

**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:	Physics and Astronomy
Subject(s):	<i>Physics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Physics, Physics with Astrophysics, Physics with Nanotechnology, Theoretical Physics. Medical Physics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc, MPhys

**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?*

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 degree schemes available at Leeds cover a broad range of undergraduate physics, with a range of available options. The aims and ILOs are appropriate and commensurate with the programmes offered.

### 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 suitable and comparable with other Russell Group universities. Both the examination papers and the general performance of students are similar to those experienced at other comparable institutions. The courses are accredited by the Institute of Physics.

### 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 examination papers and continuous assessment elements I looked at were appropriate. The balance between exam and continuous assessment contributions were acceptable. Classification of awards and the exam board was handled correctly. Students generally performed well, in line with my experience at <>.

### 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.*

The examination papers were appropriate and generally effective at probing the students' understanding and ILOs. I would recommend having more 'unseen' parts to questions, awarded 4-5 marks at the end of questions to test overall understanding of physics. A small number of papers seemed rather predictable based on previous years' papers. The section A and B structure is a helpful one in this regard.

### 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.*

There were few changes from last year. The balance of marks awarded for BSc and MPhys projects between Supervisors and Assessors was adjusted following recommendations from examiners last year.

### 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 are strong connections between research strengths and some of the taught modules. In my area of expertise relating to <> and <>, there is a strong synergy between teaching and research, which is welcomed.

### 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

The arrangements with <> have been fine. We consulted at a few points during the year by email. The practice of having the two external examiners attend on different dates is slightly unfortunate in that there is no opportunity to meet and discuss face to face.

## 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.*

The guidance was fine.

### 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. <> and colleagues were very helpful in providing information efficiently on request.

Graphical representation of the mark distribution for each module, requested last year, was very helpful in assessing overall performance.

### 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, these were provided. The level of questions was appropriate in papers generally – some requiring revision.

There were fewer minor typographical errors than last year.

Generally, the few issues that arose involved papers where several staff contributed questions. I have recommended to the department that there is greater clarity regarding the individual responsible for the correctness of each examination paper and the second person responsible for checking the paper.

### 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, all papers were made available. Scripts were clearly annotated and checking procedures were satisfactory.

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

There was a comprehensive range of final year projects. Assessment was good. The school might want to consider whether there is more scope for employing the full dynamic range at the higher end.

### 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 arrangements were good and well-administered by well-motivated staff. The Board of Examiners was conducted well with the overall classifications as well as individual cases handled appropriately.

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

Yes, the procedures used by the department are fine, in line with practice elsewhere.

**Other comments**

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

None.

20 November 2015

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Dear <<>>,

Thank you very much for your examiner's report, which was discussed at a recent School Taught Student Education Committee meeting. We are very pleased that you consider that our assessment methods and standards are appropriate.

We note that you have recommended (under point 4 – Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievements of the Aims and ILOs?) that we increase the proportion of “unseen” parts to the B-questions to make these less predictable. To this end we have instituted a revised procedure for checking exam papers, whereby academic staff will meet and go through the questions together. They will look at this aspect of the exam questions, and the meetings should also help to ensure that your second recommendation (point 12 – Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate?) is followed. The open forum will ensure that all staff who contribute questions to joint exam papers are involved in the checking.

University requirements that an external examiner sign off both module mark sheets and classification sheets unfortunately make it difficult to have both examiners present at the same time (your point 9) – unless one would like to visit twice in the space of a week!

We would like to thank you for your efforts to maintain and improve the standards of our assessment process, and look forward to your continuing assistance.

Best wishes,

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Head of School