

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:	Electronic and Electrical Engineering
Subject(s):	Electronic and Electrical Engineering
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BEng/MEng

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

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?

Yes.

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 learning outcomes are appropriate and the structure and content of the programmes are good.

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 are comparable with similar ones at other UK institutions with which I am familiar and are consistent with national benchmarks.

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.*

A mixture of assessment methods is used including traditional examinations and coursework. Project work features significantly. These methods are appropriate and constitute a satisfactory way of ensuring the ILOs have been achieved. The assessment processes are transparent and fair. When reviewing the examination papers I did notice one pair of papers in which there was significant overlap of questions between a level 3 and a level 5 module. This can be justified educationally but I have flagged the issue with the Department to ensure the justification has been consciously made.

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 students have ample opportunity to demonstrate their competence as measured against the aims and ILOs. The range of performance levels achieved by the students is comparable to that on similar in similar UK universities. It is not really possible to identify particular strengths or weaknesses of the cohort as a whole. The range of individual student strengths and weaknesses is what might be expected.

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.

I should be able to make a more authoritative comment on this next year.

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.

The Department is research led and this naturally affects the design of the curriculum. Many subjects, especially in the final years, are taught by specialists in the field with active research portfolios.

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.

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.*

I have had good access to all materials needed to judge processes and standards. All my requests for additional information have been responded to positively.

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.*

The documentation I received was entirely adequate. The role I have been asked to perform is consistent with the policy documents I have been provided with. These documents are consistent and coherent.

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 had sight of all examination papers and was given the opportunity to provide detailed feed. The overall academic standard of the papers was entirely satisfactory. I made several suggestions for minor amendments which were carefully considered by the examiners and in many cases accepted.

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?

I had access to all assessed work. Overall I am confident that the evaluations are reliable. There were some scripts, however, where the QA processes had not been pedantically followed, e.g. no evidence that the addition of marks had been checked and some scripts with blank pages with no indication they had been seen. This was drawn to the attention of the Department. There was a minor error in the addition of marks on one of the scripts that I looked at. I was impressed with Department's QA process of true second marking a random sample of scripts.

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

A wide range of appropriate project topics are offered. The assessment of projects is more subjective than the assessment of examination scripts. The processes used to moderate this subjectivity, including the use of second assessors, is satisfactory. A helpful, and clear, description of the characteristics of a project scoring in a particular mark range is available to assessors. There is a natural tendency in most departments to assess projects a little generously. (I have not worked, or been an external examiner, in any department where this is not the case.) The 'calibration' of the project assessment standard is not out of line with that in other UK universities.

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 administrative procedures are very satisfactory. The Board of Examiners was conducted professionally. It considered difficult cases carefully and seriously. I was entirely satisfied with the decisions that the Board made.

15. 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

I interviewed three students along with the other External Examiner. The students were very open and frank and made the sort of minor criticisms of the courses that might be expected. They were also very complimentary about other aspects of the courses. When asked about most positive aspects of their courses the students identified (i) the quality of the staff, (ii) the excellence of the laboratory facilities and (iii) the extent of project work.

The only negative comments I would draw attention to is that the students felt that there was a positive step change in the intellectual challenge in going from year 1 to year 2 but a negative step change in the support provided by the Department, e.g. less individual attention from teachers and discontinuation of personal tutorials. (One student singled out his personal tutor for praise in that this tutor voluntarily continued giving personal tutorials in year 2 even though they were not formally part of the curriculum.) The judgement of the students was that some of the reduction in support in year 2 arose from an uneven

distribution of teaching-load leading to one teacher having a teaching load (including lectures, tutorials and lab supervision) that effectively precluded giving any individual attention to students. No Department can operate with a precisely balanced teaching load across all staff – especially in a research led institution. I would simply counsel the Department to reflect on the student's views which were clearly made in the spirit constructive criticism.

From:
To:
Cc: [External Examiner Reports](#)
Subject: Response to external examiner's report
Date: 02 November 2012 10:35:24

Dear

Many thanks for your report on the exam processes in our School for 2011-12. It was good to meet you this Summer & to discuss exams business. The University requires us to reply to all external examiner's reports, so I'll address the main points below.

In section 3, you mentioned the similarity between a Level 3 and a Level 5 paper. I'm sure this refers to ELC3611 and ELEC5611, which we mentioned during the Exam meeting. We are aware of this issue, and the module teaching team have been reminded of the need to set differentiated papers, with the ELEC5611 paper reflecting the higher degree of understanding and achievement expected at this Level. This will be monitored by the internal moderator and the Examinations Officer.

Regarding section 12, we have asked the Student Support Office (who check the addition of marks on all exam scripts) to make a mark (e.g. "green line") on all pages to signify that they have been checked.

Regarding "other comments": it's true that there is a step-change in the amount of academic support provided (we have weekly small-group academic tutorials in the first year (only)), but we do have scheduled personal tutorials in years 2, 3 and 4 (albeit at a reduced frequency of twice per semester). There is an uneven distribution of teaching load in the School, because we have four full time teaching fellows, who have a much higher teaching load than academic staff who are carrying out both teaching and research. We have worked very hard for the new academic session to try to moderate the teaching load of these fellows and to ensure that loading is not concentrated unacceptably at particular times of year.

Best wishes,

School of Electronic & Electrical Engineering,
The University of Leeds,
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