

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
Subject(s):	<i>Economics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Economics and MA Economics and Finance
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

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

In general, the programmes are well structured and perfectly comparable to other programme in this subject offered by other Universities. Two comments:

- 1) the number of students is increasing and I suspect the assessment should be changed to accommodate the possibility that students with different abilities are admitted to the programmes.
- 2) The types of assessment should be more varied. At the moment, exams with essay-based questions seem to be the prevalent method of assessment and different methods of assessments should be helpful.

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 aims and the learning outcomes of the programme are in line with the structure of the MA economics; also the standards employed by members of staff contributing to the programmes are appropriate for the award of the degree.

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; the Aims and the ILOs of the programme are perfectly in line with those of equivalent programmes offered by Economics Departments in the UK.

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 consistent with the learning outcomes and the marking procedures are rather robust.

Quality of teaching is good across the board. The material covered by the Applied Econometrics module and the Econometrics module seems to be slightly overlapping and this requires some coordination between the module leaders.

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, although the students seem to be assessed mostly by exams and probably some variety in the assessment is warranted.

The cohort seems rather good in most exams although I am perplexed by the number of students who missed a piece of assessment in the quantitative subjects.

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

Not applicable

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 would like to commend the procedures around the moderations of exams.

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.

The programme in itself is a mixture of modules that teach standard material and modules that cover current research in the field. This is particularly evident in the modules on Globalisation.

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.*

Yes, I was,

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. The resit exam papers for some modules were sent to me far too close to the examination date (August).

Yes, I have attended the meeting and I am happy with the recommendations of the Board.

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

Not applicable.

Other comments

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

<>

Friday, 21 February 2014

Dear <>,

Thank you very much for your report and for having served as an External Examiner on our programmes again this year. Your favourable comments on the learning outcomes, research-influenced curriculum, quality of teaching, assessment methods and marking procedures on our programmes, as well as the administrative arrangements at Leeds University Business School, are much appreciated.

With reference to your concern over the lack of variety in type of assessment, I am pleased to report that, after recent revisions, 47% of the modules on our programmes now incorporate an assessed coursework component, as well as a final examination based on essay-type questions. Assessed coursework components, in turn, range across modules from 20% to 60% of the total assessment and comprise an array of essays, group projects, empirical projects and tests.

We also appreciate your comment on the need to improve coordination between the Econometrics and Applied Econometrics modules. The syllabi and delivery of these modules were partly affected by changes in teaching staff at the beginning of the 2012/13 academic year. The issue has been raised with the leaders of the two modules and I trust a more satisfactory arrangement will be in place from 2013/14.

As you observed both in your report and at the Board of Examiners meeting, the number of students on our programmes has been rapidly increasing in recent years. The trend has been confirmed in 2013/14. Early in 2012/13, we became aware of a potential problem with providing adequate student support, especially close to assessment time. One dimension of the problem became evident in an unusually high number of absences from examinations and missed submissions of assessed coursework, on which you remark in your report. The Economics Division has therefore decided to create a new Personal Tutor role specifically dedicated to our master's students, starting in 2013/14. The Personal Tutor will be responsible for personal welfare, academic progression, career advice and more, as the role develops. We will keep monitoring the situation, including through our regular meetings with student representatives.

With regard to your remark on some resit exam papers having been sent to you for scrutiny too close to the examination date in August, I am pleased to report that it is now our standard practice to request module leaders to submit simultaneously the main exam paper for January/May examinations and the corresponding resit exam paper for August examinations. In future, therefore, External Examiners should receive resit exam papers to scrutinise well in advance of the examination date in August.

We trust these measures will adequately address the issues you have raised.

We have now reached the completion of your term of appointment. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of the Business School and the Economics

Division for your invaluable help as an External Examiner during the past four academic years.

With many thanks on behalf of the entire Programme Team and my best regards,

Yours sincerely,

<>

Dean, Leeds University Business School

<>