

## 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:

POLIS

Subject(s):

Security, Terrorism, Conflict, Politics

Programme(s) / Module(s):

PIED5213M  
PIED5323M  
PIED5537M  
PIED5405M  
PIED5410M  
PIED5510M  
PIED5563M

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

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 for the level of the award. The assessed work I saw was of an impressive standard and certainly commensurate with the awards made.
- 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, aims and ILOs remain comparable with those at other similar institutions in the UK.
- 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.*

Assessment methods are of the traditional exam and essay variety. It may be worth introducing a presentation element to widen the range of skills assessed and encourage student engagement. Student performance was, in many examples, hugely impressive and suggested that teaching and learning methods were of a very high standard.
- 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.*

Students were producing work of a high academic standard and many of them would be located in the highest band of attainment in comparable institutions. At the lower end of the marks, there were some examples of students with language difficulties offering rather derivative work. Nevertheless, the overall cohort were demonstrating the intended learning outcomes.
- 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.*

Module outlines were updated in an appropriate fashion but other than that there were no significant enhancements.
- 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.*

It is clear that students are taught by research-active staff who bring their own research passions and expertise to the curriculum. The feedback comments offer intelligent insights for improvement and engage with the student essays on a high intellectual level. A strong example of good practice.
- 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

**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.*

I had access to all necessary material in a timely fashion and have been kept well-informed of developments throughout the year.

**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. I have no concerns about the policies and procedures in place.

**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?**

I was provided with draft exam papers. Questions were appropriate. Module leaders might want to check that there is sufficient changes in wording over the years to avoid the temptation for people to source previous essays online.

**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?**

I was happy with the samples offered. The scripts were clearly marked and the comments offered exceptionally detailed.

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

Yes, the choice of subjects was appropriate. Methods and standards of assessment were also absolutely fine.

**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?**

The administrative arrangements were as always very professionally arranged. Due to a new baby I was unable to attend the meeting but did not have any significant remarks to relay as the standard of the modules I have overseen was very impressive.

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

I am very confident about the procedures in place and am sure that due consideration was given to these cases.

**Other comments**

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

It is important to reiterate how impressive the level of feedback is on the Masters course. Students get rigorous and carefully formulated responses to their work from the first and second marker along with clear guidance about areas of good practice and ways to improve their mark. Disagreements between markers are handled professionally and the correct mark is allocated after consultation. This deserves high praise. Overall, the course is clearly well-taught and students are learning and improving as they continue their studies. Very well done!

School of Politics and International Studies

University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT

T (Student Education Office)

E POLIS@leeds.ac.uk



**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.

Thank you for your very positive remarks about the quality of feedback and the working of the administrative arrangements in the School. You can be sure we will be working hard to maintain our very high standards here. You described assessment methods as of the traditional exam and essay type, though in fact, we have been innovating on this front (e.g. reports, policy briefs) and it may be that the sample you saw was more traditional. We will, however, be looking into the repertoire of assessment methods as part of our review of MA IR provision and will give serious attention to your idea of introducing a presentation element.

You did point to some examples of students with language issues. Students do enter with a minimum of IELTS 6.5 and are given extra in-session language training if needed. We also run classes in POLIS on methods and approaches for MA students which feature sessions on writing assignments. You said that essay questions were appropriate, but recommended that module leaders check that there is sufficient change of wording to avoid students sourcing previous essays online. We would hope that any attempts to source previous essays online would be detected by Turnitin. We also will be reminding colleagues to vary question wording as necessary.

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**

cc