

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:	Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA programmes; modules PIED5225M; PIED5601M; PIED5626M; PIED5777M
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

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 Aims and ILOs were appropriate. The programmes and modules are well-designed, and the curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated.

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.*

Yes. They are comparable with similar programmes at other institutions.

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 are entirely appropriate. The students are clearly able and have been well-taught. The arrangements for marking and for classification of awards are very well thought-out, and the School follows its own procedures and those of the University very carefully and transparently. Members of staff, including especially the Exams Officer and administrative staff centrally involved in this process, deserve great credit.

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 opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. They wrote essays on a broad range of topics and were clearly well-equipped to do so and well-supervised in doing so. The staff of POLIS are to be commended on their support for their students.

I was a little surprised that, in a fairly large cohort of MA students, only a few had chosen to write dissertations in the area of political theory/political philosophy. However, this is not in any way a criticism of the School, which clearly supports students with interests in this area very well.

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.

The programme and modules were broadly the same as in the previous 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.*

Teaching is research-led and informed, to the benefit of the students. Staff in the area of political theory are passionate about their subject, and they manage to integrate their research interests with their teaching in a very effective way.

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. Briefing material was 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. This process was handled very well.

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.

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 conduct of the Board of Examiners meeting was exemplary.

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

Yes, this too was exemplary.

Other comments

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

I was again very impressed with the quality of student work that I saw, and the School's operation of its procedures. Students are able and well-taught, and pursue a range of interesting topics. Staff show expertise and care in their feedback on students' written work. The Exams team deserve great credit for the thoroughness, care, and efficiency with which the assessment process, including the Examiners' Board, is run.

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

T (Student Education Office)

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

18 December 2015

Dear

MA External Examiner's Report 2014 – 2015

On behalf of the School, may I thank you for your Examiner's Report which was shared with colleagues in the School.

Many thanks for your hugely positive report and the constructive comments you have on our programmes, assessment methods, and exam procedures. You can be sure we will be working hard to maintain our high standards in these areas. As you say, our students are able, well-taught, and pursue a range of interesting topics. The MA Political Theory programme is a strong example of our research-led Masters provision. You did say that you were surprised that only a few students wrote political theory/political philosophy dissertations, and I am sure that this reflects the relatively limited numbers on the MA Politics (Political Theory) route but we would have the capacity to supervise a larger number if students on other routes did opt to write theory related dissertations.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for the time and effort that you have invested as our external examiner in ensuring that the programmes and modules offered by POLIS are commensurate with the standards offered in comparable institutions.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

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