

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

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

School of: Electronic & Electrical Engineering Programme(s) / Module(s): All electrical engineering modules For these degrees	Subject(s): Electronic and Electrical Engineering awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BEng, MEng
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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.

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?

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.

The School have well developed undergraduate degrees covering electronic and electrical engineering. They attract a significant cohort of international students, many of whom are of a very high standard. The degrees are well developed and reflect the research expertise of the academic staff. The curriculum is well balanced and reflects the needs of industry.

The examination papers are tough but fair and it is clear that students who graduate with a good degree from Leeds are well on their way to becoming good engineers. They have good project, both individual ones for all students and a team project for the MEng students. The degrees cover a broad range of subjects in electronics and power engineering and it is a credit to the School that they manage to cover this range of subjects.

The first year mathematics module has been a concern as the performance in the first year has been lower than expected. However, the course has been revised considerably and the new mode of delivery appears to be extremely successful. The maths performance of engineering students across the country

is a problem and if this new course is successful it suggests how it could be done successfully in other universities.

I feel that the system whereby students are not allowed to resit examinations in the summer if they have not demonstrated a serious attempt at passing the module is a very good way to encourage all students to pass all of their exams.

I must however, make reference to the new 20 – 90 grading scale that now replaces the percentages used previously. This system is irrational and does not make sense. This is my last year so I do not have to make use it again. However, all university's that I am aware of use the % system and I see no problem with it. As I understand it, there is concern from the Arts and Humanities faculties that they do not use the full scale from 0% to 100%. I can see no reason why the full 0% to 100% scale is used as this represents the achievement of the students. Restricting students from being awarded 100% does not make sense. I would urge you most sincerely to revert to the more normal % system as staff find it much easier to get to grips with than a non-linear scale that is developed to prevent people from being awarded 100%. After all, what is the rationale for a student in mathematics who gets all the questions absolutely correct, being awarded only 90?

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 standards across the degrees are very high.

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.*

Yes

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 very appropriate to the award of the degrees and the subject that is very practical and thus contains a significant element of the assessment of practical work. However, I would strongly suggest that the details of the project assessment are biased much more strongly towards the technical achievements, accepting that the written and verbal communication skills are also very important. However, in the current scheme students can achieve a high mark based on their communication skills rather than the technical achievements and problem solving skills that are the primary learning outcomes of the projects.

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 exam questions were of a suitably high standard providing the appropriate level of challenge.

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.

The most significant change has been in the development of the year 1 mathematics module. This module, both at Leeds and elsewhere, has been problematic. However, the course and mode of delivery has changed significantly and the students now have a much better grasp of the subject. It will be interesting to see how this improvement affects the courses in subsequent years, especially those that require this mathematics.

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.

Research in the school influences both the modules offered in years 3 and 4, the majority reflecting the research areas of the academic staff. In addition the individual and team projects are influenced by both the interests of the academic staff and the facilities and expertise available.

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

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

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?

Yes

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

Yes

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

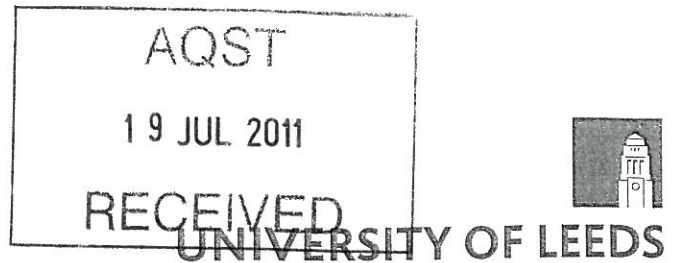
Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form.

It is important that School staff take account of the feedback from the internal moderation before papers are sent out to external examiners so that the papers seen externally are what the School regard as high quality papers. This year the papers that were sent out to me were in much better condition than in previous years.

I like to concept that if students cannot demonstrate that they have made a serious attempt at any papers that they sit, then they have to wait until the following year before they can take the resit.

Faculty of Engineering
School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



12th July 2011

Dear

We thank you for your very positive comments and are grateful for the feedback you have given us over the years that has encouraged us to make many of the improvements and develop the good practice that you mention in the report.

On the subject of the 20-90 grade scale, we can only say that this is the standard University grade scale for calculating classifications and it is entirely necessary for the School to use it. We believe the way we have adopted it, using percentages for modules but 20-90 grades to calculate the classification, is a good compromise. This may change in future as all Schools in Engineering move to using the 20-90 scale and it will be preferable to use a common system.

On the subject of project marking, we will look again at the marking guidelines and the mark proforma to make sure that the effort made by students and the technical achievements are weighted more and that students cannot get a good project mark just by writing a good report with little technical content.

We are glad that the improvements made in the quality of the examination papers have been recognised. We will be taking further action to ensure that the internal moderation process is conducted rigorously.

Finally, we note that your term of appointment has come to an end and would like again to formally thank for your years of service and the excellent contribution that you have made to the School.

Yours sincerely