

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION*Subject area and awards being examined:*

School of:	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s):	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
LLB, LLM	LAW

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.

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.

I have been an external examiner for 5 years and I have attended all the degree examination boards except for the last one (June 2011). The quality of the assessment and examining process was high when I commenced my time as an external examiner at Leeds but the best qualities I met in my time with the Law School were (a) a willingness on the part of the academic staff to engage fully with me as an external examiner in seeking to meet the highest standards in the whole assessment procedures and processes; (b) excellent internal standards of marking and moderation in accordance with clearly established criteria; (c) an appropriate blend in the methods of assessment of skills and knowledge and (d) an engagement with all the dimensions of the marking scale.

I should also like to mention the administrative staff who ensured that I was fully apprised of, for example, when the scripts would arrive and all other essential aspects of examining.

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.*

Everything was appropriately commensurate

- 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

- 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.*

I was pleased by the close consideration given to the appropriate methods of assessment for the different modules in terms of the balance of skills and knowledge.

- 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

- 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. 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.

- 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.

The curriculum at Leeds' Law School continues to blend very effectively research-led teaching and teaching / learning led by developments in pedagogic understanding.

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.*

Yes

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

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

Yes

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

I was not able to attend the Board of Examiners and therefore I cannot comment on this aspect for 2010-11. With regard to all other aspects, the administrative arrangements were excellent.

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

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.

11 October 2011

Dear <<<>>>

I am writing to formally acknowledge receipt of your external examiner's report for the 2010-11 academic year and to thank you for the very kind and supportive comments you made particularly in regard to the examinations process. Your appreciation of the work of the support staff in particular will be passed to them.

This was, of course, your last year as an external examiner at Leeds. During that time you have made many very helpful suggestions as to how we might improve learning and teaching at Leeds, specifically the quality and transparency of our assessment processes. I thank you very much on behalf of the School and the University for your dedication to the task and wish you the very best in your retirement

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION*Subject area and awards being examined:*

School of:	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s):	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
LL.B; LL.M., BA Legal Studies	
LAW 1160 Legal Skills	
LAW 2270 Land Law	
LAW 3120 Jurisprudence	
LAW 3131 Law and Environment I	
LAW 3135 Law and Environment II	
LAW 3240 Equity and Trusts	
LAW 5370M European Environmental Law	
LAW 5730M Land Law	
LAW 5760M Equity and Trusts	
LAW 5810M Pollution Control	
LAW 3225 Dissertation	
LAW 3320 Long dissertation	

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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.

No

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 programme aims and ILOs of the modules for which I acted as external examiner all seem appropriate, bearing in mind the QAAHE Framework for HE Qualifications, the subject benchmark statements and the requirements of the professional legal bodies. The standards are appropriate for 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.*

Yes. See above.

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.*

A range of assessment methods is used, giving students the opportunity to maximise their opportunities for progression and successful completion. Some of the students produced work of a very high standard, indicating that they will have been provided with sufficient information about what was required for their assessments.

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. Assessments appear to have been designed to provide good coverage of syllabus topics and to test appropriate levels of learning. The academic standard demonstrated by the better students compares favourably with those from other good UK law schools. The students' literacy and subject-based understanding is generally sound.

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.

As regards good practice:

- The quality of feedback was often very good. I very much like the 'strengths, weaknesses, suggestions for improvement' format of the feedback sheets and am proposing that we adopt it in the Law School at Swansea.
- The outline answers provided with the draft examination papers are helpful in gauging whether questions have been appropriately framed.
- It was good to see that internal moderation had taken place, leading to an adjustment of marks in one module to achieve consistency between markers.

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.

As I stated in my report last year, 'Most of the courseworks I saw – but many of the examination scripts too – showed evidence of wider reading by students, e.g. articles in academic journals. Some of the dissertations were particularly good, demonstrating a real feel for the chosen topic'.

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.*

As was the case last year, I was unable to attend the examination board and cannot comment on how well the documentation I received would have enabled me to contribute meaningfully to any discussions. Otherwise, the materials I received were perfectly sufficient.

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.

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

Yes, so far as I am aware.

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

I was asked to act as an external for fewer modules than last year and the modules I did external were far closer to my comfort zone. I was also sent fewer dissertations. As a result, the whole experience was less painful than last year's.

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

Presumably this would have become apparent at the final examination board. Sadly, commitments elsewhere prevented me from attending the meeting of the final board.

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.

N/a

Other Comments

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

I am generally satisfied with the standard of marking for the undergraduate modules in Land Law and Equity and Trusts but still have trouble with the way in which poorer scripts are dealt with. (I pointed this out to the internal examiners last year.) I can - at a pinch - accept that (as one of the internal examiners explained) 'any student who makes a serious attempt is to be given at least 20%' but I cannot see how a student who writes nothing in answer to a question (not even the question number) can be regarded as having made a 'serious attempt'. This certainly occurred in Equity and Trusts where one student (who achieved an overall mark of - as I recall - 27%) wrote nothing at all in answer to three questions but nonetheless was awarded 20% for each answer.

There is an inconsistency between internal examiners as to notations made on scripts. It is helpful if examiners write a line or two indicating why a particular mark was awarded. One or two examiners do not even use ticks or crosses.

11 October 2011

Dear <<>>

I am writing to formally acknowledge receipt of your external examiner's report for the 2010-11 academic year and to thank you for the comments you made. The School of Law values very much both the supportive comments and advice you offer with regard to how our processes may be improved. This year was the first year that we have used the new marking proforma with the 'strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement' boxes. I am pleased that you saw its benefits and this supports the feedback we have had from our students and is thus something we will continue with for 2011-12. Further, I'm pleased that our efforts to recruit more external examiners did have a beneficial effect upon the workload you were presented with this year.

As to the marking of poor scripts at 20 there is perhaps a lack of clarity as to what is being suggested by such a mark. At Leeds there are two marking scales: 0-100 and 20-90. Law is marked on the latter whereas some subjects, where marks of 90+% are seen relatively frequently, are marked on the 0-100 scale. On the students final transcript the University applies a formula that brings the two scales into line. In Law, for those students who get between 40 and 90 the formula makes no difference at all, and for those who fail, the mark will perhaps be adjusted downwards slightly but never brings a fail mark up to a pass standard. Thus, 20 is the lowest possible mark that we can award – the language of 'serious attempt' was removed in summer 2010 and I will ensure that the Property team are aware of this as it is clear that it serves only to confuse. Regardless of whether any attempt was made, serious or otherwise, a mark of 20 remains the minimum.

In regard to annotations whilst marking scripts, we do encourage this to ensure that moderation can be more effective and that students can get an indication of why they achieved the mark they did should they ask to see their script. Again, I will ensure the Property team take this advice into account and therefore the scripts you receive next time will be more transparent in how they were marked.

Again, many thanks for your very helpful recommendations which will serve to ensure a more efficient and consistent process is achieved. I look forward to working with you in 2011-12.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School