

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

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

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	School of Geography (Faculty of Environment)
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Geography
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	MA Social and Cultural Geography
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	MA

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?

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 Aims and ILOs are fully commensurate with the level of the award. Some of the modules considered were excellent in terms of the clarity as to expected learning outcomes for students and some high quality work was produced in response in the assignments.

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, these are comparable to other institutions where I have been external examiner for Geography Masters programmes.

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 design and structure of the assessment methods used were entirely appropriate. Markers provide students with excellent feedback which provides clarity on how the marks have been derived and suggestions for improvement where applicable. The modules are at an appropriate level for Masters students and the students produce some excellent work which demonstrates a clear grasp of the theoretical concepts involved and, where appropriate, illustrated by empirical research.

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 – there were some very good assignments produced by the students. The performance of the students is equivalent to other students on Geography Masters courses in other institutions where I have acted as external examiner. This was a small cohort, but there were no weak students. The stronger students produced some excellent work which combined empirical work with theoretical reflection.

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 School has taken on board the suggestions that I made last year with regard to the need for a strong Geographical component for dissertations and this is now satisfactory.

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.

Yes – this seemed very clear for all the modules. Students are introduced to research work being conducted by staff working in this field through internal and external seminars and are then asked to produce a portfolio of critical writing on these seminars as part of their assessment.

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

Not applicable

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, detailed material was made available to me by the School and this was sufficient to enable me to make the required judgements. Any clarification that I needed was readily forthcoming from the School's examinations officer or other teaching staff.

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 the appropriate documentation and materials were received and these are clear with regard to the expectations and role of the external examiner

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. The majority of the assessed work was very clearly annotated with copious amounts of feedback to the students showing very clearly how the marks had been derived. Staff clearly work very well together and where there were initial discrepancies in marks these had been fully discussed and agreement reached on a final mark. These deliberations are very clear to see on the mark sheets and very clear for an external examiner to see how these decisions were reached.

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 attended the meeting and was satisfied with the Board's recommendations.

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

Yes, these are very clear and were taken into account fully.

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



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14 January 2014

Dear <>,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts acting as external examiner for our MA in Social and Cultural Geography. We were pleased to see your confidence in the quality of the teaching staff on the programme, the quality of the students we are producing, and the overall strength of our assessment processes.

We are very pleased that you consider that our students have produced excellent work which combines empirical research with theoretical reflection. We also note with pleasure that you consider that the staff have satisfactorily addressed the issue of dissertations becoming more geographically based, which was raised last year. We are also very pleased that you consider the quality of our feedback to be very detailed and appropriate and that the staff work well together in terms of reaching a final mark.

Thank you again for your efforts and advice. We look forward to working with you again over the next year.

Yours sincerely,

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Head of School