

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:	Modern Language and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>Thai, South-East Asian Studies, Asia-Pacific Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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

During my four years of external examining I have been consistently impressed with the high standards of scrutiny applied to the assessment of students' work. This has been consistent. The Department takes the role of external examiners very seriously, and we were looked after very well each year – thank you very much!

As in my own institution, I've watched with dismay as the end-of-year examining session was anonymised, removing the ability to discuss students performance between teachers and effectively diminishing the pastoral role played by teaching staff. It dehumanises the process.

I think the Leeds marking scheme needs a lot of scrutiny – the 20-90 scale really skews things – the grades at the top and bottom are far wider numerically than the middle of the scale, which means that when marks are aggregated high and low marks can have adverse effects. This is an odd move in a university which teaches statistics!

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 standards conform for the learning outcomes.

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.*

Comparable in all respects to similar or overlapping programmes at SOAS.

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.*

A good range of assessment methods – exam, essay, project, oral etc – which all seem appropriate and well chosen.

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.*

From looking at dissertations in general, I noted that all could benefit from some REAL copyediting - detail and consistency references, spelling, punctuation, layout (justification), transcription / transliteration. I fear that students are writing and editing on a computer simultaneously, and should all be advised to read their work carefully to iron out infelicities. The standard of written English let a number of candidates down.

As in other institutions, it's worth thinking how reasonable it is to expect students who rarely need to write by hand for most of the year to sit and write fluently under exam pressure. Are electronic exams on the horizon?

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.

No significant changes I am aware of.

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 curriculum in the department is closely linked to the research interests of staff – it's very impressive.

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.

It would be helpful to have someone take new external examiners by the hand to explain in person what is expected – or a phone call before the work needs to be done. Making available all the paperwork is not all that helpful (there's too much of it to actually read through). But learning on the job works too, and members of the department were always around to ask.

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 think it would be useful for the department to have circulated them internally first as sometimes I found myself copy-editing things which should have been picked up already.

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?

Yes – all very smooth.

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

Yes. There was detailed discussion this year on the range of topics which might be considered appropriate, and this is a topic the Department considers very carefully.

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. Though see my note about the anonymisation of the process being somewhat dehumanising. It's even worse at <>.

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

Yes.

Other comments

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

No further comments – thanks for giving me the chance to be external examiner in my old department! I really enjoyed it and will happily return for another stint in the future.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

02 March 2015

Dear

Response to External Examiner's Report, 2013-2014

Many thanks for your Examiner's Report for the academic year 2013-2014.

I was very pleased to note your comments about the high standards of scrutiny applied to student assessment, the fact that the role of examiners is taken seriously, that standards in our programmes are comparable to similar programmes at SOAS, that the curriculum is research-led, and that assessment methods were appropriate.

I also note your reservations about the University wide regulations regarding the anonymisation and resulting depersonalisation of the module board discussions, and the 20-90 scale marking system.

I can confirm that we do indeed circulate exam papers internally (between 1st and 2nd markers) before sending them to the external and so any copy-editing issues should have been picked up at this stage. If there were instances where typos were missed this year, I apologise, and will remind colleagues to minimise these in future.

I further note your comments on the need for further copy-editing of some dissertations this year, where the standard of English could have been improved. It is possible that this may be linked to a new University policy on proof-reading, where students are explicitly forbidden from having their work proof-read by a third party, whether paid or not. This policy has caused some discussion amongst colleagues and we will certainly continue to monitor this issue.

In terms of training for new examiners, your comments are most useful -- I realise that suddenly being sent masses of paperwork is not very helpful. We do have a mentor system in place for all those new to the role, but will try also to ensure that we clarify expectations in advance, in person, wherever possible, for your replacement.

It only remains for me to thank you very much for all your input to our programmes over the last few years and for your very helpful contributions at the exam board. Our programmes have benefited enormously from your comments, and we have also been delighted to welcome back one of our own alumni in this role!

With thanks and very best wishes