

# 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:	POLIS
Subject(s):	British Politics
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Politics BA Politics and Parliamentary Studies BA Economics/Politics BA Geography/Politics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons)

#### 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](mailto: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.

The ILOs and the academic standards applied are commensurate for the award of BA (Hons). The programmes I examined are well designed and the standards are appropriate.

##### 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 Aims and ILOs are in line with sector norms and met the expectations of 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.*

The assessment methods for the modules on the degree programmes are appropriate. The marking is consistent across the board and much care has been taken with second marking. A good number of students received marks in the 1<sup>st</sup> class band in each assessment which indicates high quality teaching.

**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. The percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class degrees demonstrates the fact that students were given the opportunity to flourish intellectually and develop supported by high quality teaching. I think the broad suite of modules offered by POLIS is creditable.

**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 (This is my first year as External).

**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 modules I moderated demonstrated cutting edge research-led teaching especially at level 3 (final year). On a slightly different issue, the quality of the UG dissertations clearly showed the benefit of offering a student research module in the final year. The skills developed by students are transferable and such projects furnish them with specialist knowledge.

**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**

I received mentor support from a colleague in their final year as External Examiner and I found this very helpful. The colleague emailed and phoned me and we discussed a number of things.

**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 the University's guidance 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.*

Yes I did. The policies for External Examiners are clear and coherent.

**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, I read and authorised drafts examinations and assessments for the modules I was given. The nature and level of the questions was indeed appropriate. Where there were typographical errors (or such like) I flagged this and amendments were made.

**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. Sufficient numbers of exams, essays, mid-terms and dissertations were made available to me so that I have confidence in my judgement of the academic standards. I reiterate, that in my view, the grading of assessed work is sound.

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

Yes. I very much enjoyed reading the dissertations. The students' subjects were appropriate. The method and standard of assessment was appropriate.

**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?**

I attended the SCC and the Exam board. The meetings were excellent. The Exams Officer was meticulous and in full control of processes and procedures. I was very impressed. The Board's recommendations were sound.

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

Yes. I think staff at POLIS really care about their students and support them throughout the academic year. Mitigating circumstances and medical evidence were given due consideration.

**Other comments**

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

The Administrative team has been great. Highly efficient and helpful. Feedback on assessed work is thorough (both on paper copies and on Grademark). My one quibble is the practice of marking on a 20-90 scale. I understand this is a University regulation and is therefore unlikely to change any time soon, but, it is irregular. The British Politics team at Leeds is a strong one and the quality of student work is testament to their skill and hard work.

2 November 2015

Dear

**External Examiner's Report 2014 – 2015**

On behalf of the School, may I thank you for your Examiner's Report which was discussed by colleagues at the POLIS Taught Student Education Committee meeting on the 7 October 2015.

Your report was highly positive, identifying the strengths of the programmes you examined, the high quality of teaching and the excellence of the students' work. I am glad to hear that you received mentor support from another external examiner and found that helpful. Your comments about the efficiency of our administration and procedures are appreciated and a tribute to the hard work of the staff involved. You are not the first external examiner to raise the issue of marking on the 20 to 90 scale. However, as you noted yourself, this is a University policy and beyond the control of the school itself. I would say, in its defence, that academic staff here do understand it and are able to make sensible marking and grading decisions within the framework.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for the time and effort that you have invested as our external examiner in ensuring that the programmes and modules offered by POLIS are commensurate with the standards offered in comparable institutions.

Yours sincerely

**Head of School**

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