

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:	Mechanical Engineering
Subject(s):	<i>Product Design</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MDes/BDes

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 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

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?

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.*

The structure and content of the programme are appropriate, and the standards set are consistent with those in my home Institution.

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 standard is appropriate and compares well with other courses.

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. I have made some comments about procedures below.

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. I believe the assessments were suitable for the cohort, and the cohort responded well. There was little difference in the performance of the cohort on this programme, and other groups assessed in the same way (e.g. on other Mechanical Engineering programmes). The students I spoke to when I visited the design presentations were very happy with the combination of design and engineering skills they had developed. They were very positive about Leeds University and specifically the programme team.

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.

As a result of my comments last year, the course team have introduced a pro-forma for blind marking of the product design projects. An agreed mark is then produced after discussion with the Programme Director. This is now more in line with our practice with projects that potentially count for so much towards degree award.

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 exposure to excellent facilities, including those intended primarily for research use (e.g. high-definition rapid prototyping machine, has a positive impact on students. It raises their expectations.

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

n/a

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

n/a

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 – the background material received was entirely adequate.

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.

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 reviewed exam papers and consider the standard appropriate. Marking schema were provided.

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?

I was provided with an appropriate sample of the coursework, and had attended the product design show.

The scripts were clearly marked.

Once again, marking schemes to the nearest mark out of 20 were provided, and once again, markers had produced marks to the nearest half mark. This is bad practice. If further "precision" is required, the marking scheme provided to examiners should be refined.

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

Yes – though I felt the range was a little more limited than in previous years. The standard was appropriate.

I carefully examined the completed forms from the projects, and would recommend that a little more care be taken in allocating a specific mark (rather than a preferred range) for each section. Other than that, the system worked well – though I cannot see any explicit arrangements for the resolution of disagreements between markers.

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?

Before the day of the Examiners' Meeting I had been sent all the papers and marking schema, and all the paperwork for the marking of projects was available to me. Access to VLE and other systems had also been provided.

What was not readily available on the morning of the Exam Board meeting was all the data that would be subsequently presented to the afternoon's Board of Examiners – i.e. the final marks sheets, the statistics for the analysis of each module, and the marks for each module as transferred to the marks for the year for each student. Sheets with Mitigating Circumstances recorded were also presented in the afternoon only. Final marks sheets were available upon demand.

From the data available to me in the morning, it was not possible to track the mark from an exam script to the final mark sheet. A system had been introduced to transfer marks from coursework and exams to a composite mark, but there seemed to be no mechanism to track that module mark into the final mark for an individual.

Sheets presented to the afternoon Board meeting contained these marks, but it was not obvious how (or by whom) these sheets had been prepared, or how marks had been transferred to the final award sheet and between systems..

To be able to provide an audit trail, all of this data must be made available to external examiners before the meeting.

<> chaired the meeting very well, in a very clear manner, with the usual support from the School team, and I am happy

with the recommendations made by the Board on the data presented.

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

Mitigating circumstances were recorded on one of the sheets presented at the afternoon Board (see above)

Other comments

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

I have three further comments to make.

First, the paperwork contained data on the module grade/mean grade for each student, and I thought this data was extremely useful, and was an example of good practice that I will take back to my own university. Conversely, in my home university we provide data on the percentage of awards in each Class of degree over a period (say five years) so that we may see how the current cohort performs relative to previous cohorts. I believe this data would be useful to external examiners, and is probably held by the School.

Secondly, when given the module statistics, the mean mark for each module was provided. The external examiners recommend that the standard deviation also be calculated and recorded. This is common practice and is helpful.

Finally, I was perturbed by one case where the work presented at the Product Design Project was augmented after initial submission. The work as initially presented was weak (the stage at which I saw it), but the work submitted late (no mit. circs. recorded) had been deemed to elevate the grade significantly – even though a late penalty had been applied. I cannot find the University's Regulations on late submission in the Examiners' Handbook – in which case they may be implemented by School. However, there is only one day between initial submission and completion of a design project presentation, and it is not clear to me what determines the ability to "add" to an initial presentation stand. I would recommend this be made clearer to students, and a clear point of final submission be defined.

School of Mechanical Engineering

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

4 February 2015

Dear

RE: School Response to External Examiner's Report 2013/14

Thank you very much for your External Examiner's Report for our Product Design undergraduate programme last session.

We note your very positive comments and will look to address any deficiencies you may have raised. In particular, regarding your final point, we will aim to clarify that deadlines for submission of coursework should be rigorously adhered to and no re-submissions should be allowed without due cause being documented.

I regret that for the time being we are unable to update the current system for collating and viewing individual student marks due to software limitations. We will however, endeavour to improve the transparency of the process, and aim to make module mark standard deviations available as well as the mean marks.

We will aim to have more students available for meetings with the external examiners in the future.

Although this year was your third year as an external examiner I understand that you have indicated a willingness to serve for one more year and can now confirm that we would like to take up this kind offer if this is still acceptable to you.

Kind Regards

Head of School

cc

Head of School

Professor of Solid Mechanics