

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:	Computing
Subject(s):	<i>Computer Science, Information Technology</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BSc, MEng, Computer Science BSc, Information Technology
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MEng, BSc

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 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 award standards for the programmes under consideration are appropriate. The structure, content and ILOs of the offered modules are commensurate with the level of the awards.

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 Computing programmes at the University of Leeds meet expectations of the national subject benchmarks in full. The courses are of a high standard and competitive to Computer Science and Information Technology courses in my own University and other highly ranked Computing programmes in the UK.

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.*

Overall student performance indicates that effective teaching, learning and assessment methods are in place. Significant coursework components have been effectively integrated in modules and students begin to appreciate the learning benefits of coursework. The School has clear and effective rules on coursework conduct. Coursework feedback can always be improved to enhance the student learning experience.

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 exam papers were fair, rigorous and of high standard. Module marks in all modules that I scrutinised indicated reasonable distribution between excellent, good, and adequate students, with small fractions of students failing modules in all cases. I found again that the marking and scaling schemes used by the School help the School identify the brightest and most able students. The disparity in marks between students in different pathways and diverse background was not as pronounced as last year and this was a positive development. The School is doing a good job in attempting to mend gaps in student background.

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.

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.

Coursework components are now maturing and have become an essential part of the learning and assessment process.

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.

I was provided with all the material that I needed and the material was well-organised and sufficient.

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, both printed and online.

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?

I was provided with all draft examination papers/assessments and I gave feedback with very few and minor comments and revisions. Questions were appropriate and achieved good coverage of the taught material, while assessing accurately whether learning objectives were met. Most exam papers used the same formatting guidelines.

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?

All necessary material was available for scrutiny and easy to browse. I found the marking to be fair and consistent across the board. I also found the School's practice to address individual student issues well before the Exam Board and brief the External Examiners on those issues before the meeting to be effective and time saving.

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

I was once again very impressed by the quality of the subjects and work done in the dissertations that I sampled. The cohort demonstrated several dissertations of exceptional quality, including dissertations that presented rigorously derived, publishable research results. The School now uses the marking range above 80 for the most exceptional dissertations, which is a welcome change. While challenges in marking uniformly projects with very different focus (e.g. foundational research in algorithms vs. a software-intensive project) remain, the School has the necessary tools in place to address severe marking discrepancies, when these happen. The use of a third marker is appropriate for projects and I would encourage it not only for projects with wide variation between the first two markers, but also for very highly or lowly marked projects. From one case of marking discrepancy that I scrutinised it became apparent that the research/educational background of the markers may raise vastly different views on the same project. This is natural and perhaps even a positive part of the marking process.

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?

I was unable to attend the Board of Examiners meeting due to a hard conflict with another commitment abroad. I did visit the School for a full day to scrutinise samples of scripts and projects and approve marks. I was very satisfied with the whole process and agreed with all recommendations that would be put forward to the Board.

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

Yes, all mitigating circumstances received due consideration.

Other comments

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

I was pleased that the School took on board all comments from the previous Examination Board and that the School has made tangible improvement in the learning and assessment processes, which are reflected in the results of the Examination Board. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to meet with students during my visit this year and get their feedback. Nevertheless, the School seem to have addressed some of the key concerns raised by students last year (e.g. coursework deadlines conflicting).

<>

Dear <>

Thank you for completing the external examiner's report for last session and the supportive comments you have made on our programmes and procedures. We have noted the comments you made on the projects and format of examination papers and I would like to take this opportunity to respond to these.

With respect to the format of examination papers; the University introduced a new template last session that the majority of examiners are now using and we expect everyone to adopt this in the current session. We have also asked the examinations support officer to make a final check of the papers and rubrics before uploading them to the repository and final printing.

Your comment on the uniformity of the projects is very timely. We have just completed a revision of the project process and marking criteria and as a result of this review, we have divided the projects into four types, (Theoretical Study, Exploratory Software, Software Product and Empirical Study) to ensure the marking criteria better reflect the type of project.

I have also noted the comment on the use of a third marker for projects with very high and low marks. We already use a third marker for the projects that are awarded less than 40 and we can extend this to the highest grades as well.

I look forward to seeing you again in June.

Yours sincerely

<>

Director of Student Education