

**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:          | School of PRHS  |
| Subject(s):                   | <i>HPS</i>  |
| Programme(s) / Module(s):     | HPSC3600 Dissertation (20 credit)<br>HPSC3601 Dissertation (40 credit)<br>{HPSC2301 History of the Body 1; sometimes labelled coded HPSC3332 (?)<br>{HPSC3312 History of the Body 2<br>HPSC3200 Science Communication: History and Theory<br>HPSC2307 Science, Culture and Society in the Industrial Age<br>HPSC2208 Nature, Knowledge and Power<br>HPSC3111 Science and Religion<br>HPSC3401 Science, Objects and the Museum |
| Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc): | BA  |

**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](mailto: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?*

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*

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.*

Yes, the programme Aims and ILOs were appropriate and commensurate with BA level. See 'other comments' for remarks on specific modules.

### 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 Aims and ILOs are comparable with other, similar programmes with which I am familiar, and with 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 modules which I looked at were mostly assessed by essay (or dissertation) only. This is acceptable but I would strongly encourage consideration of alternative forms assessment as a supplement to this standard format. These can assess a wider range of ILOs and broaden students' skills.

The shining exception to this generalisation was HPSC3401 where students produced an exhibition and reflective logs.

The other exception was HPSC2208 whose in-class test, worth 45% of the mark, was largely factual in nature. This tested a narrow range of skills, mostly ability to memorise key facts. Whilst this is an important part of learning, 45% seems too high a weighting for it. Other skills, such as interpretation, contextualisation, criticism, and so on need testing too.

### 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.*

As above; it's worth considering a wider range of assessments. Examples that we use at <> (I like some more than others!): discussion forum posts (on VLE) in advance of or after the relevant class; blog posts; general oral performance in class; specific class presentation or leadership of discussion; exhibition; public talk; Wiki authoring; group work; reflective journals; primary source analysis; secondary source critique; making a pitch for TV documentary.

I noted that at least one essay carried the note 'mark for content only – ignore errors of grammar'. We have similar guidelines at <> for students diagnosed as dyslexic but I am sceptical about the validity of such recommendations. (a) this essay was as good as, if not better than, many of those by 'normal' students; and (b) clarity of thought without clarity of expression is meaningless. No doubt a sceptical re-evaluation of practice around dyslexia is impossible, but broadening the range of assessments is a genuine opportunity to reward a range of strengths beyond ability in writing (whether or not that be medicalised).

At the University of <> a 20 unit module would be assessed on the basis of a little more student work – around 6000 words, or more usually 4000 words in essays plus a couple of minor tasks like a blog post and/or a class presentation. So in terms of quantity I would say student assessment is acceptable (4000 words) but certainly should be no less. (Figure obtained by scaling down from Kent's 30 credit modules).

In general student performance was in line with what I have seen at other universities.

### 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.*

N/A

**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.*

In the main this was all very positive. Most of the modules were structured around fairly standard readings but that's appropriate for undergraduate teaching, and they were mostly up to date in reflecting most recent scholarship. In the case of the best dissertations, it was very clear that students had been introduced to the latest research and historiography on their topics. HPSC3401 Science, Objects and the Museum was particularly based on freshly published research.

I noticed that students' bibliographies for their essays tended to be shorter, and more similar amongst the cohort, than I would expect from a similar batch at Kent. There is perhaps a small tendency to offer students short reading lists and/or not to encourage them to do their own research for essays. Encouraging students' further research is something that might be considered, especially venturing out into research journal articles, not just books. This could particularly be emphasised for the second essay in any given module, by which time students might be expected to handle more specialist research publications.

**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. Additional requests to the Education Service Officer were dealt with fully and promptly.

**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 – drafts were provided and my (minor) comments led to emendations.

**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?**

Mostly yes.

A good sample of the final semester essays were provided. The marker feedback was clear in all cases – really high quality feedback from both the student point of view and mine - and justified the mark more than adequately. The

monitoring comments were also very clear and instructive.

My one concern was with HPSC2208 Nature, Knowledge and Power, where a mid-term test accounted for 45% of the mark. I had to make a special request to see samples of this. I understand that general practice is to submit the final piece of work to the external examiner. Where both pieces of work are of the same format (essays) this is appropriate, since one may reasonably expect that the same setting and marking standards have been applied to both. However, where the first assessment is of a different form (and when it is worth so much of the final mark) it would be reasonable to have this scrutinised by the external examiner too, or at least to offer EEs this option.

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

Yes and yes.

**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?**

Yes, all administrative arrangements were fine. I was given the option not to attend the Board since I did not examine a great quantity of work. I was very pleased to have this option.

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

N/A

**Other comments**

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

**HPSC2208 Nature, Knowledge and Power**

Rather a disappointing set of marks, though with a small cohort results can of course be unpredictable. Still, work was disappointing and in particular students showed little evidence of *reading*. Think about how to encourage this, and how to equip students with the skills and confidence to tackle the historiography.

**{HPSC2301 History of the body 1**

**{HPSC3312 History of the body 2**

These modules would seem ripe for reviewing and refreshing. Part 2 in particular is narrow in its approach. Students tend to rely on a very small range of sources for their work, often using the lectures as their major resource (or even being asked to do so). Students should encounter a broader range of scholarship and in particular recent historical methodology indicates the importance of reaching a contextual understanding of medical knowledge. I appreciate that part 1 does this more explicitly, but as I understand it some students come into part 2 without doing part 1; and anyway, the point about contextualisation of all topics remains. There is a lot of scholarship after Foucault that could be included here.

**HPSC2307 Science, Culture and Society in the Industrial Age**

I get the sense this module is still warming up. Student engagement is not fantastic as yet (some boring and predictable essays, poorly researched). I suggest some support and coaching for the module leader and co-leader to help them get the most out of students on what is a well-planned and potentially excellent module.

**HPSC3111 Science and Religion**

Great blend of history and philosophy in this module; I especially liked the Buddhist angle at the end – a fresh perspective. Just watch out that students cannot take this module and overlap their assessed work with science/religion elements of either HPSC2208 or HPSC2307 (even though they are specifically warned off Galileo's 'martyrdom'...)

**HPSC3200 Science communication: history and theory**

Great to see the historic and the contemporary combined here. In the feedback to students, it's helpful to break down areas for evaluation (clarity, knowledge etc.) but just watch out that the numbers given here are in line with the final mark. Students tended to get, say, 7.5/10 for the individual areas and then 63 for the actual mark. This is confusing.

**HPSC3401 Science, Objects and the Museum**

Great topics, assessments. The only challenge is how to make this more appealing to students. Consider re-branding??

**Final comment:**

This form doesn't seem to have boxes that explicitly ask whether I was happy with the standards of marking and monitoring; or about the quality of feedback to students. This seems like the most important set of questions to me!

For the record, I thought that marking was rigorous, fair and scrupulous. Marks awarded matched the class mark descriptors.

Comments both explained and justified the marks awarded and gave valuable guidance to students for future work. Monitoring processes worked well and in one case resulted in an appropriate adjustment across the cohort. This is evidence of effective monitoring at work, not just a tick-box system. Feedback was given to students in a diversity of formats (online, typed up) and this is absolutely fine; markers should be allowed to work in whatever way suits them and gives them the form to record and communicate their opinions effectively.