

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:	POLIS
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Global Development Global Development & Education Global Development & Gender Global Development and African
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

n/a

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

There has been a good deal of progress in a number of important areas during my four-year term, including an important move to rationalise programme administration through an 'umbrella' approach and greater coherence and consistency in marking on team-taught courses. Other aspects of good practice have been in evidence throughout, particularly the high-quality and extensive feedback offered to students on their written work, and the adoption of creative forms of assessment. The level of feedback to students is particularly impressive and stands out in relation to similar courses that I am familiar with at three comparator departments.

A key feature of most of these programmes is their dedicated or 'niche' focus, which each responds directly to a core area of development policy and practice. This is important and valued by students as it invests their studies with a degree of expertise and job-market relevance. It is also an important marketing strategy, as the more provincial universities (i.e. vis-à-vis <>) are not in the position of being able to offer big broad programmes in the expectation that the location and reputation will do the trick. As noted above, the fact that these programmes have been carefully organised into an umbrella programme means that efficiencies of scale are being attained.

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 modules that I looked at were well constructed and covered a good range of relevant material, involving a good balance between critical and policy-relevant material, and with good global coverage.

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 compare well with similar programmes in other departments that I am familiar with.

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 assessments were largely appropriate, and include some innovative examples, e.g. around more 'practical' tasks on relevant courses. Students could in some cases have been encouraged to review critical and theoretical debates more thoroughly. It might also be worth considering setting more challenging questions that cut across the range of the course material. As with last year, there was better practice this year in terms of offering students greater guidance regarding longer assignments. There is generally a very good level of feedback from markers: comprehensive and constructive.

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: particularly on those courses where students were offered the chance to formulate their own question in discussion with the course 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

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.

The level and type of feedback is consistently excellent on most courses. There are also some innovative assessments involving more practical forms of activity (e.g. Project Proposals on Development Management) that work well.

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.

It seems clear that several modules are research-led in terms of their being closely associated with the research interests of particular staff and in that they include good examples of recent research in reading lists and lectures (e.g. case-studies). This is generally positive and seems to work well, and is particularly appropriate at masters level.

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

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, although I was regrettably unable to attend due to competing commitments.

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

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17 April 2013

Dear <>,

Thank you for your external examiner's report for the Global Development programmes. I am pleased to see that you think that the organisation, marketing and administration of the programmes has been strengthened over the four years you have been externalling on them. You also pick out the high-quality and extensive feedback, the adoption of creative forms of assessment, and the research-led curriculum and teaching as positive features, and suggest that they measure up well against other programmes. You can be sure that we will be working hard to maintain these high standards. Your comment about the need to reflect on assessment strategy and approaches is well made, and we will take that on board.

You have now completed your four-year term, so let me thank you again for the way you have played the role of external examiner in this period.

Yours sincerely

<>
Head of School

cc <>