

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 Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>French</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	French Studies, with responsibility for the following modules: Level 1 – FREN1010, FREN1020 Level 2 – FREN2120/2125, FREN2160/2165, FREN2340/2345 Level 3 – FREN3010, FREN3585, FREN3740, FREN3751, FREN3770, FREN3835, FREN3840
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?

Yes, I received the final report from my predecessor.

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 – first year as an External Examiner

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 aims and outcomes for the programme are clear and well articulated, and the programme is very well designed in order to facilitate them. The programme offers clear progression and pathways, from introductory and survey modules at Levels 1 and 2, to more specialist and research-led modules at Level 3. At the same time, modules at earlier stages of the programme reflect the research interests and strengths of the teaching team. There is no doubt that standards are appropriate for the award of a BA in French Studies.

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 design and aims of the programme compare very favourably with programmes in French Studies at comparator institutions with which I am familiar ().

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 programme uses an appropriate range of assessment methods at all levels of the programme. Like many similar programmes, emphasis is increasingly placed on assessed pieces of coursework, which is an effective way of allowing students to engage in depth with a topic and develop skills of independent learning and research. There are a number of examples of innovative and stimulating forms of assessment, such as an assessed life-writing exercise in FREN3740 (Women's Writing) and essays based on a photograph selected by the student in FREN3585 (Camera Lucida). Marking of assessed work was consistently rigorous and judicious, and feedback is generally of an excellent standard. There is clear evidence from written work that students are engaging very well with a diverse range of often challenging and complex material.

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. The strongest students are producing work which is comparable with the best students at other institutions with which I am familiar. A number of essays were thoughtful, well structured and showed excellent understanding of key themes in French culture. Less strong students displayed weaknesses common to many students (difficulties with structuring essays and developing arguments), but they were generally very well supported by feedback which was focused, clear and helpful. I saw evidence that several students had improved their marks from one piece of assessment to the text, suggesting that they are benefitting from the feedback provided.

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 – first year as External Examiner in Leeds.

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.

There is clear evidence that the research interests and expertise of the teaching staff inform all levels of the curriculum. This is most obvious at Level 3, where there is an exciting and diverse range of specialist modules available to students; but modules at lower levels also reflect the research strengths of the Department, which helps create clear and coherent pathways through the programme. Consistent use is made of modes of assessments which encourage students to develop skills of independent research and thinking in relation to the subject. A notable example of this is the practical life-writing exercise in FREN3740 (Women's Writing).

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

I was offered mentor support as a new External Examiner for AY 2013/14. Even though I have not needed to draw extensively on it, the mentoring system is an excellent example of good practice.

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 School and University made available a range of documentation which was very helpful for getting to know the programme and regulations in Leeds.

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. All relevant documentation was provided relating to modules for which I had responsibility.

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 draft assessment material in good order and good time. Questions were always well judged, and there was good communication over any (usually minor) comments and suggestions I had.

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. I had access to all the assessed work for the modules I was scrutinising. Marking was rigorous and judicious, with feedback to students consistently helpful and detailed, reflecting a well-embedded culture of feedback across the Department. It was also pleasing to see good use made of the full range of marks,

particularly at the top end of the scale.

Overall, there was very clear evidence of moderation being carried out carefully, and of dialogue between first and second markers. The sole exception to this was the French-English Translation component of FREN3010 (Advanced Language), the scripts for which had been divided equally between two markers. Although the batches produced quite divergent mark profiles (one containing a higher number of firsts, thirds and fails than the other), I saw no evidence that moderation or discussion between the two markers had subsequently taken place. Instead, the external examiner was invited to adjust the mark distributions if deemed necessary. Following review of the scripts, discussion with the Departmental Examinations Officer, and comparison with statistical data from other components of the Advanced Language module, I was satisfied that the overall results for the F-E Translation component were in line with the other components, and felt that it was not necessary to adjust the mark distributions in this instance. However, I would strongly recommend that the Department review its assessment processes in relation to this component of FREN3010, and ensure that marking practice is consistent across the module as a whole, given that it involves a number of different components. In particular, I would recommend that markers establish an agreed marking scheme before marking takes place (as was the case for the English-French Translation component), and ensure a clear record is kept of second marking and moderation. Indeed, the Department might find it helpful to draft and implement a single moderation record form to be used across all its modules to help with consistency of practice in this area.

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

I was not responsible for reviewing French Dissertations this year.

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 this year, due to a clashing commitment at another institution. However, I spent a full day in the Department prior to the Board in order to review modules for which I was responsible. The day was very well organised and run by the Department's Examination Officer, and I was able to complete my work in good time. Administrative arrangements over the course of the year have been excellent.

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

N/A (see 15 above).

Other comments

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

I was asked to pay particular attention to FREN3840 (Sublime and Object in French Literature and Thought) this year as part of the Department's regular review of its modules. FREN3840 is a new module being offered for the first time in AY2013/14, and confirms the diversity and intellectual interest of the Department's modules at Level 3. The course invites students to engage with a challenging and stimulating range of material on an important theme in French culture. Assessment (two long essays) was appropriate for a course of this type, which requires extended reflection on complex texts. Work was good even from weaker students, indicating that the module engages and pushes students very effectively. Marking was carefully carried out and helpful moderation suggests that an appropriately experienced second marker had been assigned to the module. Overall, the module is a welcome and appropriate addition to the Department's offering at Level 3. Although this year's cohort was relatively small (four students), the module can be expected to attract greater numbers of students in subsequent years.

