

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	School of Mechanical Engineering
Subject(s):	Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) <i>Year 3 Placement</i> MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) <i>Year 4 Placement</i> MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (International) MSc Aerospace Engineering
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BEng, MEng, MSc

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

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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

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.*

I believe the ILO's are appropriate for this type of programme. The programme structure is consistent with similar provision elsewhere and offers some flexibility, which is valuable.
The standards are entirely appropriate for the awards under consideration.

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.*

The programmes compare favourably with those offered at other institutions.

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 assessment methods appear to adopt a standard format and are appropriate for the ILO's. Arrangements for marking are clear and the classification of the awards well documented. I note that, in parallel with some similar institutions, there is little, if any, scope for input by the Final Board of Examiners. I believe this is potentially an unfortunate constraint – specifically in relation to marginal candidates who are automatically allowed to progress from year 3 to year 4.

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.*

In my experience, the standards are broadly comparable with candidates on similar courses elsewhere. Based on the sample of final year projects I have seen, marking standards generally are similar. Some of the higher final thesis marks (>65%) do seem slightly generous in some cases.

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 note the introduction of a new module: Aerospace Propulsion (MECH3750) which is co-taught with Thermofluids3 (MECH3496). The mean mark for both modules appears to be low and feedback from both staff and candidates suggest that there were a number of issues with both the module delivery and assessment. The appropriate procedures are in place to address any issues raised as a result and I understand this provision will be reviewed before the next session.

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 is clear that, at least in areas that I am familiar with, staff research interest's impact on the subject matter and content of final year research projects. This can be of considerable benefit to final year candidates and was recognised in discussions the External examiners had with them.

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, this material was sufficient and I was given several opportunities to request further documentation, had this been required.

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.

I believe I was given appropriate documentation

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?

Draft exam papers relevant to my area of expertise were forwarded for comment. The questions were appropriate and at a suitable level. My comments were primarily related to fairly minor issues in specific questions to which the associated module leader responded directly

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?

A very comprehensive collection of marked scripts and dissertations were made available to the External examiners during the visit. These were acceptable in terms of an evaluation of overall standards. Considerable effort was put into making sure that we had access to computer based records of assessment marks. These records were valuable in terms of our evaluation.

It was apparent that a number of different systems appear to be in use for recording, processing and presenting assessment marks and the link between these systems was not always straightforward. This comment may be driven primarily by my unfamiliarity with the process, but there did appear to be a number of opportunities for errors to creep in to the system.

The majority of exam scripts that I viewed were clearly marked in a consistent and coherent way. A small number used ½ marks and in a similar small number the marks were not expressed as percentages – both practices should ideally be discouraged. It was not always easy to identify when a particular script had been double marked – on some scripts this was obvious, on others much less so. The Teaching Team may wish to consider adopting (and enforcing) a consistent standard for double marking that facilitates this check.

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

The choice of dissertation subjects was appropriate for the programmes considered. The Teaching Team may wish to note that candidates considered the choice limited (but understood the staff resource reasons for this) they also requested

that available Masters subject areas be advised earlier to enable more detailed appraisal.

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 administrative arrangements for the Board of Examiners were entirely satisfactory. I was able to attend the meeting and invited to comment within the agenda. I was satisfied with the recommendations made by the Board. It is important to record that the Examiners Board was well attended; staff were fully engaged in the process and able to comment on specific candidates/modules/assessments, as required.

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

While procedures were not discussed in detail at the BoE it was clear that there was a process in place which addressed these issues that appeared to be entirely satisfactory. The Teaching Team may wish to note that some candidates had experience of decisions in relation to submissions for mitigating circumstances taking some time to receive feedback or not having any feedback at all. It would appear that these instances were attributable to communication problems, but both academic staff and students need to ensure that they are familiar with the correct procedures involved.

Other comments

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

Given that this is the first year of my appointment it is important to note that the impression generated by the Teaching Team was very favourable. There is clearly engagement by the academic staff with the role and tasks of the External Examiners and a very positive approach to all matters related to quality and standards. I look forward to my continued association with the delivery and assessment of these courses.



21 September 2015

Dear

RE: School Response to External Examiner's Report 2014/15

Thank you very much for your External Examiner's Report for our Aeronautical & Aerospace Engineering undergraduate programmes last session.

Your comments on the complexity of the software systems currently used to process and present marks (VLE, SIS, Banner) are well made and have been raised with the University's Quality Assurance Team. However we are currently obliged to continue to use the SIS software as an intermediary between the VLE and Banner.

Regarding your comments on how mitigating circumstances are dealt with by the School, we do of course have to respect the confidentiality of the individual student's circumstances. We do tend to consider such cases in batches at an appropriate time and endeavour to let the students know the outcome of their application as soon as we can. However we will review our procedures to see if we can respond in a more timely fashion with perhaps more feedback on the rationale for the decisions made.

You raise the problems with the Thermofluids 3/Aerospace Propulsion modules last year which we acknowledge. We are reviewing the content of these modules as well as delivery and assessment to ensure that they meet the expectation and needs of the students in this important area of aeronautical engineering science and practice.

Finally, regarding your comments on the marking of exam scripts, we will remind staff that only whole marks should be returned and as a percentage for the exam as a whole. We will ask the check markers to annotate the cover sheet to indicate that the scripts have been checked.

Head of School

Professor of Solid Mechanics

Assuming that you are happy with these responses, all that remains is for me to thank you again for your efforts as an external examiner in the School and to look forward to your contributions in the coming year.

Kind Regards

Head of School

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