

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

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

School of:	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s):	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
Aviation Technology with Pilot Studies	BSc
Aviation Technology and Management	BSc

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.

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?

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.

This is my fourth and final report as external examiner. It has been a privilege to work with the academic staff and meet with a wide range of students. I believe I have a good and detailed understanding of the two programmes. Over the four years I have observed many examples of excellent practice in teaching and learning and have been please to comment on the high quality of student outputs. I particularly welcome new initiatives such as the 'Futures' unit that has introduced a different approach to learning and perhaps stretches students' critical thinking and approach to aviation development.

Overall, these are excellent programmes taught by dedicated a knowledgeable staff. Students leaving the Programme are a credit to The University of Leeds.

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.*

I can confidently state that the structure and content of the two programmes are largely of a very high standard. Consequently, I have no doubt that the aims and learning outcomes are appropriate for the award. From the material I reviewed from the past four years and from other evidence gathered (student interviews) it is clear that the standards of the programme are appropriate. Indeed the standard of work of some students (1st class) was outstanding.

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.*

To some extent it is rather difficult to compare this course with others in the UK given its distinctive and unique status.

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.*

Throughout the year I received a number of examination papers to review and comment upon. In general I had few issues with these and it was clear that they were designed to robustly test the knowledge of the students in light of expected learning outcomes. During my formal visit to the Department I had an opportunity to review final year examination scripts. Through the VLE I had access to a selection of summative assignments and all final year projects. The balance between summative assignments and examinations appears to be about right. I also note that formative exercises are used in a number of units which students value.

I note that PEME3140 (Flight Procedures, Planning and Communication) had a mean mark of 78%. Clearly this will trigger an internal review. Given the subject and nature of this unit perhaps staff should consider a different approach to test learning outcomes.

The one area where I believe there is may still room for improvement is the 30 credit final year project. This year I read every project that was submitted via Turnitin. In general there has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of the projects. 1) a number of projects were excellent/outstanding and demonstrated a good understanding of the subject; 2) Weaker projects lacked focus and tended to be little more than literature reviews with little evident critical thinking; 3) Reference in some cases was very poor; 4) in most cases it was easy to identify the unique efforts of individual students within the team projects. However, in a minority of cases this was not possible; 5) A few of the projects raise significant ethical issues that were not considered; 6) The marking criteria perhaps do not reflect, or sufficiently credits, the scientific and technological content. Currently, 50% of marks are awarded to presentation, project organisation, references and group conduct.

I recommend that consideration be given to 1) changing the marking criteria to reflect the importance of the technical and scientific content and the understanding of the student; 2) building into the project design stage ethical consideration; 3) Each project including a clear statement of the students unique contribution to the project; 4) Seeking advice from Social Scientists with regard to questionnaire design and analysis.

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.*

I am confident that the standard of the degrees awarded are similar to that of other institutions I have knowledge of

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

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 year the 'Futures' unit was well received by the students who particularly appreciated the research focus and short projects.

The use of guest lecturers enriches the student experience by making the units even more vocationally focussed and placing taught work in a real world context. Such practice should be applauded and is particularly welcomed and appreciated by students.

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.

Final year projects clearly demonstrates student centred research and reflects the interests of staff.

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.*

The guidance I received from the University and School was comprehensive. This year with access to the VLE I have been able to read and assess a much wider range of outputs including projects. This has significantly helped in allowing me to discharge my duties.

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. All requests for material including statistics from previous years were accommodated.

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?

Administrative arrangements were excellent.

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

Yes

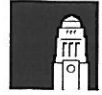
For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements

If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.

Other Comments

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

It would have been useful to have had the opportunity to meet students who were borderline to better inform my comments to the Board of Examiners.

**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**5th July, 2011

Dear

Response to External Examiner's Report
B.Sc. In Aviation Technology with Pilot Studies
B.Sc. In Aviation Technology with Management

This letter acknowledges with thanks and responds to your External Examiner's report, for our two Aviation Technology B.Sc. degrees. On behalf of the School, I wish to thank you for your insightful comments and helpful suggestions for improving the Aviation Technology Programmes throughout your term as External Examiner.

Response to Matters for Urgent Attention: You identified no matters requiring urgent attention.

Response to Programme-Related Comments: My colleagues and I were most pleased to note that your comments on the Aviation Technology degree programmes were extremely positive overall. This provides the Aviation Staff with the opportunity to focus on the two areas where you identified a need for improvement:

- **The High Mean Mark in PEME 3140** will be addressed by means of a module review, as per standard internal QA procedures. This applied module is delivered primarily by an external industry practitioner and the module leader will assist this individual to develop a more challenging examination.
- **Projects**, as noted in your report we have sought to improve the overall standard of project work, but fully agree that there remains scope for further improvement along the lines you recommended. Hence, we plan to undertake the following actions:
 - revision of the marking scheme to provide a stronger weighting for S&T insight and quality;
 - enhanced guidance to students, based loosely around the example you kindly provided;
 - addition of advice on surveys from a suitably experienced member of academic staff;
 - cross-reference back to the statistical content included in the PEME1000 Technical Skills and Applications module;
 - On a School-wide basis:
 - seeking block ethical approval for low ethical impact/risk projects;

- establishing a strengthened process for considering ethical implications at the project design stage;
- putting in place clear guidance on how to determine which projects fall outside the scope of the block approval request and so require separate ethical approval.

Reviewing Process Related Issues: None were identified this time.

Thank you again.

With best wishes.