

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

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

School of: Engineering	Subject(s): Aeronautical & Aerospace Engineering
Programme(s) / Module(s):	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BEng/MEng

All Aeronautical and Aerospace Programmes, plus all related modules.

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. My appointment as external examiner was done late in the academic year, and therefore, I was not asked to look at all relevant exam papers for the academic year 10/11. By default, this should not happen during the next academic year.

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?

On request I was provided with 2 previous reports, but not with the School's response to these.

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

METHODS

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

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 learning outcomes are as expected for this programme, and the standards are appropriate.

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 first two years of the programme are common for all students of the School. Specialisation starts in the 3rd year, which gives BEng students one year of specialisation. The programme is of high quality and in line with similar courses offered at comparable institutions. The programme is well resourced with respect to software and study resources.

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 inspected written exam scripts have been properly marked, and the projects include detailed mark sheets for the various components that make up the mark for each of the students' individual and group contribution.

The assessment process is robust, and thorough consideration is given to individual students taken into account their circumstances. For the classification of awards careful consideration was given to borderline students, and their final degree classification was determined in a good reliable manner in line with the regulations.

One weakness of the degree classification system is that students well below the degree class have to be considered for the higher degree class, i.e. some students with averages of 4% and more below the higher degree classification had to be considered by the exam board for the higher degree classification. It was good to see that the exam board consistently went with the lower degree classification in such cases.

Careful consideration needs to be given to Year 3 students progressing into the 4th year of their respective programmes. Weaker students around the 50% mark or just below can be moved into the 4th year. However, some of these students seem to be struggling achieving the required higher standard in the 4th Year.

A weakness of the 4th year group project lies in the assessment. There is little differentiation between good and weak students. For the 60 credit project in the 4th year, the group mark is 60% and the individual mark is 40%. This will lead to a clustering of the marks around the group mark. It might be worthwhile to reconsider the proportion of group vs individual component, and/or introduce a component of anonymous peer assessment.

There has been one project where an unexpected high number of students had valid mitigating circumstances not allowing them and the others of that group to complete their degree on time. The School considered this and extended the project submission due date allowing the affected students sufficient time to complete this important work.

It is good to see that module average mark adjustments, i.e. scaling, is done in very few cases and only after careful consideration.

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 performance of the students is very much in line with the marks awarded and the standards for the work and the projects is high and in line with their peers at other institutions.

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.

This is my first year as external examiner on this programme.

The group project in the 4th year is one of the strong points of the programme. It is well organised and the strong support from industry strengthens it and gives students a good industrial perspective of their work.

The completed group projects in Level 4 are of high standards.

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.

The course development is informed by a good industrial participation. This is also highlighted by the high number of individual projects in Year 3 and all the group design projects in Year 4 with industrial supervision/input.

Many of the projects are also aligned with the research interests of the academics delivering the programme.

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.*

Documents were made available online.

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

Yes.

However, the time allocated to look at these was too short. I recommend an earlier start and a shorter lunch break.

It would also be helpful if the Level 3 Projects would be sorted according to programme in addition to sorting them by marks.

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

Yes.

The Exam Board was run very well and the School has a very good combination for presenting the marks in paper form and online. Very helpful were the online records that also included any mitigating circumstance or medical evidence allowing for an informed decision making process. The distribution of the minutes of the internal exam board including notes on the discussion about individual students makes the degree classification process transparent and confidence inspiring.

For future years, it would be helpful to have fixed dates for the whole academic year, i.e. for when to expect the exam papers that need to be assessed, poster sessions and the exam board.

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

Yes. Mitigation and medical evidence were given due consideration and were taken into consideration.

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

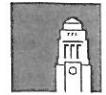
Other Comments

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

Some general observations:

- Students were very complimentary about the technical and administrative support teams.

- ^{MECH003} The Students view is that the academic support for their programme is very good, and academic staff are seen as very helpful.
- Students were enquiring about off campus access to the software packages needed for them to study.
- The whole aeronautical and aerospace programme relies only on 2 to 3 members of staff for the majority of the delivery.
- Some students were not happy with modules that were taught in Semester 1, but examined at the end of Semester 2.
- There might be an issue with mixing the usual 'long-thin' delivery of modules with the delivery of one module that is taught in block mode, i.e. within a week.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

07 September 2011

Dear

Re : School Response to External Examiners Report

Thank you for acting as one of the External Examiners on our Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering undergraduate programme last year and for your prompt and very positive External Examiner's report.

Regarding your comments on assessment methods under Section 3 of the report form, I am pleased to report that the "exit velocity" rule which required us to consider some candidates well below a class boundary for possible upgrading has been discontinued by the University. We also note your comments regarding weaker candidates scoring just over 50% being allowed to proceed into the fourth year of the MEng – we do always counsel such students to carefully consider whether this is the best option for them, given there is a high risk that they will not meet the requirement for the MEng degree at the end of Year 4. Finally, regarding the individual assessment component of the 4th year group project, we feel that the 40% now allocated to this is about right. The students have to produce an individual report and undergo an individual viva (in addition to the group report and presentation) which does enable the examiners to distinguish effectively between the different members of the team. We found that the peer review system we previously employed was not applied consistently by the students and led to unwarranted complaints and conflicts.

Regarding your comments on administrative arrangements, we shall certainly ensure that exam papers and exam board dates are sent to you in good time. We shall also consider allowing more time for the external examiners to look at coursework prior to the Exams Board meeting and sorting the project reports by programme of study in advance.

We look forward to seeing you again next year and in the meantime if there is anything either myself or our support team can do to help you in your duties, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely