

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:	Mathematics
Subject(s):	<i>Statistics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Statistics MSc Statistics with Applications to Finance
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

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

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.*

Structure, content and learning outcomes are all appropriate.
Standards are broadly in keeping with those of peer institutions.

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.*

Assessment and marking were good.

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 were given the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements.
Overall, students were quite strong.

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

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 a substantial gap between the level of MSc course material and current research, so I would not expect to see research having a major influence on the MSc curriculum. The key point for me is that the course material should be up to date and address important application areas --- and this is the case.

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

- 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.

The material was sufficient.

- 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.

There was ample documentation provided.

- 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 examination papers and solutions. The nature and level of the questions was fine in most cases. When I made comments, these were considered and acted upon.

- 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?**

The dissertation topics were good and a good standard was achieved.

The assessment of dissertations is based on the written report and a presentation. In some cases I found the marks awarded to be high given what I had seen in the written report – but the examiners replied that the student showed good understanding when replying to questions in the presentation. However, the student may not have been questioned on the aspects of the dissertation that I found to be weak. There is not much point in having an external examiner read a dissertation and comment on the mark awarded if shortcomings can be countered in this way. I would rather see a higher proportion of marks attributed exclusively to the written report.

I would repeat my previous comment that I would like to see the goals of each project more clearly specified. This can be done in a way that allows flexibility for the student to focus his/her effort. However, there are often core requirements that should be met and a good dissertation must cover these in appropriate depth.

- 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?**

The reports I received showed that the assessment process was conducted satisfactorily and I was satisfied with the recommendations made.

I did not attend the meeting.

- 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

None



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Response to the External Examiner's Report
on the MSc Statistics and
MSc Statistics with Applications to Finance programmes 2013/14**

We begin by thanking [redacted] for [redacted] thorough work in examining our programmes. We are pleased by [redacted] positive comments on the overall standards of our teaching and assessment.

[redacted] commented in [redacted] report on the assessment procedures for dissertations. These were discussed by the School Taught Student Education Committee. The Committee noted that the final mark for dissertations is, indeed, strongly informed by the student performance in the oral presentation, contributing about 20 percent to the total mark. While comments on student performance are included into the assessment form, we agree that it is difficult for the External Examiners to see precisely how the presentation and questioning went in each particular case. We understand that it is not always possible for the External Examiners to attend both the MSc classification board and the oral presentations, so it was agreed that it would be helpful for the External Examiners to see the marks from the Supervisor and Assessor independently before the oral presentation, and then the final agreed mark after the presentation has taken place. We will make the appropriate changes to the assessment procedures.

[redacted] also commented on the importance of having clearly specified goals for each project. The Committee agreed that some of the project titles could be described more precisely, and we will instruct the supervisors accordingly. At the same time, we feel that it is important to allow students to explore open-ended problems, giving flexibility for each dissertation to develop according to the student's interest and knowledge. The assessment criteria as described in the module handbook and assessment form allow in our view a fair assessment of student achievement.

Head of School of Mathematics
May 2015