

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>	History
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Medieval History
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	MA modules in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methods and Bibliography: Critical Bibliography; Review Article/Survey of Research; Essay and Proofing • Research Project • Dissertation
<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

No areas require urgent attention, although I have advised that the Essay and Proofing module be kept under scrutiny, as there is tendency for students to perform below their average for other modules. This may, of course, be unavoidable, given the technical nature of the module.

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?

This is my first year of appointment and, yes, I have received previous External Examiner Reports and responses.

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

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 ILOs are fully commensurate with the standards demanded for Masters level programmes. These standards are high and it is made clear to students what is expected of them. The consequent level of achievement is impressive.

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 set out clearly in the relevant handbooks and are consistent with those at my own institution \diamond , at other institutions where I have acted as External Examiner and in respect of 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.*

Assessment criteria, marking practices and award classifications are all rigorous and fair. Students are made aware of the School's practices and receive excellent and extensive feedback on all their work. In every respect, students are well served by the information they receive and the critical comments they are given. As a result, the students have every possible opportunity to prepare for their assessments and to seek improvements on future work.

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 student work I received was generally of a high standard, in some cases exceptionally so. Students have wide choice and flexibility as regards how they approach their studies and the majority take full advantage of these considerations, often to excellent effect. Of course, there are always going to be disappointing outcomes in some cases, especially when there is evidence of high quality research which is then presented in a way that does not match the research effort. This, however, is regrettably common across the sector and it seems to me that the School does everything possible to deter carelessness in advance of final submissions.

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. 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 of appointment and I am unable to offer comment or advice in this respect. I am, however, aware that academic staff members keep the School's provisions under constant review and are keen to respond positively to any criticism that may be forthcoming.

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.

The research standards in the School are of the highest calibre and this clearly informs teaching. Students in the School are fortunate to have access to, and to benefit from, such a wide range of expertise.

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

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.*

Both administrative and academic staff have been very helpful in giving me access to all the documents I need to perform the role of External Examiner effectively and constructively.

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, all that is required has been sent to me, as and when I needed it.

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?

No. I was appointed relatively late in the academic year by which time all such matters had been finalised. That said, I consider the assessment and examination papers I received to be of a high standard, intelligible and commensurate with the guidance and instruction the students received.

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 scripts I received were sufficient for me to assess student performance on the various modules. The marking processes are scrupulous and the comments and annotations provided are clear and helpful.

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

The dissertations I received covered a wide range of subjects, including Icelandic sagas, medieval literature and manuscript studies. Here again, the spectrum of research options that students can select from is made possible by the number of academic staff involved and the diversity of research expertise they can access.

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?

The arrangements made have been considerate and efficient throughout. As regards the Board of Examiners, this was conducted with careful attention to detail and the correct application and interpretation of regulations.

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

Yes, the Mitigating Circumstances Board considered all cases sympathetically and in detail. Decisions were made according to regulatory standards.

Other comments

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

I look forward to playing a helpful and constructive role in the future and am grateful for the courtesies and considerations I have received thus far.

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

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

Faculty / School of:	History
Subject(s):	<i>Medieval Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in Medieval Studies
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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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

N/a

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.*

This is a well-designed programme, which provides rigorous training for students seeking to pursue advanced research in medieval studies, and meets its aims and learning outcomes fully. In both the skills modules I examined (Latin and palaeography) and the interdisciplinary History modules, the standard of work expected and delivered is high.

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 programme meets national benchmarks and compares well with MA programmes offered in similar institutions, not least in the rigour of skills training provided and the range of options available to students.

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.*

From the work that I have seen, and the detailed feedback provided to students by staff, I have no doubt that the quality of teaching on the programme is high. The modes of assessment used across the programme are entirely appropriate. Exams are used for the skills modules, where key competencies need to be tested; and a varied and balanced pattern of assessment is used for the interdisciplinary modules, developing skills in essay writing and source criticism.

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.*

Students are provided with a number of opportunities to demonstrate achievement, including regular coursework essays, a number of tests and exams on the skills modules, and the 10,000 word dissertation. The overall standard of the work was high this year, as demonstrated in the dissertations and research projects produced. The genuinely interdisciplinary nature of these assignments – integrating historical research, literary studies and material evidence – was a particular strength.

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.

A new module on 'Parish Church and Community' has broadened the range of options open to students on the programme, and the 'Medieval Tournament' module (new last year) has bedded down well and is a good example of the value of teaching collaborations between university and museum.

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.

Every element of the programme integrates research. The medieval modules are closely linked to the research interests of members of staff, and encourage reflection on and engagement with the sources for the study of the topic. The programme also includes rigorous training in the skills needed for research in medieval studies, and an opportunity to practise these skills in the dissertation or research project.

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.*

I did not receive the Taught MA Postgraduate Handbook for 2012-13, although I had access to last year's handbook. Any questions that I had about the programme, moreover, were quickly and helpfully answered.

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.*

I did not receive any module handbooks this year, but useful information about the programme is available on the university webpage.

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, and everything sent to me was wholly appropriate for Masters level work.

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: I was sent, and have read, every piece of assessed work for the modules assigned to me. All of this work has been very carefully marked and second marked, with full and detailed feedback provided to the students. I would, however, have liked fuller explanation for the alteration of a small number of marks by the 2nd marker in the Medieval Tournament module.

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

I saw only one dissertation and one research project for students on the programme this year, both of which grew out of a taught module (The Medieval Tournament). While this may represent a 'safe option', it also reflects the high standard of teaching on the programme. Both pieces of work were carefully double marked.

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, all communication was conducted with efficiency and courtesy. The Board of Examiners was also efficiently run and the external examiners were fully involved in discussions about the Board's recommendations.

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

Yes, this was handled sensitively and with the full involvement of external examiners.

Other comments

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