

# 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):

PIED5400M	The Rise of China	
PIED5501M	Israel-Palestine Conflict	
PIED5564M	Counterterrorism	
PIED5578M	Theoretical Approaches in IR	
PIED5702M	Advanced Political Analysis	
PIED5777M	POLIS MA Dissertation	

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?

Yes.

#### 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.*

The sample of modules I saw suggested a programme with healthy levels of quality and diversity, contributing to a coherent and appropriate set of learning outcomes. The standards contained in the modules, both in planning and in student work produced, meet the standards appropriate for the intended level.

**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, the modules I saw meet this standard. The programme being run at Leeds is clearly on a par with national competitors of the top tier.

**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 on modules appeared to be a well-balanced: sufficient to allow development in response to feedback over time, but not excessive in total quantity. The overall quality of output from the students indicates a strong baseline of quality of the cohort, while also providing scope for the strongest students to excel. Work receiving grades at the top of the range was of impressive quality, and appropriately rewarded.

I have been particularly impressed during my time as second marker by the extensive and engaged nature of the feedback provided by staff for written work on the modules I have assessed, especially this year. It suggests that high-quality feedback is embedded as a norm in the culture of the School, and this is no doubt of great benefit to the students.

**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 generally displayed a solid core of knowledge of the debates and issues on which questions were set, and at the upper end there was evidence of levels of independent thought and analytical ability of the highest level.

**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.*

As noted, I thought the quality of written feedback stepped up across the board this year, from a starting point that was already of good quality. Given the number of students with which the School deals and the other pressures on time that exist, this is especially commendable.

**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.*

There is evidence of a clear connection between the research expertise of module leaders and the material taught/assessed on the modules, and the range of modules offered is noticeably connected to the research portfolio of staff.

**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, I was informed appropriately throughout.

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 was sent appropriate documentation in a timely way.

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, I was sent all appropriate material, my queries were addressed and my feedback duly responded to.

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 dept was well-organised in its dealings with me. I attended the June exam board, which was excellently run, but was obliged to submit my apologies for the October one..

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

Yes. My experience of the June board was that the School is exceptionally diligent in this area.

## Other comments

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

In my two years as examiner thus far, I have been extremely satisfied with the standard of work I have witnessed, and the very robust processes that the School has in place. I have seen a School operating at a high level of administrative competence and educational quality.

**School of Politics and International Studies**

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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 what is a highly positive report overall. I am particularly pleased that you singled out the high quality of feedback on students' work which you say was stepped up this year from an already high starting point. Thank you also for your positive comments on our assessment methods and the range of research-led modules. Your comment that the School's procedures are well organised and conducted obviously reflect the hard work, commitment and professionalism of the staff. You can be sure we will be working hard to maintain these high standards.

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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