Dear

Many thanks for your first External Examiner's report and for all your excellent and constructive comments. We are delighted that you commend our teaching and assessment procedures so highly. We set great store by the range and quality of research-led modules we offer, and it is encouraging to see precisely these aspects being validated externally. We are delighted that you praise the high standards that our students achieve in their assessed work and we welcome your positive comments about the opportunities we provide students to undertake independent research in their final year.

Thank you for your comments in relation to specific final-year modules and your praise of innovative assessment practices on Women's Writing and Camera Lucida and of the diversity and intellectual interest of texts covered on the new module, Sublime and Abject. Your comments on the marking of FREN3010 French to English translation exam are very welcome and I have raised these issues with the module convenor for Level 3 language. We will ensure that next year there is an agreed marking scheme in place for each of the written language papers and that moderation procedures are thorough and consistent across all three written language exams.

Finally, I should like to thank you for the care you have taken in monitoring our procedures and for the invaluable way in which you have shared your knowledge and experience with us and we very much look forward to continuing to work with you over the next few years. Looking ahead to next year, [redacted] will continue as exams representative for French and my colleague [redacted] will take over the role of Head of French, as I am stepping down after three years in this role.

With best wishes,

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:	Arts; School of Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	French
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single and Joint Honours including French
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Completed report

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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

No

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 – the department has informally invited me to continue as external examiner into a fourth year (2014-15) and I have accepted.

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 Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes of the programmes examined are completely commensurate with the standards appropriate for the award of a BA including French

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

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.*

I reviewed both language modules (FREN3010 synthese exercise & FREN3730) and a range of social / political / cultural studies modules. In both cases, the assessment methods were entirely appropriate to the Intended Learning Outcomes. In terms of language, students were appropriately challenged as regards their grammatical accuracy and fluency of expression. In the 'content' modules, the coursework essays produced were on the whole highly analytical in nature and well versed in academic conventions. The best performances in the examinations for the content modules were outstanding in terms of their structure, detail and referencing.

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. As in previous years, particular strengths in relation to students on comparable courses relate to performance in examinations for content modules (see 3 above).

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.

The majority of the modules that I reviewed continued in the high standards that I had seen in the previous years. The principal innovation in the modules that I reviewed was the transformation of the 'synthese' exercise within FREN3010 from an unseen examination into a take-away paper. I found that this new arrangement was very well organised and the department has already undertaken a very thorough review of this year's practices with recommendations for next year with which I concur. This change was made in response to student demand for an element of the final language assessments to be made into a piece of coursework rather than an unseen exam, bringing French in line with practices in other language departments. It was not entirely clear to me why this exercise was chosen since, apart from the time factor, there is little added value in terms of the type of work that students might undertake at home rather than in an examination hall for a summary. In contrast, translation exercises, for example, might benefit from students being able to undertake research if undertaken as a piece of coursework.

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 content modules, particularly at final year, are closely related to the research specialisms of tutors.

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

I was assigned as mentor to <>. We had email contact over the course of the year as and when necessary.

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

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?

All the questions that I reviewed were very good and I had very few comments to make other than a few suggestions to wording.

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 work is made available to External examiners for review. The department gives each external examiner a list of core modules, new modules and a selection of other modules (on a rota basis) to review as a priority. This year, we were a team of four external examiners for French rather than three. This made a significant difference to the percentage of work that we could review and thus was a very welcome improvement. The scripts were all clearly marked and annotated. The standard of marking and moderating for the synthese exercise for FREN3010 was, without exaggeration, the best that I have ever seen.

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

Yes, the system whereby the module convenor acted as second marker for all the dissertations provided an excellent degree of consistency in 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 able to attend the Board of Examiners for French in which module marks were reported and discussed which was run entirely satisfactorily. I did not attend the Classification Board. The Board is not run on an anonymous basis as is the case in some institutions. As last year, I commend this practice and encourage its continuation.

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

Yes – a separate Mitigating Circumstances committee had taken place prior to the Examination board and its recommendations reported at the Board.

Other comments

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

Dear

Many thanks for your External Examiner's report and for all your excellent and constructive comments. We are delighted that you commend the high standards our students reach in the final year and that you find our assessment procedures rigorous and fair. The advice and support you provided earlier this year in relation to FREN3070 Bilingual Liaison Interpreting was particularly invaluable and the module convenors are very appreciative of your recommendations.

Thank you for your comments regarding the introduction of a take-home assessment for the final-year synthèse and we are delighted with your positive response to this change. We chose the synthèse as a take-home exercise rather than a translation because we felt that this would reduce the risk of students using online resources whilst working at home and in particular, translation tools. This year, the students seemed to appreciate the opportunity to use dictionaries and have a longer time period in which to reformulate the passage. However, your comments about the usefulness of the synthèse in relation to translation as a take-home assessment are very helpful and we will consider these again in our review of final-year language during the first staff meeting in October.

We are delighted that you commend our assessment procedures so highly and your comments on the rigorous marking of the final-year synthèse paper and the final-year dissertations are greatly appreciated. I am also glad to hear that the increase from three to four external examiners in French this year has allowed you to carry out more extensive scrutiny of our modules.

Finally, I would like to thank you for the care you have taken in monitoring our procedures and for the invaluable way in which you have shared your knowledge and experience with us and we very much look forward to continuing to work with you next year. Looking ahead to next year, will continue as exams representative for French in Semester Two and my colleague will take over the role of Head of French, as I have stepped down after three years in this role.

With best wishes,