

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
Subject(s):	<i>Italian</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Italian studies
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?

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.*

All fully commensurate

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.*

As I mentioned last year, the range of assessment is excellent (ranging from traditional essays through commentaries and presentations). The range of modules is commendable, and students seem genuinely engaged with them. It's a very interesting programme. In a couple of places there is still a slight inconsistency in the use of tick boxes.

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 theoretical underpinning that students could access in order to express their feelings, especially on emotionally charged subjects like gender and sexuality, has improved, which is very good to see.

The final year course on contemporary cinema still sees students getting lower marks than in other areas. Nonetheless, there was an improvement in that students had clearly engaged more this year with some of the relevant theory in the absence of much available secondary material. It is more challenging for students to deal with texts where little secondary material is available.

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 modules that I saw this year had not changed significantly since last year. However, Ital 2300/2301 is worthy of mention. It is a module that has undergone a number of changes in recent years and struck me as one that particularly strongly demonstrated the centrality of literature to any understanding of the construction of Italian national identity. At a time when practical language learning tends to be emphasised, it is good for students to see why literature is so important.

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.

A number of the modules clearly derive from the research interests of the staff, particularly in final year. The balance between research-led and other modules is commendable.

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

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.

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

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. It all runs wonderfully smoothly, a credit to those working behind the scenes to ensure everything in place. The examination meeting is led very well. I am grateful for the printing out of online material (which I had requested last year).

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

I am impressed by the real interest in students and in their progress that shines through the feedback and exam board. Feedback on the whole continues to be excellent, and is generally very supportive in nature. Lecturers/teachers have taken the time to use the form to suggest improvements as well as pointing out errors. In a couple of places I noticed that lecturers had encouraged talented students to pursue either the final-year dissertation or postgraduate work, which is instrumental in aiding strong students to develop into researchers, and therefore, in my view, very commendable. The question, always, of course, is whether the students actually use the feedback to improve.

Italian School of Modern Languages and Cultures

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds, 02 marzo 2015

Dear

I am writing to thank you for your external examiner's report for the Single Honours and Joint Honours BA Programmes in Italian at the University of Leeds (2013-14). Not only you sent us very useful comments, but receiving them so quickly allowed us to take them immediately into account in the last Italian staff meeting of this year, when planning next year's teaching.

We are pleased to read your praise for the range of assessment, the students' engagement, the research-based and research-led modules, and the balance between research-led and other modules. In particular, the fact that you commend the real interest in students and in their progress shown by staff – both in giving feedback and in the final board – is extremely rewarding for the rigorous assessment practices put in place in our unit. As you note, though, the intensity of students' care can be time- and energy-consuming, and we are also looking at ways to streamline and rationalise the efforts in assessment and tutoring. In this light should be seen the changes to level2 assessment and to language modules assessment that have been approved for next year.

We are also pleased to see you noticed the improvement in sensitive areas such as those related to students' difficulties in expressing their feelings, especially on emotionally charged subjects such as gender and sexuality, and in dealing with texts with little secondary bibliography available. We will continue to work in this area also next year. Finally, a finer scrutiny will be put in filling in the feedback forms, to double check that the boxes ticked are consistent with the comment of the tutor and with the mark awarded.

As in the past, we appreciate your help and guidance as external examiner. It is a pleasure for us to work with you, and we look forward to seeing you again next year.

Best regards,

Director of Italian (SMC)
University of Leeds
LEEDS LS2 9JT (UK)

Email: