

## 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:	School of Civil Engineering
Subject(s):	Civil and Structural Engineering BEng & MEng
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Fifty four modules on the Civil and Structural Engineering BEng & MEng
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BEng & MEng

**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](mailto: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*

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?*

No

**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

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes are undoubtedly appropriate for the courses under review and clearly correlate well with the BEng and MEng awards.

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes for both the BEng and MEng awards are set at appropriate levels and compare very favourably to equivalent degrees run at other 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 assessment methods used, both formative and summative were competently set and marked by the academic staff. I was very pleased to see that most of the coursework that was available for my review contained substantial feedback for the students which is commendable. I have full confidence that all of the assessment methods, marking of the examination papers and coursework, which in turn leads to the classification of awards, was professionally undertaken by all of the academic staff.

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.*

During my recent visit to the Department I was able to meet with several students all of whom I found to be both intelligent and articulate. Their performance relative to other student cohorts I have spoken with recently was excellent.

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.*

This is my first visit as external Examiner so it is not possible to make a judgement in this area.

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.*

This is a little difficult to ascertain during such a short visit to the Department primarily spent reviewing student output. However, members of the teaching staff have an international reputation for their research and there was clear evidence that a majority of the MEng projects were related to

the current research undertaken in the Department.

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

#### The Examination/Assessment Process

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, the information provided by the University was sufficient for me to undertake this role.

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, the documentation provided by the Department was both sufficient and helpful.

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, I was provided with all of the draft examination papers and given plenty of time to comment on them. I believe that all of the question papers were set at an appropriate level and also that my individual comments were carefully considered by the relevant examiners.

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. The Department provided plenty of assessed and examined work for me to review during my visit. I am very confident that the standard of work is appropriate relating to each particular course. In addition, all of the scripts were clearly marked. Also, most of the coursework presented had plenty of comments and feedback to assist the students in their learn.

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

Yes, there was a good choice of dissertation topics and the standard of assessment was appropriate.

**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?**

The administrative arrangements were excellent. I was able to attend the meeting which was professionally run by the Chairman. I am completely satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

**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**

During my discussions with the students they were concerned with the difference in work load between the first and second years. The majority of the students I spoke with found the first year to be relatively easy, especially the mathematics course and they all struggled completing the second year. It may be sensible to look again at the student work load in the first and second years with the aim of rebalancing a little, student commitment.

The students were also concerned that the second year reinforced concrete design was very theoretical, based on code requirements used for individual element design. They appreciated that this detailed work is necessary but all wished that more conceptual design could be included in the course and hopefully throughout the year.

School of Civil Engineering

University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

1 September 2014

Dear

Firstly, I would like to thank you for stepping in at the last minute to be our external examiner. Your willingness to take on this role at short notice was very much appreciated.

We are pleased with the comments made in your report, and particularly appreciate your positive observations regarding the attitude of those students with whom you met. We are also pleased to read your comments concerning the level of feedback provided on the coursework that you viewed. Like all university departments students have very high expectations regarding feedback and it is heartening to see that your view is that the feedback we give is of a high standard.

We recognise that next year we may need to change our arrangements to allow more time for the examiners as with such a large cohort it is a major undertaking to review so much work in one day.

Your additional comments regarding the discrepancy in level 1 and level 2 workloads was timely. We have recognised this problem over a number of years and, from September 2014, our programmes have been revised with some of the level 2 material being brought into level 1, thus easing the level 2 workload. Additionally, the changes will introduce a greater element of design throughout the programmes thus, hopefully, addressing your comments regarding theoretical and conceptual design.

Once again, thank you for your time and effort.

Yours sincerely

Head of School