

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014**

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

Faculty / School of:

School of Geography

Subject(s):

Human Geography

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Geography, BA Geography with Transport Planning

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BA

**Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner****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](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to:

**Head of Quality Assurance**

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?*

Not applicable

**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*

Not applicable

## 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 Intended Learning Outcomes are appropriate for the programmes of study and with the levels of the award. The human geography components of the degree programmes provide a stimulating and challenging range of modules for the students. These clearly provide students with subject-specific skills, but also with broader transferable skills. The learning outcomes encourage students to engage with employability skills, specifically in those modules targeted at these outcomes, but they are also present in more academically-focused modules.

### 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 aims and ILOs are comparable with similar programmes at other institutions that I have knowledge of, and compatible with subject benchmarks. The programme provides a number of high quality modules that cover the majority of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary debates within Human Geography.

### 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 assessment methods are appropriate for the ILOs. A variety of assessment methods are used within the School in order to test different types of knowledge, students' ability to research into a topic, as well as analytical and interpretative skills. I was pleased to see that my recommendation to utilise different marking criteria for different types of assessment has been implemented and written guidelines on these are available for students. Arrangements for marking of the modules and the classification of awards are also appropriate and well thought out. Module feedback forms were 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.*

Yes this came through in student performance in individual modules and for the programme as a whole where students' academic standards were clearly demonstrated. The module evaluation forms were particularly helpful in taking note of student feedback and the actions that had been taken to respond to this. The external examiners met with a small group of three students and these were full of praise for both the programme and for the commitment and enthusiasm of staff. Although this draws on the opinion of a small number of students, the programme appears to provide good preparation for future careers and employment.

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

Not applicable

### 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.*

The human geography programme introduced new modules for the third year of study (level 6) this year, so I focused on these new modules and the new field trips associated with two of the new modules (to Miami and Mumbai). These new modules utilised a good range of assessment methods, some of which are innovative (e.g. production of a visual essay, podcasts). For both the Miami and Mumbai field modules I felt that the students could be stretched a bit more in future in terms of the standard of work expected, given that marks were predominantly in the 2.1 category, with several 2.2 marks for the Mumbai assessments. Having said this, both the Miami and Mumbai modules look to be excellent modules that expose students to new situations and it was evident from students' reflective work associated with the modules that they had gained substantially in terms of both subject knowledge and personal experience.

### 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.*

There is evidence that staff research feeds into individual module delivery and also through student field work. Students appear to appreciate the enthusiasm for the subject material and for teaching that arises from staff engagement with research.

**8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

Not applicable

**For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements**

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

The external examiner for the physical geography programmes was new this year and I was able to brief informally on arrangements within the School.

**The Examination/Assessment Process**

**10. 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, clear guidance is provided in the External Examiner Handbook and also from information sent out in advance by the School.

**11. 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. I had copies of the School's Code of Practice on Assessment and the Undergraduate Student Handbook, as well as dissertation guidelines, the module and programme catalogue and marking criteria. Minutes of the Student-Staff Forum were also made available during my visit to the School. A range of statistical information on modules and programmes was provided this year which was helpful in assessing variations in marks across modules – it would be useful to have the standard deviation included in these figures in future years.

**12. 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?**

Yes, I saw draft examination papers and assessments at an early stage of the year. For the most part the nature and level of the questions were appropriate. For a few of these I suggested some minor changes and these were incorporated into the final versions.

**13. 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. I saw a range of assessed and examined work. Assessed/examined work was made available for a range of modules and I sampled these to ensure that the evaluation of student work was appropriate. Access to the work through the VLE in advance of my visit to the School was particularly helpful in that it allowed more time to be spent looking at these, rather than trying to read large amounts of assessments and examinations in one day. The exam scripts and assessed work were clearly marked, with some excellent feedback provided.

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

Yes, I looked at a range of dissertations across the range of marks and the methods and standards of assessment were appropriate. It was good to see a number of human geography dissertations that utilised quantitative methods, in addition to those that adopted a more qualitative approach.

**15. 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 administrative arrangements for the whole process are entirely satisfactory. I attended the Board of Examiners and this was conducted in a fair and rigorous manner. The recommendations of the Board were also entirely satisfactory.

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

Yes, it was clear the due consideration had been given to both mitigating circumstances and medical evidence.

**Other comments**

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

School of Geography  
University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT



14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Dear

**Head of School response to the BA External Examiner's Report**

I am writing to express my gratitude for your work as external examiner on our BA programmes this year. The School very much appreciates the role you play in ensuring that the School delivers a high quality education in Human Geography.

Your report comments upon the nature of the curriculum on offer, which as you know, has been substantially changed over the last three years. We are pleased then, to hear that you conclude it is stimulating and challenging, covers the breadth of the discipline, that it is informed by our research, and that it provides effective skills development, including transferable skills that prepare our graduates for employment. You commended the new L3 field trip modules, but asked us to stretch the students more here, given the preponderance of 2i marks – the module teams are alert to this and will consider how to address this issue in future as these new modules bed in.

We are also pleased to hear that our assessment processes are sufficiently varied, and of a high standard. We have worked hard on providing high quality feedback to students tied to the assignment type specific marking criteria you had previously recommended, so it is gratifying to hear this meets with your approval. Similarly, we are pleased that you find our quality assurance processes, including moderation and exam boards are thorough and robust.

Whilst you identified no matters for urgent attention, rest assured that we are continuously seeking new opportunities to enhance our programme and the student experience. In this regard, we look forward to working with you again over the next academic year.

Yours sincerely

Head of School