

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of:	Computing	Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):		awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)	
Computer Science		MEng, BSc	
Artificial Intelligence		MEng, BSc	
Computer Science with Mathematics		BSc	

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.

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.

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.*

I continue to be satisfied that the content of these programmes, their intended learning outcomes, and the standards applied, are all appropriate at MEng/BSc level.

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 those offered in similar subject areas at other institutions.

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 open-book examinations predominantly used for assessment seem to work well, avoiding both the uncertainties associated with open assessments beyond the control of an exam room and the temptation for students to cram mere facts for closed-book exams .

I was generally pleased with the standard of draft exam papers that I was sent, and examiners were mostly responsive to comments and suggestions. I checked a sample of exam scripts and found they were marked appropriately.

There was a good range of project topics. I was pleased to see the continuing development of procedures for conducting and assessing individual projects and particularly commend the much-improved record of independent double marking followed by a joint report and recommended final mark.

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.*

Project dissertations give some of the clearest evidence of the standard of work students can achieve, given the chance to work in a sustained way on a topic that engages their interest. As in previous years I looked quite closely at a selection of projects across the mark-range.

The top projects this year were very impressive, with a strong research element, and amply deserved their first-class marks.

At the bottom end of the scale, it did seem that a few students were a bit lost, and didn't really understand what they were trying to do: perhaps a bit more help is needed when a student is clearly struggling, duly declared as part of the marking process.

Considering the cohort as a whole, however, I think the students generally do well in their projects, and all the projects I looked at gave the students plenty of scope.

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.

No significant further enhancements were drawn to my attention this year. This is not too surprising after a recent period of extensive review and redesign.

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.

Though projects once again provide the obvious example, there is also plenty of evidence of research interests and expertise feeding into the taught modules at the more advanced stages of the programmes. For the most part I am happy to endorse the view that such research-led teaching is a highly desirable and distinctive feature of university education. Care is needed, however, to moderate the tasks set in exam papers in view of the limited time available, and to recognise the limited capacity of undergraduate students of average ability.

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, I felt I had all I needed. As noted above, I particularly appreciated the much fuller records of project marking.

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 did.

10. Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?

Yes, all exam scripts and all project dissertations were made available to me. I was able to study a sufficient sample of students' assessed work to endorse recommended results with confidence.

11. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?

The administrative arrangements were more than satisfactory, and the meeting of the Board of Examiners was very well conducted.

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

Yes, from what I saw it seemed clear that due consideration had been given to mitigating circumstances.

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.

N/A

School of Computing

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

07 February 2012

Dear

Thank you for completing the external examiner report for last session and the supportive comments you have made on our programmes and procedures.

We have noted the comments you made on the possible need for further support for those students who are struggling with their projects, and also the moderation of tasks set in examinations. These have been passed on to project supervisors and module leaders, and the School's Taught Student Education Committee will be monitoring implementation.

Yours sincerely

Head of School