

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:	Business School
Subject(s):	<i>Economics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Economics, Economics and Finance
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

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 that requires an urgent attention.

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?

Not Applicable

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

Not Applicable

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 MSc in Economics and Finance and MSc in Economics both are well designed programmes. Both these offer students a high level of technical skills and develop a broader understanding of the subject area commensurate with the degree awarded.

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.*

The Aims and ILOs are in line with other universities. The choice between core and optional courses is well balanced with the focus on Micro Macro and Econometrics is indicative of a good programme. I also liked that the programme combines both heterodox and mainstream economics. This is a great strength and there aren't many programmes which covers such breath of topics. However, some of the courses could increase their level a bit. In particular, LUBS 5116M although very interesting should endeavour to pitch the course at a higher level appropriate for Master's students. I also think the programme would be enhanced if there are few more optional courses covering topics such as Business Cycles, and Behavioural Economics

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.*

As in previous years the programme continues to use a wide variety of assessments from group works, to final exams. Again this is a great strength of the programme. The marking had been careful and thorough. Some of the courses such as LUBS 5134M and LUBS 5104M used the full range of marks, which is commendable. Quite a few of courses also use a 100% exam based assessment. While this might be appropriate in some contexts I would suggest convenors to think carefully whether formative and summative assessment can be used to enhance students learning. I would also suggest that while setting exams, if possible, convenors assign marks for the sub-parts of the questions even if it is to assign equal marks to the sub-parts.

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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.*

On the whole the performance of the students was in the normal range. There seems to be adequate spacing between the assessments in each course so that students received feedback from their previous assessment before the next assessment. However I felt that students struggled with essay based questions so that is something that needs to be looked at carefully in terms of providing them better assistance with essay based questions. This is where formative assessments are useful.

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

Not Applicable

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 am greatly pleased that on the whole the feedback to students have improved, although for LUBS 5134M I didn't notice any comments or feedback on the assignments.

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 courses covers important journal papers and encourages a wider reading. The core courses are particularly provides a solid coverage of the key theories. I also saw evidence of using the theory to analyse topical issues, which helps students put the theory to practice.

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

Not applicable

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

Not Applicable

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 they were 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.

I received all the information I needed and asked for. <>, the Programme Director and <> the Administrator, were both extremely helpful.

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 all exams and answer keys were provided which I vetted. The nature and level of questions were appropriate and my comments had been taken into consideration.

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 did go through a good chunk of the assessment which gave me a good idea of the level of the work of the students. Most courses also did provide comments on the exams which made it easy for me to see the justification for the marks. I would appreciate if all the courses could do so. For instance, I couldn't see any feedback for the assignments for LUBS 5134M.

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

The dissertations this year was of a particularly high standard. Most of the dissertations were empirical in nature and I thought the level of analysis was very sophisticated. The marks awarded were appropriate

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

I think the programme has sufficient amount of diversity to offer specialisation in different pathways. There is a great demand for students for specialist programmes. The proposal of having specialist pathways within the same programme would address that well without really having too much resource implication. I had discussed this with the Programme Director <>.

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08 April 2016

Dear <<>>,

Thank you very much for your recent Examiner's Report for the MSc in Economics and the MSc in Economics and Finance.

We are very pleased with your comments on our programmes, especially in relation to the development of technical skills and broadening of students' understanding of the subject area, the breadth of topics covered, the choice between core and optional modules and the balanced plurality of economics content, involving both mainstream and heterodox economics. Your comments also provide a rewarding acknowledgement of the effort made by our teaching team to incorporate relevant and contemporary research.

We are happy that you regard our assessment methods to be appropriate and diverse, along with the nature and level of exam and assessment questions. We are very pleased that you consider our marking to be both careful and thorough. **We will relay your valuable suggestions about assessment methods and especially that convenors should look to assign marks for sub-parts of examination questions if at all possible and also to encourage module leaders to use the full range of marks when marking examinations and coursework as appropriate.**

We are delighted that you see broad improvements in our feedback mechanisms to students. Under the current feedback guidelines, the minimum expectation is that individual and generic feedback will be provided on all assessed pieces of coursework. Therefore, we expect improvements in relevant modules particularly in terms of summative assessment feedback, including for LUBS5134M. **Furthermore, we much appreciate your help in suggesting changes to enhance our essay-based modules, which students have found particularly challenging. For LUBS5116M, the module leader plans to bring forward the coursework to facilitate a feedback session for students and is looking to incorporate more formative assessments as appropriate. In response to a concern raised about the general level of this module, the module leader has commented as follows:**

'The course aims to give students an introduction to a wide range of theories and help them apply theories to policy and real world problems. However, students have indicated previously that this module was too challenging. In response, the teaching content has been modified somewhat to help students succeed on this demanding essay-based module. Any further specific suggestions for improvement would be very gratefully received.'

Thank you for your helpful suggestion regarding the incorporation of specialist pathways within the MSc Economics programme. We agree that specialisation may help further distinguish our Masters programme, but we need to very carefully consider the restrictions and constraints this would place on students and more generally on the programme.

Your highly positive evaluations of our Masters programmes and teaching staff are very much appreciated. We are most grateful for your helpful feedback and guidance as we continue to look at ways of improving our successful programmes.

Yours sincerely,

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