

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of: Earth & Environment	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s): MSc Sustainability (Environmental Consultancy and Project Management), MSc Sustainability (Business, Environment and Corporate Responsibility), MSc Sustainability (Ecological Economics)	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) MSc

Name and home institution/affiliation of examiner:

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 matters requiring urgent attention.

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes were commensurate with the award of an MSc at a top UK University. The intended learning outcomes of the individual modules were in line with the goals and objectives of the individual modules and the three MSc programmes.

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 aims and intended learning outcomes meet the expectations one should have of a high quality, internationally excellent UK University. As far as I can tell the aims and intended learning outcomes are on par with comparable institutions in the UK and abroad.

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 School employs a variety of assessment methods as is to be expected. The classification of awards was done in line with the relevant regulations and I found the marking to be done consistently overall. There continue to be some examples of rather limited feed-back but these have decreased since last year. Teaching quality, as reflected by student performance and feed-back, continues to be 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 School appears to be able to attract very good students overall. The MSc sustainability (Consultancy and Project Management) continues to have a unique profile. It is a challenge for a programme like this one to bridge the gap between the applied and the more theoretical side of the curriculum. The School manages to deal with this potential tension even better than last year.

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 School was able to keep its high standards since last year. Student employability of the students on the MSc consultancy programme appears to be very good even in the current challenging business climate.

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.

There appear to be good links between the teaching staff's research interest and the curriculum. Looking at staff profiles and the curriculum there appears to be the opportunity to involve a wider range of staff in teaching. As external examiner I am of course not aware of the respective teaching contribution of all staff across all programmes but it is striking that especially in the business-related programmes there is only a small number of

staff involved in teaching a high number of students. A wider participation of existing staff could make sure that students would profit more from staff's research background.

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.

Student numbers on the consultancy programme are very high and it should be carefully considered whether they can be increased any further without putting the overall quality of the programme at risk. Any further growth would have to be matched by additional resources. This is especially true in comparison with other programmes and in light of the fact that this programme is positioned as a premium programme.

In the absence of additional staff it should be investigated how and where existing non-business staff can make a contribution to the business programmes. This is to make sure that students' learning experience can profit as much as possible from the different research backgrounds of different members of academic staff. The current concentration of a few members of staff might be a bottle neck for the programmes.

The sharing of modules can be necessary and be good for students but it requires good coordination and might therefore not be worthwhile for small student groups. You might therefore want to carefully consider, whether sharing a module is really worthwhile.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Head of School of Earth and Environment
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

9 January 2012

Dear

Re: Response to External Examiner's Report - MSc Sustainability (Ecological Economics); MSc Sustainability (Business Environment and Corporate Responsibility); MSc Sustainability (Environmental Consultancy); 2010-11

Thank you for examining our MSc programmes for the last academic session. Your views are an essential part of our quality assurance mechanism and we welcome your input into our teaching processes.

We would like to express our thanks to you for your thorough, engaging and very timely review of our programmes. In particular, we are pleased that our programmes were found in general to be of high quality.

In particular we welcome your reflection on the improvement in feedback to students made since last year but also that there are some more improvements needed in this regard. The School is committed to improving student feedback and has identified this as a key priority moving forward.

We also note your comments on distribution of staff, particularly in the business-focused areas and regarding student numbers on the MSc Sustainability (Environmental Consultancy and Project Management) programme. We will ensure that both of these issues are considered as part of the strategic teaching planning undertaken by the School.

We are grateful for the encouragement and helpful suggestions provided during your stay.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School of Earth and Environment