

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):	<i>International Development</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Politics of Aid; State and Society in Africa; Development Practice; Violence, Reconciliation in Africa; Gender and Violence; Land, fuel and agriculture; Development Approaches, Politics of Contemporary China; Comparative Politics of Pacific Asia; Dissertation
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

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?

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

I am completing 4 years and may take on a 5th. However, I have seen progressive improvement in the design of assessment, and also in the streamlining and refining of administrative processes.

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 for the programme are appropriate for the level of the award and standards are also 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 programme compares very well with international development in other institutions. The modules are highly contemporary and rooted in current research. Students are taught to critically analyse issues and to question standard assumptions. Progression between levels is clear.

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.*

There is continued refinement in assessment and each year new forms of assessment are introduced- for instance the 'policy brief' in The Politics of Aid module. This is to be encouraged to ensure that students develop other skills apart from standard essay writing. That said, the writing skills demonstrated through essays and exams are often very impressive.

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 on these modules generally perform very well as it shown by the distribution of marks. There is plenty of work in the good to excellent range, with very few students struggling to pass. English language skills are excellent overall but this may reflect a cohort with a large proportion of English as a 1st language.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

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.

There appears to have been a deliberate move to enhance feedback to students by deliberately giving students both 'feedback' and 'feedforward'. This was done in a careful and thorough way by all Lecturers. Some modules have also moved to mark online with gradebook. I think this is an excellent move and should be encouraged- again those who used it provided excellent feedback/forward to students.

Feedback surgeries are also offered to students- again an excellent innovation but I did notice that this was sometimes not applied consistently by different markers across the same module.

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.

All modules are research informed, which can be seen clearly in module reading lists and in the work that students produced. Lecturers are all active and engaged researchers and this shines through in their teaching.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

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

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- especially now that we have access to the VLE and can therefore see things like online communications with students, and turnitin scores for assignments.

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- everything is provided and communications are superb.

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- on the whole questions are excellent. Any minor suggestions that I have had are dealt with promptly and effectively.

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- again with being able to see the VLE , whole sets of work can be viewed. Marking is extremely detailed and thorough with annotations to the students throughout.

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

Yes- excellent choices of topics.

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- the Board is a highly streamlined but extremely thorough process. Indeed it is highly impressive compared to my own institutions.

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

Yes- the mitigating circumstance procedure is particularly detailed and obviously very supportive to students.

Other comments

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

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.

You make many positive points in your report and I am particularly pleased that you say you have seen progressive improvements across the four years you have been an external examiner. You picked out the new forms of assessment we have introduced and we will continue to look for ways of innovating in this area. You identified our Grademark pilot as an excellent move and we are continuing to try it out again this year. You described feedback surgeries as another excellent innovation, but noted that this was sometimes not applied consistently by different markers across a module and we will be reminding staff of the need for consistency in this respect.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for the time and effort that you have invested as our external examiner over the years 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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