

## 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:	History
Subject(s):	Medieval History
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in Medieval History
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

**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

N/a

**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

I have been impressed by the programme and its development over the four years of my appointment as external examiner. During that time the module coverage has continued to broaden, and the MA now offers exposure to a wide of periods, topics and historical methodologies. Academic standards and marking are rigorous, and the programme clearly provides excellent training and preparation for advanced studies in medieval history.

**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 intended learning outcomes for the programme are entirely appropriate and consistent with comparable institutions in the sector. The academic standards applied across the programme are rigorous and effective in training postgraduate medieval historians.

**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 meets national benchmarks and compares favourably with MA programmes offered in similar institutions, not least in the quality of skills training (in Latin and palaeography) provided and the range of options available to students.

**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 used in the programme are well designed, if a little less varied than the Medieval Studies modules. It is clear from the good standard of the work produced, and from the detailed feedback given to students, that the quality of teaching is high across the programme.

**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 general standard of work was again good this year, including some high quality dissertations. This indicates the effectiveness of the programme in training students to produce high-level independent research.

**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.*

New modules have helpfully increased the breadth of thematic options available to students.

**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.*

Every element of the programme integrates research. The historical modules are closely linked to the research interests of members of staff, and they all encourage reflection on and engagement with the sources for the study of the topic. The programme also includes rigorous training in the skills needed for research in medieval history, and an opportunity to practise and develop these skills in the dissertation or research project.

**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.*

The material provided by the university and the school of history was clear, comprehensive and helpful.

**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: I received all the assessed work for every module that I examined. In all cases, the scripts had been clearly and carefully marked and 2<sup>nd</sup> marked, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> marking helping to ensure high levels of consistency across the programme.

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

Yes: a range of interesting projects were devised which allowed students to pursue original and up-to-date avenues of research. The standard of assessment was rigorous and fair, thanks in part to diligent and thoughtful second marking.

**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 of Examiners was conducted professionally and the views of external examiners sought at every juncture. All the recommendations of the Board were fair and consistent with the university's procedures and policies.

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

Yes. These were all handled with sensitivity and with due attention to the university's procedures.

**Other comments**

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

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**From:**

**Sent:**

15 December 2015 16:52

**To:**

**Cc:**

**Subject:**

Re: External Examiner Report - MA Medieval History

Dear

Thank you for your external examiner's report for the MA in Medieval History for 2014-15, which I have recently received. I am very glad to read your very positive comments about the programme (including the "rigorous" and "effective" training components, the range of thematic choice availability to students, and the centrality of research-led teaching), as well as the quality of the individual work – particularly, as you note, with regards to the dissertations. I am also very pleased that our administrative processes appear to have worked well, and that marking had been undertaken by colleagues carefully and diligently (with second-marking helping to ensure "consistency across the programme.").

Since you have now concluded your term as external, I would like to thank you - on behalf of the School, and in particular our Medievalist colleagues - for your considerable efforts over the past four years. We have appreciated very much the professional and thorough way in which you have discharged your numerous responsibilities, and I know that the School has benefited greatly from your thoughtful and well considered advice.

With all best wishes,

Head of School  
Senior Lecturer in American History  
School of History  
University of Leeds