

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

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

Faculty / School of:	Geography
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Activism and Social Change
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA/PgD/PgC

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

None

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?

Yes

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

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 aims and ILOs are wholly commensurate with study at Masters level, and are fully reflected in (and met via) the structure of the programme.

Standards are high, and exactly what I would expect of a Masters course at a leading University.

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 ILOs are comparable with similar programmes elsewhere, and reflect national benchmarks.

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 diversity of assessment is excellent, and a real strength of the Masters. The use of innovative media here has really stretched students to display a range of skills and talents that will be of practical use once they graduate: blogs, book reviews, feature articles and zines (note in particular some really excellent work in these) as well as group reports and essays. There is every sign that teaching and learning are providing full support for students to learn about and complete these innovative formats, which helps students to achieve their best.

The overall structure of assessment across the Masters is also excellent and well thought through. The process of marking and award classification is exemplary.

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.*

Academic standards are high. The students come from mixed educational/experiential backgrounds, and it is a great credit to the staff teaching on this course that achievement is so good. The work set is challenging, innovative and appropriate for this unique Masters. I get a sense of students constantly being asked to link theory and practice, and of a sound grounding in philosophies and politics underpinning the issue they study. Many students evidence a real passion and commitment to the issues they study, and the scholarly framing of their work is impressive. Students have clearly benefitted greatly from the course, developing and documenting skills in political critique and theoretically-informed activism. There is evidence of a high level of satisfaction with the course teachers, the content and modes of assessment on this Masters.

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.

This is my first year, so I can not comment.

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.

This Masters course is very clearly influenced by the research that staff undertake into activism and social change, which itself is at the cutting edge of this field of research internationally. It is clear to see that students are inspired by their teachers' research. The practice elements of the course are equally informed by the involvement of staff in local and international activism movements through their research. This makes the course an especially unique and valuable opportunity, which clearly stimulates students. Again, the movement between theory and practice that is expected of students is very impressive.

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

The Examination/Assessment Process

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.*

Yes

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?

Yes

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

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

Yes

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 – I did not attend the meeting, but have no concerns about the process.

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

Yes

Other comments

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

This is an excellent and unique Masters programme which, in the time it has been running, has accumulated a strong reputation internationally for its innovative practice. This is a great credit to the staff who have developed and taught on it.

School of Geography

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

5 February 2013

Dear

On behalf of the School of Geography at Leeds I would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your very interested, supportive and conscientious work as in your role as external examiner for our MA in Activism and Social Change in 2011-12. Through your help and advice, we have been able to continue to build up this programme and use it as a bedrock for the continued development of our Masters provision here in Geography for 2013-14 onwards. In particular we stress that the MA in Activism and Social Change will now recruit for one further year before it is replaced with the proposed MA in Contested Cities for 2014-15 onwards. This change reflects changing staff profiles and recruitment, and it is a shift we are very excited about. We will consult with you about these changes and share appropriate paperwork with you in due course.

We note, and are very encouraged, by your comments in your 2011-12 external examiner's report on the overall quality of the programme, and its comparability with similar programmes. We also note your comments on the quality of the teaching, innovative media used in assessment, feedback given, and engagement with local issues and outside practitioners, as well as student support and quality of teaching. Your comments about the "process of marking and award classification is exemplary" are particularly pleasing.

We would like to thank you once again, and wish you every success in your own work, and if possible to act for a final time as external examiner next year for the proposed final year of the MA in Activism and Social Change.

With warm regards,

Head of School

Head of School