

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 Modern Languages and Cultures

Subject(s):

German

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All degree programmes with German as a named element

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

n/a

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?

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

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.*

ILOs were entirely appropriate for the level of award. Programmes are well-structured and provide students with a broad range of material and the opportunity to attain high levels of linguistic proficiency.

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 programmes are in line with sector benchmarks and comparable with those of other 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 design and structure of assessment methods was appropriate with numerous examples of best practice, in particular in relation to the second year content modules and final year language-based modules. The marking was done fairly, consistently and with great care. Student performance was excellent overall with evidence of excellent teaching, often by leading researchers in the field.

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 academic standards achieved by the students were high across the board, probably exceeding those of students in comparable institutions in some cases. The cohort was strong with very few candidates falling into the 'tail'. Care was taken with those for whom extenuating circumstances had come into play although it was notable how many such cases there were.

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.

It is hard to single out individual cases here as the modules are well-run and subject to continual improvement, with staff clearly responding well to student feedback. There is a sense that staff are keen to ensure that each module is of the highest standard.

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 curriculum is dominated by modules on post-1945 Germany which might be seen as a negative by those determined to retain the full canon on the syllabus. However, this emphasis is undoubtedly also a strength of the course at Leeds as students are being taught by researchers working at the forefront of their fields. They will graduate with an in depth understanding of modern Germany which will equip them well for the world of work.

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

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 in each case.

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 in both cases. We were able to view all material in the base room which continues to function incredibly well.

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

Yes in both cases. Some students had taken on ambitious topics which were well-researched and carefully presented.

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 in each case.

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

Yes, although it was noted at the board that the number of these was very high.

Other comments

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

This has been my last year as external for German at Leeds. I found it to be an informative and rewarding experience and wish the department the very best moving forward. The course on offer at Leeds is excellent and should be recognised as such by the institution. I would like to thank all the staff involved and in particular the administrative staff, especially <> and <>, who have been a delight to work with.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

24 July 2014

External Examiner - Leeds

Dear

I'm writing to thank you formally for your external examiner's report, which wraps up the exams cycle for 2013-2014.

I'm delighted that you were able to commend our programmes, quality assurance, and quality of student responses. I'd also like to repeat our gratitude for the comments you made at the Board, especially in relation to the efforts of our junior and temporary members of staff. Your words of praise meant a lot to them, and indeed to all of us.

We did indeed have a larger than usual number of 'special circumstances' cases this year. That is something we will watch for over the coming years, to ascertain whether it is a trend, an anomaly, or perhaps a consequence of improved systems for reporting and dealing with such cases.

Thank you again for your efforts over the period of your externaling in Leeds. I have passed on your thanks to our staff, especially support staff, and they, with all of us, are grateful for your support, cooperation and critical interventions.

Yours,

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 / Modern Languages & Cultures
Subject(s):	German (Dept of German & Russian Studies)
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All SH, JH and CH where German is part of the degree programme.
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

This is an excellent Department, & one which is important nationally in the field of German Studies. The students achieve very high standards and staff in German have consistently impressed me with their commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. There are particular strengths in language learning and teaching, and across all modules the range of assessments offered is highly innovative; an example of best practice and an approach which serves the student body well. Staff engagement with comments and suggestions made by _____ and myself has been exemplary. The Departmental module board has become more efficient, and I welcome the introduction of a School Examination Board to consider all the School's degree

programmes together, so that parity of treatment across a diverse range of degree programmes is easier to achieve.

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.*

Standards were absolutely in line with other institutions and appropriate for the BA honours degrees offered. The ILOs were appropriate for the modules offered and the programmes were coherently structured.

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 programmes offered are comparable with other similar programmes at my own institution & other similar institutions with which I am familiar, and are consistent with the national subject benchmark.

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.*

Assessment methods are appropriate to the ILOs and some excellent work was produced across the range of modules offered, demonstrating the students' productive engagement with the assessment tasks.

As last year, there were a number of examples of best practice in assessment with poster presentations, product pitches and project/portfolio work all used to excellent effect in inspiring students to work independently and creatively.

Position papers and literature reviews were used in second and final year modules to encourage student engagement with scholarly literature and I feel, as last year, that these assignments supported students effectively and helped to reduce the 'tail' by giving confidence to weaker students in their essay writing.

A commentary exam was used to good effect this year in the year 2 module on Gender, Culture and Representation, where the commentary assessment both supported and challenged students in answering in the target language in exam conditions. This mode of assessment could be extended to other year 2 examinations in the target language – weaker students who otherwise struggle to address the question adequately are given some supportive boundaries; but it is still a testing assessment which demonstrates clearly which students have understood the material and allows the very best to shine.

