

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 Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	<i>POLIS</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED5201M Global Politics of Health PIED5235M Education in Development PIED5256M Global Inequalities and Development PIED5275M Political Economy of Resources and Development PIED5766M Research Methodology for Development PIED5210M Africa in the Contemporary World PIED5255M Gender, Globalisation and Development PIED5562M International Relations and Environment PIED5764M Development Management Techniques PIED 5523M International Political Economy PIED5777M MA Dissertation
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

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

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 programme aims and ILOs are commensurate with MA standards in this disciplinary field.

The standards of content and assessment are appropriate. The subject matter covers appropriate and sufficient core areas, builds on staff expertise, and is assessed rigorously.

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. They compare well to Masters programmes in Development Studies I have taught, and for which I have been external examiner, in Durham, Birkbeck, Sheffield and Cambridge.

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 with last year, I am confident that the assessment methods (which include shorter and longer essays, reports, analyses of techniques and methodologies and a dissertation) are both diverse and appropriate to these ILOs. They engage with both intellectual and professional/policy elements of international development, which is very desirable. They are double marked with a final mark agreed. All of this is good practice, and appropriate to the aims and ILOs.

My question about the criteria going to 90% was explained in the Exam Board, and it is an interesting (and persuasive) idea. That said, across several different modules it was notable that very few marks were awarded above the mid-70s. From a look at the modules this year, this doesn't seem to translate into too few Distinctions, and it may simply reflect particular cohorts, but there is a chance that markers are not using the full scale (even when capped at 90%). I would suggest that the Exam Board does a routine review of the final suite of marks/bands, ideally over a sequence of years to keep an eye on this.

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. They have undertaken a sufficient number and range of assessed elements in relation to individual courses and the programme overall.

From the sample I have seen the spectrum ranges from very good at the top to some struggling at the bottom - although there appears not to be as big a 'tail' as in some other institutions. This is in keeping with what might be expected, and does not reflect (from what I can see) on staff/Departmental support, but on a natural range.

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.

I don't think that there have been any significant innovations in the programme/modules since last year, so I can't comment on this.

Good practice includes: often lengthy first and second marker comments, which provide decent feedback to the students, and usually good justification of the marks; the range and searching spectrum of teaching and assessment, including more professional/practitioner oriented elements.

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.

It seems clear that many papers incorporate considerable research and practice-based expertise.

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, I had sufficient material, sent in good time. <> and <> have been extremely efficient and helpful, including giving lots of advance warning of dates of material arriving and the exam board. I also received everything I needed like criteria, handbooks, module descriptions etc.

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, as above.

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 received all draft assessment in good time. I made some small suggestions in a number of cases, usually around wording, but no significant changes were required.

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 assessment comments were almost always extremely detailed and helpful (see good practice above). Moderation comments were also sufficient and usefully explanatory

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

Yes. The dissertation guidance gives an appropriate range of options for style/methodological approach which should enable students with a variety of interests and differential access to primary and secondary material to produce successful dissertations.

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 was advised of the time and place of the Board in good time, and the arrangements and conduct of the Board was professional and rigorous.

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

Yes. Anonymity and discretion were maintained, and the process appeared to be working in terms of appropriate responses to varying mitigating circumstances and medical issues.

Other comments

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

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16 March 2015

Dear <<>>

Thank you for sending your MA external examiner's report for 2013-14 for our International Development teaching. This has been shared with relevant colleagues and discussed at the latest School Taught Students' Education Committee (in February).

Your report was overall an encouraging one, with positive comments about our assessment methods, feedback to students, the quality of students' work, and the administration and conduct of the exam and assessment process. You can be sure we will be working very hard to maintain high standards in these areas. You raised the issue of using the full range of marks and marking above the mid-70s, where work merits very high marks. We do regularly repeat that message to staff and hope that we can see the best work appropriately rewarded. As you suggest, we will keep an eye on this and we are looking at data about the range of marking across the board in the School over the last few years.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School

cc <<>>