

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:	Leeds University Business School (LUBS)
Subject(s):	<i>Management</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BSc Business Analytics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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

No.

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. The administration and associated support was first-class – it was very impressive indeed.

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.*

I found the aims and ILOs to be highly appropriate in relation to the programme and modules that I examined. I believe that the standards of the programme and modules that I examined were highly appropriate for the award and award elements that were under consideration.

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 – I believe that they are commensurate with other HEIs and HE 'industry' standards.

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.*

From the coursework assignments and exams scripts that I have examined, I believe that the assessment methods are appropriate and rigorous in terms of their structure and content. I also believe that the arrangements for marking and the classification of awards are generally appropriate and well-founded, as are the teaching, learning and assessment methods.

However, there weren't many 'first*' (80% and above) marks for overall modules and for individual module assessment elements, with marks typically not being higher than 77%. This made me wonder whether perhaps the upper range of the '20-90' university marking scale was not always being applied in practice by markers?

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. I thought that the standard of student work was generally very high, with some really excellent pieces of coursework and some good exam essays. Not being involved in other Business Studies courses/programmes, I cannot comment on the relative performance of LUBS students to students on comparable courses at other HEIs.

From the coursework assignments and exams scripts that I have examined, I believe that the standard of students at LUBS is very good.

I did not notice any weakness in the cohort as a result of the documents that I examined.

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.

N/A – this is my first year of external examining at LUBS.

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.

In the scripts that I examined, I didn't see any obvious evidence of the influence of research, although I'd imagine that the final year modules that I examined are based around the research interests and expertise of the lecturers teaching on those modules.

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 was provided with all necessary information and documentation all throughout the current academic year, including at the Validation Day and the Exam Board meetings.

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.
However, it would have been beneficial to have been given the module programmes/catalogues/outlines/descriptors as part of the paperwork I was given when I was at LUBS on the Validation Day. As it transpired, I brought such documents with me to the Validation Day and so could refer to them whilst doing the examining.

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 provided with such documents and I approved the majority of them without suggested amendments. In the few cases where I thought the documents needed to be altered in some way, my comments were adopted by the relevant lecturer.

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 was provided with a very good selection of exam scripts and coursework assignments, which allowed me to evaluate the overall standard of student work.

However, whilst all the exam scripts I saw were clearly marked with at least one tick on each page, there were no written comments on any of those scripts. I believe that it would have been beneficial (for me, and for students and staff when students come to staff to discuss their exam performance) if there had been a sentence or two of comment at the end of each exam essay so as to summarise the marker's view of how the essay addressed the set question. Moreover, it would have been good from my perspective to have the mark awarded to each question written on the script at the end of each question so I could easily relate the comments of the marker to the mark awarded without having to look at the front sheet of the exam paper continually.

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

N/A – I didn't examine any dissertations.

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 – everything in this respect was fine. I was able to attend the Board of Examiners' meeting and was happy with the recommendations of the Board.

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

Yes – everything in this respect was fine.

Other comments

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

There were a great many positives about my first year of external examining at LUBS and I was generally very impressed with the way in which student assessment is conducted and administered. For example, I particularly liked the fact that strict prescribed marking criteria (per degree classification, including the 'first*' classification) were adhered to closely for coursework assignments and exam essays.

Also, I liked the fact that exam markers are encouraged to provide generic feedback to students on their exam performance via the university's VLE system. However, it would have been good to see more in the way of consistency among markers in respect to such feedback, as it was not provided for all the modules (that had an exam) that I was responsible for examining.

In my experience, it is important for student satisfaction and for professional esteem and validity for students to receive information consistently across modules. Thus, any kind of lack of consistency is a quite negative thing for me.

I also liked the fact that there was clear evidence of written dialogue between first-markers and checker-markers (quality assurers) for exams and coursework assignments. However, such dialogue was not evident for all the modules that I examined, thus further emphasising the need for consistency.

I noticed that there seemed to be quite a few students with '9' marks for modules (e.g., 59, 69) and wondered why a categorical marking system, with a scale typically comprising high (e.g., 68), middle (e.g., 55) and low (e.g., 42) marks within each degree classification, didn't appear to be in use within LUBS. Aside from eliminating the frustrating and arguably unfair '9' marks (which aren't the result of a combination of marks on different assessment elements of modules, that is), using such a scale might result in more 'first*' marks being awarded due to having fewer possible marks in the 70s (e.g., 72, 78) and greater distance between the marks in the 'first' (e.g., 72, 78) and 'first*' (e.g., 82, 85, 90) classifications.

