

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):	Medieval History
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in Medieval History
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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.

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

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 history, and which fully meets its aims and learning outcomes. In both the skills modules I examined (Latin and palaeography) and the 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 quality of skills training provided and the 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: mainly exams for the skills module (where key competencies need to be tested) and essays for the History modules, where writing skills need to be developed with the MA dissertation in mind.

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 good this year, if not quite as high as the previous year's cohort, and every student on the programme produced a well-researched dissertation.

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.

There were no major modifications to the programme this year, although the development of a new marksheet for the Latin module, designed to explain more clearly how marks are calculated, is a useful innovation. The reduction in the dissertation word length from 15,000 words to 10,000 has not led to any decline in quality or rigour, in my view.

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 historical modules are closely linked to the research interests of members of staff, and they all 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 history, 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 did have access to last year's handbook. Any questions that I had about the programme 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 much useful information about the programme is available on the university webpages.

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.

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

Yes, although this year's dissertations were quite closely tied to taught MA courses. While this may represent a 'safe option', it also reflects the high standard of teaching on the programme. All dissertations were carefully and appropriately 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