

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):	Sustainability and business
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Various modules on MSc programmes listed below
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc Sustainability (Ecological Economics); MSc Sustainability (Environmental Consultancy & Project Management); MSc Sustainability (Business, Environment & Corporate Responsibility)

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

No matter for urgent attention

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

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.*

Programme aims and learning outcomes are commensurate with level of award.

- 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.*

Programme aims and learning outcomes are comparable with other UK universities I am familiar with.

- 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.*

In general, the assessment methods are appropriate for the learning outcomes. The process of marking and of classifying awards was fair. Student feedback and the marks themselves testify to the high quality of the teaching on the programmes.

- 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. There were some very impressive results, in particular for the consultancy project.

- 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.

My comments from last year about possible over-examining no longer apply.

- 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.

Research by the School and particularly by the Sustainability Research Institute clearly infuses teaching.

- 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 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 material was sufficient and sent well in time.

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?

Yes

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. The combination of hard copy work and access via Blackboard worked well.

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

Yes, entirely. Some very good dissertations.

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. Many thanks to <> for managing this process.

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

Two small points the teams who work on the design of the respective programmes could consider. Neither is essential; there may of course be good reasons why matters are as they stand.

1. Reconsider the delivery of 5041 CSR Standards and Tools. I accept both the need to have this material on the programme and its rather dry nature. Yet, the teams could perhaps investigate opportunities to make delivery more lively and/or manage student expectations better. This should help improve student feedback for this module.

2. Consider combining 5092 and 5222 into one module, perhaps a 30 credit one. Both modules cover similar ground. From a student perspective, the need to have two separate modules may hence not be too clear.



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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

11 December 2015

Dear ,

Re: Response to External Examiner's Report - MSc Sustainability (Ecological Economics); MSc Sustainability (Environmental Consultancy & Project Management); MSc Sustainability (Business, Environment & Corporate Responsibility); 2014-15

Thank you very much for examining our MSc programmes for the last academic session once again. Your views are an essential part of our quality assurance mechanism and we very much welcome your input into our teaching processes.

Overall, it is encouraging that you felt that all the modules you scrutinised were of a good quality and that no urgent modifications are necessary. Thank you for noting that the assessed work, and marks awarded, suggest that learning outcomes are appropriate and teaching overall is high quality. You identified a couple of areas where there is scope to review and potentially improve our teaching and its impacts:

- SOEE5192 Project Management: Developing and Managing Environmental Contracts and SOEE5222: Project Management: Sustainability, People and Resources. This was the first year that we had delivered these updated modules (previously SOEE5191/SOEE5221) and we recognise that there is a real risk of duplication between these two linked modules, particularly when they are delivered over the same period of a few weeks. We have, thus far, shied away from the obvious step of creating one 30 credit module but this will be reviewed, as you suggest. One 30 credit module would be core to the MSc Sustainability & Consultancy programme and provide a quarter of the taught credits for that programme. The practical skills and techniques of project management which are covered in these modules are highly valued by students, but we know there is a challenge to ensure that the learning outcomes are commensurate with an MSc. In 2015/16, these modules are being delivered in different semesters, which may help to frame them as closely linked with one building on the other, rather than highlighting potential duplication which is the risk of concurrent delivery. In 2015/16 these modules will also have the same module manager (there were two module

managers for 2014/15) and we hope this will also help us build coherence and complementary teaching in both modules.

- SOEE5041: Standards and Tools for Business, Environment and Corporate Social Responsibility. We share the concerns you highlight given that the student module feedback is much less positive for this module than for others. You are correct to recognise that the subject matter – introducing and discussing around sixty distinct standards – is challenging to teach in a varied and engaging way, but this is a challenge we need to rise to! We are reviewing this module and moving to team teaching to ensure a variety of teaching styles and methods. We are also developing further the practical experience of audit and applying standards which was introduced in 2014-15.

We note your recognition of the efforts made to support you as external examiner more effectively and are glad that, in essence, you find the process effective. We intend to continue to improve the processes and facilities that support external examination.

We are very pleased to hear that you are satisfied with the overall quality of the Masters programmes and that you consider our programmes to be well designed, appropriate and generally well received by students. We have refreshed our Programmes for the 2015 entry and hope that you will still find evidence of this good design and structure in the two Programmes that we will be asking you to examine next year. These are the MSc Sustainability & Consultancy, replacing MSc Sustainability (Environmental Consultancy & Project Management) and the MSc Sustainability & Business, replacing the MSc Sustainability (Business, Environment & Corporate Responsibility).

We trust this response clarifies our direction forwards and provides useful information as background to your future scrutiny of our programmes. We are very grateful for your encouragement and very much appreciate your time and efforts in providing feedback that continues to make a positive difference to our programmes.

Yours sincerely,

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