

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

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

<b>School of:      <b>Sociology and Social Policy</b></b> <b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b> Race and Hollywood Gender Race and Culture Ethnicity and Popular Culture Racism and Ethnicity Studies Sexuality and Society Protest and Social Movements Dissertation Research Methods	<b>Subject(s):    <b>BA</b></b> <b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b>
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*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](mailto: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.*

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?*

Yes I was provided with copies of the external examiners' report but not the response of the school, these were not included

***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 learning outcomes for the modules are clearly specified and highly appropriate as well as the standards. ILOs, structure and content of the modules are carefully designed and thought through to enhance the student's learning experience and provide employability skills.

The modules that I examined are a lively range of contemporary topics at the intersection of Sociology and Social Policy designed to engage the student with cutting edge issues. Students are required to grapple with socio-political issues around race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender, social movements and research methods. The teaching is driven by the research interests of staff, which stretch student by engaging with theory combined with a practical approach to research methods.

### 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 aims, ILOs, curriculum design and instruction adhere to the QAA benchmarks set for Sociology and Social Policy. The programmes compare favourably with similar programmes in the Russell Group Universities.

### 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 range of assessment between modules and within modules is rigorous and a credit to the university. Students are given clear guidelines on how to complete an assessment and the marking arrangement is detailed highly appropriate to the ILOs. The quality of the feedback provided to students by staff is exemplary. The feedback process is an area of good practise, full comments of the second markers, dialogue between first and second marker and a system of direction to study support aids provide a detailed and robust framework of guidance and support.

Student performance was impressive with some excellent results a good proportion of firsts most getting 2.1 and a few 2.2 and thirds which is a testament to the quality of teaching and learning and commitment of academic staff. The best students produced analytically sophisticated, some even theoretically innovative, and for the dissertation it was pleasing to see students using primary data gathering techniques.

### 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.*

The modules I saw produced excellent results of very high quality work comparable with students in other leading UK universities. Outstanding students are thriving in a positive learning environment and are encouraged by motivated and dedicated staff. Able students are engaging with cutting edge issues and debates in a theoretically informed manner. I was pleased to see that some students adopting primary data collection techniques for their dissertation demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the discipline.

### 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.*

N/A

**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.*

Teaching at Leeds is research driven and this is visible from the module content. Contemporary topics are conceptually engaged with such as race and ethnicity, gender studies, and social movements and students are given hands on approach to research methods, which is linked to the dissertation.

## **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 this is fine.

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. I have asked that in future documentation illustrating the structure of the degree pathways should also be provided.

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?**

The process was fair, robust and the board of examination was transparent and impartial.

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

Regulations on degree classification may perhaps need to be revisited, As the board of examiners meeting produced anomalies where deserving candidates with exit velocity were denied higher classification while another student with less deserving trajectory was granted discretion.

### **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.*

Discretion of the board to change classification produced anomalies. Would request that the school revisit the rules and consider if changes are required.

Some minor comments:

Documentation showing structure of the degree pathways would assist in evaluation of the program.

Some modules have more than one assessment but the mark sheet usually referred to only one of the assessment. Would be useful to see mark sheets include all the marks for an assessment.

While not insisting that all feedback should be typed some handwritten comments were difficult to read. Also some of the dialogue boxes were not ticked, which is not relevant for strong students but is much more important for weaker students.

22 July 2011

Dear

External Examiners Report 2010/11

I would like to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiners report for 2010/11 and also to thank you for your, much appreciated, contribution to our assessment process.

Your report is very thorough and I will make sure your commendations are passed to all staff in the School. I will also try to make sure that the School takes note of your suggestions for improvements, particularly in relation to the completion of feedback forms. I will also make sure that in future we provide an outline of the structure of our degree programmes. While I understand your concerns on the rules for discretion I would like to reassure you that our application of the rules was correct and that I have raised the issues with the Faculty and we will be looking at changes for the next session, hopefully to promote greater equity. It is really pleasing that you noted the quality of our research led teaching and I would like to assure you that we will continue to try to maintain our high standards.

May I once again thank you for all your hard work on our behalf. I hope that you have enjoyed your first year with us as an External Examiner and we all look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School  
School of Sociology & Social Policy  
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