

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

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

Faculty / School of:	Mechanical Engineering
Subject(s):	<i>Product Design</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MDes/BDes

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Title and Name of Examiner:	Mr C J Brown
Institution:	<i>Brunel University</i>
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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

NO

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.*

The structure and content of the programme are entirely appropriate. The standards set are consistent.

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, the standard compares well with other programmes.

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 methods are appropriate. I have made some minor comments about the technique of marking the major design exercise in Level 3 which has a high credit weighting (see below), but I was happy with the marks recorded.

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 I spoke to when I visited the design presentations were very strong on the design elements, and given a sound basis in engineering skills, this provides well-equipped graduates. I have no comparative data for the performance of streams of students. Again this year, no data for the proportion of awards in each class were presented for the cohorts within the School.

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 am not aware of any substantive changes. I am aware that there have been some normal re-allocations of teaching duties; this led to a small change in rubric to one of the exam papers but students did not appear to have a problem with this.

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 practice of design was evident in the work of the students.

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.*

Adequate material was provided. Access to coursework through the VLE is a little less comfortable for those of us who work with other systems.

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.*

Yes.

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?

Examination papers were sent prior to the examinations. Assessment briefings were not sent.

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 – though most assessments are received through VLE. I was able to attend the assessment session for the level 3 design project – this accounts for a major part of a 60 credit module, and it would be my recommendation that this is moderated as a normal part of the External Examiner's role for Product Design.

The scripts were clearly marked and the checking process was evident.

For two of the examinations, the markers had resorted to half-marks which were rounded up in each question. This seemed to lead to more-than-usual checking errors. The consequence of this rounding also seems to have been added to a rounding of coursework; where two pieces lead to a half percentage, this is also rounded up. This is not necessarily bad practice, but something of which all markers should be aware.

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

The standard of the Design presentations was very good, and there were some very well-motivated students presenting with an appropriate level of self-confidence.

I have commented separately to the teaching team that the existing process of agreed marks tends to lead to a convergent marking outcome, and recommend that some greater level of independence of each marker's results is introduced to the procedure. That said, I did not see any problems with the results from the process adopted.

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?

Yes. The Board was Chaired very effectively, with excellent support from the Director of Teaching and Learning, and the SSO.

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

Yes. Mitigating circumstances were treated properly.

Other comments

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

When I checked the Module marks, the system adopted by the university seems to include zeros when calculating the average and standard deviation for the Module. In cohorts that are not large, a relatively small number of students who do not take/connect with a Module – for whatever reason – and achieve a mark of zero, will distort the cohort average significantly. The truer measure might be to include only those who have achieved some marks – i.e. to exclude the zeros. Perhaps the system could return both values.

School of Mechanical Engineering

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

3 July 2013

Dear

RE: External Examiner's Report 2012/13

Thank you for very much for your External Examiner's Report for the 2012/13 academic session.

We note your very positive comments on our Product Design Programme and also your suggestions for improvements.

Regarding sending assessment briefings to you in advance, in principle we are happy to do this but there may be logistical problems that we will look into. On the examination marking, we shall instruct examiners to avoid awarding half marks as we recognise this may lead to arithmetic errors and overall mark inflation. Finally, we will make the process of double marking of projects more transparent, quite possibly by reporting the individual marks of each examiner as well as the final agreed mark on the marking proforma.

Thank you for your continued efforts and advice as External Examiner for our Product Design programme. We look forward to seeing you again next academic year.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Head of School

Head of School

Professor of Solid Mechanics