

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:	Lifelong Learning Centre
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Introduction to Arabic Language; Essential Skills in Arabic; Arabic for Beginners; Introduction to Islam and Music; Women, Culture and Islam
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	

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

No major concern to be noted. The programme seems destined to go from strength to strength.

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!

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

It has been a positive experience, I was impressed by the novelty of some of the modules, the dedication of the team, the standards achieved, and the impeccable marking and assessment procedures.

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 intended learning outcomes were certainly appropriate for the structure and content of the programme.

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.*

As an LLC programme, the structure, coherence, and delivery, as well as student achievement, of the modules are impressive.

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 well structured and appropriate to the ILOs, and the high quality of teaching and feedback are often reflected in at times very impressive student performance.

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.*

Obviously, at the Beginners' level, some candidates are challenged by the contents and ambitions of the Arabic language modules; but their efforts are always recognised and appropriately assessed. Some of the essays submitted for the two Islam modules which I have seen have presented good analysis and fresh and critical thinking in response to invariably probing and focused questions. Clearly, such attitudes by both teaching staff and students need to be encouraged.

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.

N/A

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.

Sample essays that achieved Merit and Distinction were invariably grounded in research and were aware and respectful of complexities, an attitude obviously encouraged by the module leaders. Be that as it may, the use of recent publications (both books and journal articles) of various ideological perspectives along with the need of candidates to consistently conform to a standard referencing system needs to be tirelessly monitored and encouraged.

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.*

Sufficient material was always provided.

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.*

Appropriate documentation was consistently made available.

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?**

I was regularly provided with draft examination papers, and when I made comments or corrections they were always considered. The nature and level of the questions were appropriate.

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?**

Sufficient and fairly representative work was made available, and the scripts were clearly marked and annotated.

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

N/A

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?**

The exam board I attended was very satisfactory, and I was satisfied with the recommendations of the board.

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

N/A

Other comments

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

I was pleased to meet an exceptionally dedicated and motivated team offering some innovative and relevant as well as community serving modules and inspiring their students to work to the best of their abilities. I wish everyone involved in the programme (both staff and admin) continuing success.

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28th November 2012

Dear <>

External Examiner's Report for 2011-12

Over the last few months we have been reflecting on the feedback that we have received on 2011-12 from our students, teaching staff and External Examiners. I am now writing to each Examiner to respond to reports individually and to give an overview of the outcomes of this annual review process.

We are very pleased to find that, looking back over your four years as External Examiner for Creative Writing, you can trace a range of positive developments, including the introduction of new modules, and see progress in areas where you have made recommendations. Your report suggests that you finish your term of office with the programme in good health. You judge the learning outcomes to be appropriate, compatible with benchmark statements and expressed in documentation that is "academically sound, detailed, clearly articulated" and indicative of a "robust and effective programme". You also commend "thoroughly and imaginatively designed" assessment methods, the "superb feedback from tutors", "high levels of teaching and support" and "exemplary" communication with you in your role as External Examiner.

We have valued your recommendations in previous reports and recognise the benefits that these have brought to the programme. <> notes, for example, the way in which the introduction of annotated bibliographies has extended the range of resources used by students and deepened their reflective engagement with this material. In the same spirit we note the following observations in your 2012 report:

Development of further modules: You suggest that the programme would benefit from the development of level 3 "single-form modules which would follow on from Writing Fiction, Writing Poetry and Script Writing Workshop." We, too, would welcome this although your suggestion that such development might be "incremental" is certainly apposite. The University is engaged in a wider process of renewal of its elective provision that will extend for several years to come and further thinking on our Creative Writing offer will take place as part of this larger development.

Writing to industry conventions: You note that this is a matter that still needs further attention and we shall continue our work to promote the use of correct layout in students' assignments.

Moving beyond Creative Writing, please find enclosed a summary of feedback from our other External Examiners. As you will see, your positive evaluation of the quality of our learning and teaching, feedback and student support is shared across Externals for all of our programmes. Where points have been raised for further development, these are not only being addressed within the relevant programme but will also be taken account of, wherever appropriate, across the Centre's provision as a whole.

Feedback from our students through the NSS and the University's own Programme Survey, which covers those in other years of study, continues to give a positive picture. NSS scores for 2010-11 were an exception to this but were based on a very small and flawed sample of respondents. We are pleased to see that rectifying this technical problem for 2011-12 has elicited feedback that is consistent with previous years for the NSS and all years of the Programme Survey. Please find enclosed a copy of our Action Plan which summarises feedback from students, along with some of the key points from External Examiners, and identifies our main areas for further work in the current year.

I should like to close by thanking you for all that you have done during your period of office as our External Examiner for Creative Writing. It has been a time of change in this provision, not least in management of the programme, and I know that <> has greatly appreciated your encouragement and the wisdom and breadth of experience that you have brought to the Examiner's role. Our Creative Writing provision has certainly been strengthened by your work with us and we hope that you leave office feeling a due share of satisfaction in what is being achieved.

Yours sincerely,

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Director for Lifelong Learning/Head of Centre