learning outcomes to those of the programme as a whole, and for each level or year, and to more clearly document and articulate how module assessments (and their respective marking and grading schemes) relate to and measure learning outcomes at both the module and programme level. This process is likely to necessitate the reconsideration of precisely how individual modules are assessed. Although this process is on-going as part of the AACSB accreditation application, I am confident that it will lead to much clearer and transparent evidence about how the achievement of learning outcomes by students is measured and assured.

Secondly, you comment on the adequacy of using multiple choice question (MCQ) papers as an appropriate mode of assessment, particularly on LUBS2860, and that you are concerned that the high average marks achieved by students may be indicative of a possible 'imbalance' between student ability and this type of examination at this level. Personally, I strongly agree with you on this point and, as Programme Director, I have been resistant to seeing greater use made of MCQ-based examinations by IB Division staff, as has the Business School's Standing Group on New or Amended Module and Programmes (SGNAMP) on which I sit and which approves this type of change. The most immediate step for us to take is to ensure that the MCQ paper used on LUBS2860 is revised to ensure that it evaluates a broader range of student abilities and learning than is presently the case, and that it is better aligned with the learning outcomes of the module and those at Level 2 of the programme. At the same time, the IB Division will consider collectively the role of MCQs more generally as a module assessment mode.

Thirdly, you note that it is unclear whether the module assessment instruments are scrutinised systematically across the programmes in order to: (i) achieve a balanced set of assessment approaches, (ii) ensure that assessment methods are dissimilar across modules, (iii) ensure that assessment instruments are expressed clearly, (iv) verify that the internal moderation process and scrutiny of assessment instruments are robust. In response, I can comment that when the programmes and modules were designed, one of my objectives as Programme Director and author of most new module and programme proposals was to ensure that a variety of assessment methods were employed across modules, not least to maintain student engagement. I should point out that during regular staff-student meetings on the student experience at a programme-level the issue of close similarities in assessment across modules has never been raised. However, I am required to revisit this issue again as part of the AACSB accreditation process, and I will take care to bear in mind your observation as this is done. Moreover, I have already had preliminary discussions with <>, the Divisional Director of Student Education, about introducing a more transparent, rigorous, and thorough internal scrutiny process within the Division, perhaps with the involvement of native English-speaking colleagues where necessary to improve the clarity, presentation and quality of the assessment instruments. Indeed, there is also an initiative underway within the Business School to address this issue more widely, especially in respect of a more visible and evidence-based audit trail for the internal moderation process. I am hopeful that you will see improvements in all these areas over the coming academic year.

Fourthly, you comment on the patchy practice you observe across modules concerning the annotation of assessed coursework and examination scripts, especially with regards to how this helps an external examiner (and also the second marker, I should point out) to understand better the grading and marking process used by the first marker. The Business School does require first markers to annotate and give written comments on coursework and examination scripts, but clearly this policy is not being followed by all markers. I will discuss with <> how best to encourage colleagues to more diligently engage with this aspect of the marking process in future.

Finally, with regards to the dissertations, I am very pleased to see your comment about some of them being excellent. I agree, and I was impressed by the quality of the work I read myself. However, like you, I am also concerned about the consistency of marking across markers, and the fact that some colleagues swapped dissertations in the second marking process did I think reduce the opportunity to establish uniformity in the marks assigned and the dissemination of best practice when assessing them. I have already discussed this with the module leader, <>, and we are agreed that in future a matrix will be

designed and implemented that will see different second markers used to evaluate the dissertations of the supervisor/first marker. I hope that once more you will see improvements in this area next year.

I would also like to make the general comment that, in response to feedback from previous years, we invited External Examiners to the Business School on the day prior to Exam Board in an attempt to allow examiners dedicated time to scrutinise assessed coursework and exam scripts. The feedback we have received in relation to this new approach has been very positive and we will look to repeat this format next year.

On behalf of the IB Division may I again thank you for your suggestions and for your comments on our modules, our programmes, and our examining. We greatly appreciate the assistance you have given to us. As you know, it is very likely that another Programme Director will be in place from next year onwards, so I would also like to thank you personally for the excellent work you have done to date, and for your strong and on-going support of our international business programmes as a “critical friend”.

Yours sincerely

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on behalf of ◇

Dean, Leeds University Business School