

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:	Lifelong Learning
Subject(s):	<i>Foundation</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Interdisciplinary Science Foundation Earth and Environmental Science Foundation Preparation for HE International Foundation (Biology)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	

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?

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 very much enjoyed watching the transition from external delivery of the ISFY to internal delivery and the subsequent improvement in consistency of standards. The introduction of individual learner projects is also to be commended and is of great value in preparing students for study in HE. Suggestions and comments I have made over the years have been acted on and I have also benefitted from ideas to cascade back to my own Centre.

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 Learning Outcomes for all the awards are appropriate for the 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.*

While there are no benchmarks for Foundation Programmes in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, the aims and ILOs are appropriate and commensurate with other Foundation Programmes

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.*

Generally the assessment methods are innovative and varied, allowing students to demonstrate their potential in a range of ways. The only suggestion for improvement that I will make, again, is that the Biology for the International Programme is over-assessed. I would recommend that the number of assessments is reduced for these two modules.

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.*

I was able to discuss the issues of the particular cohort with the teaching staff. Although there were some issues with non-completion and failures, the staff had worked hard to enable all students to reach their potential

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

NA

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 Biology modules for the ISFY and EEFY are particularly well marked with supportive, constructive feedback to students. This is mirrored in the good student feedback on the modules. The Chemistry modules have improved greatly over the four years of examining and the students are very complimentary about the tutor's enthusiasm. In the PHE course the majority of modules have excellent feedback from the students. Any of the few suggestions I have made in the past have been acted on.

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.

I would particularly commend the use of independent research projects in the courses – they are an excellent way to induct students into the community of practice of a research-intensive university.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

NA

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

NA

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.

Sufficient

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 I received the papers, the questions and levels were appropriate

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 had sufficient work and the scripts were clearly marked

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

NA

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?

All of the arrangements were very good, I attended the meeting and the recommendations of the Board were satisfactory

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

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18th December 2015

Dear <>,

External Examiner's Report for 2014-15

Over the last few months we have been reviewing reports from our External Examiners along with feedback from students, including the results of the National Student Survey of finalists and the University's Programme Survey which covers those in other years of study. I am now writing to each Examiner both to respond to reports individually and to give an overview of the outcomes of this annual review.

Thank you for your report this year which, as always, gives us a clear sense of your observations and their grounding in the close knowledge of the field that you bring from your own academic practice. It is good to have confirmation that aims and learning outcomes remain appropriate for foundation level provision and that you judge assessment methods to be "innovative and varied, allowing students to demonstrate their potential in a range of ways". We also appreciate your more detailed comments on assessment, marking and feedback in which you highlight good practice in feedback from tutors on a number of modules and commend the use of independent research projects as "an excellent way to induct students into the community of practice of a research-intensive university". As in previous years, colleagues appreciated the opportunity to reflect with you during your visit to Leeds and to consider the challenges of an intensive programme for widening participation students which, very regrettably, result in non-completion for some learners. It is encouraging to find that you feel that staff have "worked hard to enable all students to reach their potential".

Given that this is your final report we have the benefit of your reflections on four years as our External Examiner. As you observe, your period of appointment has coincided with considerable change, especially for science programmes which we took over from delivery in an FE setting. We are glad that you have seen positive signs of progress, in for example "consistency of standards" and that you feel that your suggestions and comments have been acted on.

In terms of further development for the coming year, we note your view that the International Biology modules are over-assessed. I can confirm that this point has been addressed with the new tutor who is now teaching these modules and that the assessment regime for the modules has been amended. We shall evaluate these changes over the year both in relation to student feedback and outcomes.

Alongside your own report, we have also received observations from our other External Examiners and feedback from students through the NSS and the University's Programme Survey. We are encouraged to see consistently positive messages from all of these sources and look, of course, both to build on good practice where this is identified and to address any issues that are raised. Please find attached, for your information, a summary of our external examiners' reports along with our action plan for 2015-16 which captures our student scores and feedback and sets out the key developments that we are looking to take forward in the current year.

It remains for me to thank you for the four years in which you have worked with us so effectively as External Examiner for our Science Foundation programmes and PHE. These have been times of significant development for us and it has been invaluable in this process to have the reference point of your thoughtful and informed perspective. Colleagues, I know, have particularly appreciated the opportunity for conversation with you during your visits to Leeds and we have benefitted, too, for your encouragement for us to take a greater part in the annual Foundation Year Conference.

For myself, I look forward to opportunities when we may continue to catch up with each other through lifelong learning networks and hope, in the meantime, that your work continues to flourish at <>.

Yours sincerely,

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Director

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