

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:	Law
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	LLM Modules
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	LLM

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**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

I have never had concerns about the standards being applied, indeed if anything I have pushed for marks above 80 to be considered where students have submitted really very interesting assignments, and that has begun to happen. In the first year there were some failures largely due to poor English and that seems to have improved over the time I have been external. The paperwork received and the conduct of boards have been exemplary. The regulations/conventions being applied seem to have produced very rational results.

The only slight concern that I have expressed (though this did not arise in the last diet) was in the area of Sharia Law Finance. I understand the religious constraints that students writing in this area might feel they are subject to, but nevertheless I did expect that for good marks, students did have to at least consider some of the criticisms that might be levelled at Sharia Compliant Products, even if they were then rejected. Occasionally scripts read more like theological rather than legal submissions.

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.*

Completely appropriate

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.*

Certainly comparable and indeed the best scripts were outstanding

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 LLM is entirely by submitted essays and dissertations. Inevitably this does lead to concerns about the room for plagiarism (or even impersonation, in that scripts may not be written at all by the person submitting). The School took its responsibilities very seriously and suspected plagiarism was tackled.

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.*

Standards comparable. The only weakness (and this seems to be improving) was some poor English

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.

My one area of concern, English, does seem to have been tackled either by entry standards or support. The one other area that I know the Board is considering is the sheer plethora of different specialist awards. This does give rise to some slightly curious results between students because of differing requirements as to compulsory modules from award to award. One area of good practice I would strongly commend is the very clear lay-out of results presented to the board and the 'isolation' of cases that will be subject to discretion so that externals can concentrate on those.

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.

Given the assignment based assessment of the whole programme, research is central to it and some of the students demonstrated considerable capability. As I was external largely on fast moving commercial subjects, I was impressed that the teaching clearly was keeping students up-to-date on legal developments.

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

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

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. Indeed the cover pages were very helpful

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?

These were excellent, see comments above

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

I have to presume so. These were conducted prior to the Boards where the externals met.

Other comments

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

Although I am sure externally is not supposed to be an entertaining experience, I did enjoy my 'stint' for Leeds

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17 February 2014

Dear <>

Thank you for your recent external examiner's report. We were pleased to read the many positive observations you offered about our assessment procedures and the standard of work produced by our students. It was particularly encouraging to hear that we have made progress in terms of the standard of English demonstrated in assessments by our international students, and we welcome your observation that we are now using the full range of marks. We will continue to persuade students who select dissertations on Sharia Law to engage with critical debates.

We have noted carefully your comments about inconsistency between programmes. We no longer offer an LLM in European and International Business Law and have amended all the other business law programmes so that students are not required to pass compulsory modules to secure a fallback award. I hope this addresses your concerns.

On behalf of the School of Law, I would like to thank you for your commitment over the past four years to improving our LLM programmes. We very much appreciate the volume of work you were willing to take on and were delighted to hear that you enjoyed your time working with us.

Yours sincerely

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