

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	History
Subject(s):	<i>History</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Race and Resistance
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.

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

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

- 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.*

These are fully appropriate
- 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.*

Yes
- 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 – long essays and a dissertation – are entirely appropriate and in line with practice elsewhere.

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, students were given adequate opportunities to demonstrate their skills. The quality of the work on display is very high in this year's cohort. Across the cohort, the group are comfortable discussing complicated abstract concepts, with summarising often complex literature and with the practices involved in original research. Average performance here is, I would say, better than those on comparable courses, at least in my experience.

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.

I was very impressed with this course last year and so made no recommendations for improvements to the programme or to individual modules. I am just as satisfied with the programme and modules this time around.

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 University of Leeds has considerable research strength in the fields of the history of the idea of 'race' and of racism, also the histories of resistance to racialised oppression, in colonial and postcolonial contexts. The history of race, racism and Civil Rights activism in the USA is a particular area of strength, and this very clearly shapes the teaching on the core course and the sorts of projects that some students have pursued for their dissertations. A recent strengthening in the area of Caribbean history, with the appointment of a new member of staff, very clearly benefits this course and has shaped the teaching on the core course and dissertation work in beneficial ways.

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 are clear and well-handled by administrative staff.

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?

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. This year there was a fairly small cohort, and so I think I have seen all of the work.

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

Yes. The topics are all appropriate, and it is apparent to me from the dissertations themselves and from the acknowledgements that students receive an admiral level of help and support when it comes to choosing and shaping their project and seeking out appropriate research materials. The marking is rigorous and the feedback to students clear and consistent. It is also very useful to have a record of why marks have been moderated in particular ways (when they have been moved up or down from that of the first marker). The marking is quite tough, at times. I would encourage all internal markers to be consistently rigorous or generous and be aware of the full range of marks above 70. A piece of work at 70 will inevitably be somewhat flawed ... there are, after all, a full 30 marks (nearly a third of the whole range) above that point.

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

This was my second year as external examiner for this MA, and my overall judgement of it remains unchanged from last year: It is in my judgement an excellent degree. It offers material that is stimulating to students and is delivered in a very attractive way, judging from the various module handbooks. Some of the best work that I moderated was of a very high standard, making good use of archival sources (especially in the dissertations) and working an advanced conceptual level. This is very clearly a course of study that facilitates good performances from students. Moreover, it is well managed. The process of internal marking and moderation is transparent and well documented. It was clear to see how tutors agreed their final marks. Overall, I have no substantive criticisms or suggestions for this course based on the work and documentation that I have seen.

The feedback on the essays was more clearly presented this year, I think: much of it word-processed and otherwise in clear handwriting. I would urge markers to be consistent in terms of the rigour of their marks but also in terms of the amount of written feedback they give. Some comments were slightly overwhelming in terms of dense detailed commentary and might have been more clearly structured or even pared down a little, so as to emphasise the key points for improvement. Other comments were a little vague and brief.

I was especially impressed by the quality of the dissertations this year. Staff must feel pleased that they have helped support work of such quality and proud of the students doing this work, who deserve full credit and recognition for producing work that is of a very high standard when compared with work at this level at other institutions and which can provide a very sound basis for PGR study.

From:

Sent:

15 December 2015 16:55

To:

Cc:

Subject:

Re: External Examiner Report - MA Race and Resistance

Dear

Thank you very much for your external examiner's report for the MA in Race and Resistance for 2014-15, which I have recently received. I am very pleased indeed that you continue to be impressed with this MA programme and that, in your view, the performance of the students was perhaps stronger than at comparable institutions. Given the overall aims of the degree programme, it was particularly rewarding to note your comments that, across the cohort, students were "comfortable discussing complicated abstract concepts, with summarising often complex literature and with the practices involved in original research." I also agree wholeheartedly that the MA programme has been strengthened with the recent, excellent, appointment in Caribbean history.

I also note your comments about the rigorous marking and clarity of feedback, as well as the helpful comments around the reconciliation of divergent marks. I accept your point that colleagues should be encouraged, where appropriate, to make use of the full range of marks available to them (especially 70+) and this is a matter that will be taken, in the first instance, to our School Taught Student Education Committee for discussion.

With all best wishes,

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