

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:	PRHS
Subject(s):	<i>History of Science</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	HPSC modules 2111, 2115, 2301, 3111, 2307, 3312
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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?

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.*

ILOs are appropriate for the modules and for the programme components which they represent.

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, these are comparable with ILOs elsewhere.

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 this year were all very traditional (essays, tests and exams) and were appropriate to the ILOs. I had some concerns with the proportion of assessment being carried out by multiple choice/short answers in one module as I thought this method tested factual knowledge at the expense of other ILOs. I hope that the weighting will be reduced next year.

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.*

It might be good to diversify assessment methods a little (they were more diverse last year) in order to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements in different ways. There was no cohort as such (i.e. no single History of Science programme); the results across the combined modules which I saw were bunched quite tightly around the upper second band, with some lower seconds and firsts. There was not much by way of really outstanding achievement. It was quite surprising that there were not any thirds.

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.

none

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 modules I saw had quite well-established content.

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

Appointed as mentor but no action as yet.

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, flawless.

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, no problems at all.

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 fine.

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, all fine. Marking was exemplary – marks were thoroughly justified and explained through comments.

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

Yes. I would like to see more explicitness about the difference in kind expected for shorter and longer dissertations. Specifically, shorter dissertations seem to be treated as extended essays, while longer ones require original archival (or primary) research. This is a perfectly good distinction but it could be made clearer to students and markers.

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, flawless.

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

The process had been changed this year. Most cases had been pre-decided by a special panel (all in the negative, I believe) whilst a last few difficult cases were brought to the Exam Board. I would encourage PRHS to decide *all* cases for itself; since the board could not see the details of the cases it was really not possible for us to comment on them. I would further suggest that one external examiner be invited to scrutinise this process. I noted that cases were only considered or actioned where it made a difference to the student's classification. At <> we consider all cases, since transcript details are increasingly important to students in their on-going employment opportunities. Leeds might consider whether they wish to do the same.

Other comments

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

The choice of modules on offer adds up to a rather patchy overall coverage of History of Science, with some narrow and deep modules. Although there is no History of Science programme, one might nevertheless hope to see a better breadth of the school's collected scholarship represented in the module offering.