Although I thought that the written feedback by markers on the coursework assignments that I examined was fair and generally quite informative, I was quite surprised to not see any evidence of feedback with respect to how students could improve future similar assignments (e.g., "Future such assignments would be improved by doing X, Y and Z"). In my experience, students are as keen to know what kind of things they need to do to get better marks in future as they are to know what they did well and where they went wrong on previously-submitted assignments. Thus, I'd recommend that markers are encouraged to include this aspect in their written overall feedback on coursework assignments in future.

Although the briefs for the coursework assignments (documents stating what the assignments entail) that I saw were quite explicit in stating what students needed to do on the assignments, I was quite surprised not to see anything obvious on what things students would need to do to get good marks as opposed to getting less-good marks (e.g., excelling vs. passing). In my experience, it is important to specify such information on assignment briefs so as to properly inform students about the criteria that distinguishes good from less-good students in terms of their academic performance, as doing this can help avert or deal with subsequent student complaints as well as increasing transparency in general.

On a final, more administrative note, at the Validation Day, I would have liked to have had the descriptive statistics regarding student performance on the cross-semester modules that I examined in the paperwork for each semester's part of the modules rather than in the paperwork for only one semester's part of the modules (e.g., semester 2).

Leeds University Business School

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W business.leeds.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Thursday, 28 January 2016

Reference: External Examination Report 2014-15

Dear

Thank you very much for your Examiner's Report for the Management programme. We are very pleased with your comments on our programme. In particular, I am pleased that you found everything to be appropriate and clear, in this your first year.

We noted the following comments:

- **There weren't many 'first*' (80% and above) marks for overall modules and for individual module assessment elements, with marks typically not being higher than 77%. This made me wonder whether perhaps the upper range of the '20-90' university marking scale was not always being applied in practice by markers?**

Response: We encourage our staff to use the full range of marks, and will remind staff to apply this.

- **In the scripts that I examined, I didn't see any obvious evidence of the influence of research**

Response: We note your comment regarding the lack of evidence of influence of research in your sample. We encourage module teams to make the links between research and teaching, and shall remind staff of this.

- **It would have been beneficial to have been given the module programmes / catalogues / outlines / descriptors as part of the paperwork I was given when I was at LUBS on the Validation Day.**

Response: We note your comment that it would be useful to receive course information in advance.

- **Whilst all the exam scripts I saw were clearly marked with at least one tick on each page, there were no written comments on any of those scripts. I believe that it would have been beneficial (for me, and for students and staff when students come to staff to discuss their exam performance) if there had been a sentence or two of comment at the end of each exam essay so as to summarise the marker's view of how the essay addressed the set question. Moreover, it would have been good from my perspective to have the mark awarded to each question written on the script at the end of each question so I could easily relate the comments of the marker to the mark awarded without having to look at the front sheet of the exam paper continually.**

World Ranked – Triple Accredited – Award Winning

Response: It is Business School policy to ensure that all examination scripts are annotated. We shall remind staff of this requirement.

- **There seemed to be quite a few students with ‘9’ marks for modules (e.g., 59, 69) and wondered why a categorical marking system, with a scale typically comprising high (e.g., 68), middle (e.g., 55) and low (e.g., 42) marks within each degree classification, didn’t appear to be in use within LUBS. Aside from eliminating the frustrating and arguably unfair ‘9’ marks (which aren’t the result of a combination of marks on different assessment elements of modules, that is), using such a scale might result in more ‘first*’ marks being awarded due to having fewer possible marks in the 70s (e.g., 72, 78) and greater distance between the marks in the ‘first’ (e.g., 72, 78) and ‘first*’ (e.g., 82, 85, 90) classifications.**

Response: We encourage our staff to use the full range of marks, and will remind staff to apply this. The School has a policy that we disallow the use of 39 at undergraduate level. We shall take your comments to the Assessment and Feedback Working group and share your comments with The Assessment Standards Committee.

- **I was quite surprised to not see any evidence of feedback with respect to how students could improve future similar assignments**

Response: The Assessment Standards Committee is currently addressing standards and consistency of feedback; we shall share your comments with this Committee.

- **I was quite surprised not to see anything obvious on what things students would need to do to get good marks as opposed to getting less-good marks (e.g., excelling vs. passing).**

Response: This year we have introduced an assessment criteria matrix which should address this point.

On behalf of the Division may I again thank you for your suggestions and comments. We greatly appreciate the assistance you have given to us, and I look forward to meeting you once more at next year’s examination board.

Yours sincerely

Dean, Leeds University Business School