

## 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 Earth and Environment
Subject(s):	<i>Structural Geology with Geophysics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc
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](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*

*One urgent matter I would raise relates to marking of project reports. All projects are double marked, with the majority being marked by a supervisor and an independent marker. A handful of projects are not marked by a supervisor. I would recommend consistency of marking across all projects; either a supervisor is always included in the marking team, or both markers are independent. In the latter case, it might be useful if the supervisor provided a brief written explanation of the background to the project and the level of initiative/independent working undertaken by the student.*

*I also noted a disparity in the level of supervision between some projects. In the most extreme cases, a student met only once with their supervisor, whilst another had weekly meeting with both internal and industry supervisors. Of course it is very difficult to create a "one size fits all" system given the wide range of projects (e.g. some projects being conducted at the Industry partner's premises). However, the course team might wish to consider introducing guidelines for a minimum number of supervision sessions.*

**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.*

Learning outcomes and 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 MSc in Structural Geology with Geophysics is unique in the UK. However, the aims and ILOs are commensurate with other MSc programmes.
  
- 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.*

A range of assessment methods are used (e.g. poster presentations, practical work, oral presentations, written reports); these are appropriate to the ILOs. The overwhelming majority of project reports and presentation demonstrated excellent three- and four-dimensional understanding of the geology. These skills are critical for any practising structural geologist and demonstrate the effectiveness of the teaching and assessment.
  
- 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 assessments I looked at gave the students opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs. Most of the cohort achieved Merit-level marks, with a handful achieving Distinction. One student failed the project. I concurred with these outcomes. This distribution of marks suggests that the assessments and marking criteria are appropriate.
  
- 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.*

This is my first year of examining.
  
- 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.*

The staff are research active and familiar with the latest developments in structural geology. Staff expertise is reflected in the broad range of projects offered. Staff were successful in obtaining cutting-edge, confidential datasets from industry partners (e.g. ION) for use in student projects. The quality of some projects was very high, with some elements being of publishable standard.
  
- 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

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

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?

This is my first year of examining. I understand that I will be asked to comment on draft examination papers during the next academic year.

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?

Yes, entirely appropriate and, in many cases, allowing students to follow specific interests/specialisms.

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

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

Overall this programme offers high quality training and occupies a unique niche in the UK. I have two minor comments, based on reading the project reports and discussion with the students. First, I suggest that students are encouraged to take a more critical approach when using kinematic/geomechanical modelling software, i.e. to be aware of the limitations/assumptions and how these factors might influence results. Second, I would encourage the course team to ensure students use the terms "stress" and "strain" appropriately (some students had a tendency to use these terms interchangeably).



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11 December 2015

**Re: Response to External Examiner's report – MSc Structural Geology with Geophysics**

Dear

Firstly, I want to sincerely thank you for your extremely helpful comments and feedback as well as your visit to Leeds during the presentations week, they are greatly appreciated.

I was happy to read from your report that overall you found the course appropriate in terms of the intended learning outcomes, that in general it is working well and that it offers a good learning experience based on staff expertise and industry connections.

We acknowledge that you have raised some concerns, to which we respond below.

You raised concerns that the projects are not necessarily marked by the primary or the secondary Leeds supervisor, and recommend that for fairness either one of the supervisors should always be included in the marking team, or alternatively both markers are always non-supervisors (unfamiliar with the project). I agree that the marking needs to be consistent in this way, and I will ensure that in the future one of the Leeds supervisors marks each project.

You also mentioned that some projects seemed to have received less supervision than others, some students only having met their supervisor once. As you say, it is difficult to make sure every student gets the same amount of supervision, and it is in practice impossible for us to control the supervision, especially in companies where many of the students are placed. Often, much depends on a student's initiative in seeking help and it is in fact expected that a student takes some responsibility in seeking supervision (to a degree). However, we agree that there is more that we can do in terms of providing guidelines to the supervisors regarding a minimum number of supervisory sessions. I will recommend to the project module leader that this is done for the forthcoming academic year, drawing on good practice elsewhere in the school.

You mention also that the students would benefit from more critical approaches to software and should be better aware of the limitations of the software and how these might influence the resulting models. Some students also seem to have misunderstood some basic concepts

(stress/strain), so we need to make more effort to ensure learning basic concepts throughout the course. These are valid points and we will aim at addressing them in the relevant modules during the year.

Finally, many thanks again for your contribution this year and in the coming years. We aim at maintaining and continually improving the high standards of the programme and greatly appreciate your time and efforts in helping us to achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

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