

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Electronic & Electrical Engineering
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Electronics
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	Broadband Wireless & Optical Comms Modern Digital & Radio frequency Wireless Communications Engineering RF & Microwave Design for Wireless Systems Nanotechnology and Advanced Electronic Devices
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	MSc

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?

na

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

I have completed 4 years examining the MSc programmes. There have been no significant changes in the programmes but general progress all round. The standards are high, as expected of a Russell Group University and the students achieve their learning outcomes well. Students have high loyalty to the department and feedback from them was positive. Project marking has been improved with disparities between markers addressed. The marking includes a viva voce for all students allowing both markers to adequately assess progress and achievement. The teaching provision is good and marking follows the solution mark schemes as presented to the external examiners. My major gripe is over the University imposed compressed scales from 2 to 9 marks which I have commented on in each year's report. The department officers have explained to me the concepts and background but this scheme is entirely illogical for engineering programmes and does the University a disservice. Overall the MSc programmes are running well although more students would be welcome.

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.*

These postgraduate programmes are taught in a department with a wide range of skills in the field of mobile and Optical communications. The programmes are very relevant to current applications in the communications sector of industry around the world. The modules offered give students a broad range of subject skills and the standards of teaching are good. Standards are appropriate for MSc programmes and compare well with those at Universities of a similar status in the Russell group.

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 deliver a high standard of education at a level comparable with other highly ranked UK 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 modules are assessed by assignments and examinations apart from the project which is assessed by the project work delivered, a viva voce and a dissertation. This is good practice. Modules are marked by the examiner and checked by a second member of staff. Awards are classified at the tens boundaries in line with most other Universities.

The project marking scheme gives the supervisor more input than the other marker which is absolutely vital to get a fair reflection of the student's achievement and the difficulty of the project. Marking the project just on the basis of a report does not give a reliable view of the standard of the project. The marks scheme used here is very good.

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 achieved a high standard and there was a wide range of marks reflecting the abilities of the students across the courses. As with all engineering MSc programmes many of the students have an overseas background and inevitably a range of abilities result.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

na

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.

na

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.

Student projects are closely aligned with research topics. The modules reflect much that is current in leading research areas such as nanotechnology, advanced wireless devices, wireless systems and components etc.

8. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

I was appointed as a mentor and this was a useful process for the new external examiner as I could give <> background information about the programmes, department etc.

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.*

Yes the material was satisfactory and there were no hitches.

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.*

I looked up the modules and programmes on the web pages. Any information I requested was supplied.

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?

Draft examination papers were sent to me for both semesters.
The levels of the questions were of the expected standard. Mostly the solutions were good with a clear marking scheme
Comments were acted upon by the examiners.

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?

Yes, exam papers were available on the day of the BOE. Mark sheets from project supervisors and assessors were also available. Project reports were forwarded before the examination board to allow more time to assess them.
Exam scripts were clearly marked.

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

There was a wide range of appropriate subjects available for projects for each programme.
The assessments included a preliminary project report and finally a viva and dissertation.
The marking and standards of assessment were appropriate.

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 arrangements for the whole process were excellent.
I attended the examiners meeting.
The recommendations were appropriate and students considered in a considerate and satisfactory manner.

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

Such evidence was discussed as appropriate.

Other comments

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

I had asked the department to review their criteria for reconciling project marks between the supervisor and assessor where a difference of over 10 marks is used to trigger a third marker and this had been acted upon.

Every year I have raised my concerns about the mapping procedure and discussed it with academics from the department. However I cannot see why a student who earns a zero is awarded a mark of 2, this is beyond my comprehension as an engineer. I ask the University to reconsider its use of mapping in engineering subjects as I believe it brings no credit to the University.

From: _____
Sent: 28 October 2013 13:04
To: _____
Cc: _____
Subject: External Examiner Report - MS Electronics

Dear

Many thanks for returning your external examiners report, and for your supportive comments. We've really appreciated your input over the last 4 years.
I note your closing comments about the University's mapping procedure for calculating classification grades. The other MSc examiner, _____, has also expressed concerns about this procedure in _____ report, so this conversation looks destined to continue at least for another year.

Best wishes,

Director of Student Education,
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LS2 9JT, UK

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