

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	POLIS
Subject(s):	Security Studies, International Relations
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED: 5213M; 5503M; 5504M; 5561M; 5323M; 5410M; 5450M; 5510M; 5537M; 5756M
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	Masters

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 Quality Assurance**
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

There are no matters of urgent attention.

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 aims and ILOs were appropriate for the level of the award. The assessed work I saw was of an appropriate standard for the awards made.

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, aims and ILOs remain comparable with those at other similar institutions 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 perhaps a little narrow, focusing on essays and exams. Module leaders could consider presentations, reaction papers, field research etc as alternative assessments that might help students in their future careers.

Resit questions continue to be very close to the original assessment – identical in some cases. Last year I suggested this might lead to the temptation for students to use their colleagues' essays as a reference point and so advised that it would be a good idea to make sure there is variation and different wording where possible. If this was disseminated to staff it doesn't seem to have been acted on.

Student performance was, in many examples, hugely impressive and suggested that teaching and learning methods are of a very high standard.

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.*

Students were given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement and there were a number of examples of excellent work being produced. Achievement was comparable with national standards and the spread of marks within the cohort is comparable with other cohorts of similar size and from similar institutions.

On the evidence of the sampling, the programme at Leeds attracts a very strong cohort of Masters students who produce work of real quality and insight. The staff and students deserve high praise for the achievements demonstrated in the finished work.

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.

The reading lists are uniformly up to date. The second marking process in place is exemplary and something other schools/institutions would do well to replicate. Disagreements were handled effectively and the agreed marks appropriate.

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.

Clear evidence that curriculum design was informed by current research and adapting to contemporary events. Students were undertaking projects that reflected current issues and there was no evidence that the teaching itself was anything but excellent.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. 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

10. 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, it was.

11. 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.

12. 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. See above for comments on identical original and resit questions.

13. 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.

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

Yes. One example of serious discrepancy in marking but this was handled professionally and the right result was arrived at.

15. 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. Unfortunately I was unable to attend but have always been hugely impressed with the professional and rigorous nature of the board processes.

16. 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

Overall, this is a really impressive programme. Modules address contemporary debates in security studies and international relations with intellectual rigour using current examples and the latest developments in theory and practice. The standard of student performance is very high and it is clear Leeds offers an exemplary level of postgraduate education. The amount of feedback offered to students exceeds national benchmarks and no doubt contributes to the high performance evinced.

4 December 2014

Dear .

External Examiner's Report 2013 – 2014

On behalf of the School, may I thank you for your Examiner's Report which was discussed by colleagues at the POLIS Taught Student Education Committee meeting on the 19 November 2014.

You singled out the very high standard of student performance on what you called our "really impressive" programmes and also said that the feedback offered to students exceeds national benchmarks. This is very much a tribute to the hard work of our staff and to the quality of our student intake which we aim to maintain into the future. You did wonder whether assessment methods are a little narrow and recommended consideration of alternatives to essays and exams. We are looking at assessment methods in the School as part of our Teaching Enhancement Strategy and of course whenever new modules are introduced, careful attention is paid to their assessment methods. So I hope that over time we will see some innovation and greater diversity in this respect on the IR and Security MAs. You also raised the issue of resit questions and we have been speaking to staff about the need to vary these from the original assessments and the DSE and Exams Officer do scrutinise questions to address this issue.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for the time and effort that you have invested as our external examiner in ensuring that the programmes and modules offered by POLIS are commensurate with the standards offered in comparable institutions.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

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