Marking on the year 2 core language module was careful and consistent, but the range of marks was rather compressed, with some rather generous marks at the lower end and a tendency to cautious marking in the first class range. Markers should be supported in use of the full range of marks, and consideration might be given to the assessment tasks, especially in the written exam, so that the very best students are challenged, and the cohort as a whole differentiated more clearly.

Students on the Linguists into Schools module produced some very strong and creative work which was carefully marked and moderated. Given the numbers taking this module and the different languages offered by participants, it might be worth distributing the reflective logs more evenly among the team of markers, as specialist language knowledge is not required for marking this exercise, and the markers would benefit from a larger sample of work to look at. The moderation arrangements for this module are robust, leadership on the module is effective and the team has worked together very successfully.

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.*

Students demonstrated very high standards in their academic work. Language teaching as well as teaching on literature and culture modules is clearly very effective and supports student achievement. I was not able to assess the strength of the cohort at degree classification level, but at module level the cohort was strong with a very short 'tail'. Standards are in line with comparable courses and institutions, and in language work the standard is, if anything, somewhat higher than in some other institutions.

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.

There have been no major changes since last year. I welcome the introduction of a new research-led module in the final year on Screening Terrorism and found year 2 modules refreshed with texts reflecting the research interests of staff teaching on them. The additional focus on colonialism within the Gender, Culture, and Representation module worked very well indeed. Students were clearly inspired by the ambitious and wide-ranging module Freedom and Control, and produced some excellent work on this module; Shock of the New also yielded work of the very highest quality; the second year cohort is highly engaged and a credit to the Department, its curriculum and teachers.

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.

Final year students in particular benefit from research-led teaching from highly regarded researchers at the cutting edge of their respective fields. The German Department is exemplary in this respect. In addition, students are encouraged to develop their own research skills in a number of assessments. This year in particular, final year students worked on a focused range of modules with emphasis on post-war Germany. On the one hand, students thus had an excellent opportunity to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of contemporary Germany. On the other hand, the exciting and wide-ranging thematic approach which dominates in year 2 was less in evidence and there was thus less of a pathway for those students particularly inspired by 19th century and early 20th century German culture and literature. If it is possible to broaden the final year curriculum somewhat while retaining the emphasis on excellent research-led teaching, this might further capitalize on the student engagement that is so in evidence in the year 2 cohort.

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.

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, in both cases. The process was handled very efficiently by the exams officer.

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, the base room continues to work very well and scripts were clearly marked and annotated with all the appropriate module information and mark sheets. The moderation process was clear.

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

As in previous years, a wide range of topics was in evidence with some excellent dissertations produced. The method and standard of assessment was very good. Students handled the target language very well and had clearly been supervised effectively in their research topic, as well as given appropriate guidance and support with the challenge of writing a dissertation in German.

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. I am pleased to report that all the very minor issues from last year had been resolved and the whole process ran very smoothly. I did not attend the School Examination Board (external examiners take it in turns to attend this Board) and so cannot comment on degree classification recommendations. The German and Russian module classification board was handled in exemplary fashion.

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

I cannot comment much on this, as I was not at the School Examination Board, but as far as it was possible to tell from the departmental module board, careful consideration was being given to students with mitigating circumstances.

Other comments

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

Many thanks to the Department for its warm welcome and attention to our comments and suggestions. Especial thanks to the hard-working exams officer and administrators who were unfailingly helpful, courteous and efficient.

University of Leeds
School of Modern Languages
Department of German and Russian
GB-Leeds LS2 9JT



Head of Section

10 December 2014

External Examiner - Leeds

Dear

I'm writing to thank you formally for your external examiner's report, which wraps up the exams cycle for 2013-2014. I would also like to take the opportunity of apologising for the long delay in responding – not least because you praise the efficiency of our processes!

I'm delighted that you were able to commend our programmes, quality assurance, and quality of student responses. I'd also like to repeat our gratitude for the comments you made at the Board, especially in relation to the efforts of our junior and temporary members of staff. Your words of praise meant a lot to them, and indeed to all of us.

I am particularly grateful for your comments on the use of position papers and literature reviews at level two – we are glad that you felt that these work well and that help to reduce the long tail of weaker students. We note also your suggestion that we might look at extending the commentary exam currently used in Gender, Culture and Representation to other modules, though we would want to make sure that this replaces another element rather than adds to the marking burden.

We fully agree that we are sometimes reluctant to use the full range of marks, especially in core language modules. As Head of Department, I will return to colleagues with a renewed urging to use the full range!

We thank you also for your positive comments both about the quality of work produced at Level Two, especially in cultural modules, and about the research-led options at Level Three. We do endeavour to ensure that there are cultural module available at Level Three, in addition to more applied language modules, but here of course we are to some degree responding to student demand. However, we will look again at this to make sure the balance is right.

Thank you again for your efforts over the period of your externaling in Leeds. I have passed on your thanks to our staff, especially support staff, and they, with all of us, are grateful for your support, cooperation and critical interventions.

Yours,