

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:	Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
Subject(s):	Religion
Programme(s) / Module(s):	THEO 2030 Hebrew Scriptures THEO 2000 Students into Schools THEO 2300 Studying Religion in Context THEO 2650 Introduction to John's Gospel THEO 3040 Ideologies of the Hebrew Bible THEO 3400 Dissertation
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

No matters of urgent attention were noted

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?

No

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.*

In all the modules which I examined the Learning Outcomes were entirely appropriate for the module in question; the programmes themselves seemed well structured and students were given clear guidance as to what was expected of them.

The standard of classification and assessment were broadly in line with comparable institutions.

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 aims and Intended Learning Outcomes were in line with the national subject benchmark

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 School of Philosophy and Religion is to be commended for the wide variety of assessment methods in the various modules. The arrangements for the marking of the modules (some completed online prior to the visit, others were examined during the visit itself) were perfectly satisfactory as were the methods by which the awards were classified.

The overall student performance suggested that the teaching was of a high standard, and the methods of assessment were entirely appropriate for the modules in question.

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, the students were given ample opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs and to provide considered reflection on a range of topics.

Some of the exam scripts and essays were of exceptional quality and the questions were such as to enable students to demonstrate their intellectual skills. The weaker candidates tended to include irrelevant material and provided insufficient critical engagement with secondary sources.

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.

This was my first year of examining.

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.

It was clear that the research expertise of the individual module leaders had been fed in to the lectures on a range of topics. Students were also given the opportunity to undertake their own research especially in the module 'The Religious Mapping of Leeds' and in the dissertations.

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.

I was provided with a copy of the documentation relevant for each of the modules which I examined. My role and responsibility were clearly explained to me before the examining process commenced.

- 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, this was entirely satisfactory.

- 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?**

I was provided with draft examination papers for some of the modules which I examined and was able to make some suggestions and comments.

- 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 good cross section of exam scripts and essays which gave a good reflection of the work done for all degree classifications. One of the strengths of the School was the fair and detailed comments provided by the internal markers and the monitor's report.

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

Yes the titles for the dissertations were appropriate as were the methods and standard of assessment

- 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?**

The exam board was conducted with exemplary skill by the examination officer; all cases which required special consideration due to mitigating circumstances were dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner. I was able to attend this, my first, exam board meeting, and was entirely satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

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

Yes, see under 15.

Other comments

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

1. Perhaps internal examiners should consider using a broader range of marks when it comes to awarding a First class honours; some of the essays were (rightly) described as excellent and comprehensive but were still only awarded about 72%
2. Students should be encouraged to be consistent in their referencing – some were using the Harvard system others footnotes (e.g. in Studying Religion in Context module) – it would be good to have consistency across the board.
3. I did raise some issues at the exam board concerning the way marks were awarded in the Religious Mapping of Leeds module (where students worked in groups) but was assured that this was something that was currently under discussion.
4. Perhaps the requirement to write 14000 words in the Year 3 dissertation module was rather too ambitious and this may be why comparatively few seem to have chosen this module. Perhaps the word count should be in the range of 10-12000 words.

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:	Faculty of Arts, School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
Subject(s):	<i>Religious Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Theology and Religious Studies (and joint honours) Modules: God, Sex and Gender in Africa (level 3), Hindu Tradition to 1600 CE (level 2 and level 3), Buddhism (level 2), Religions and Global Development (level 3), Religion, Gender and Society (level 2), External Placement (level 3), The Sikh Tradition, Pentecostalism as a Public Religion in Africa, Dissertation (20 and 40 credits)
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

Nothing to report

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

Overall the experience has been very positive.

1) Development within the School:

During the four years the School was in transition due to the merger of three disciplines. The process of harmonising procedures took a while but has been successful. While teaching and assessment standards achieved always the national benchmark, some differences (e.g. between TRS and philosophy) were visible during the exam board meetings. These differences have been harmonised now, in particular with regard to the consideration of mitigating circumstances and other procedures.

2) Development within TRS

During my time I observed the arrival of new members of staff and was impressed by the internal procedures within TRS in helping new members to understand internal procedures about marking, teaching and the use of VLE. A similar structure was in place to monitor and support teaching assistants. It was also good to observe how new members of staff were eased in by their

predecessors whom they replaced. While students experienced a continuation of teaching topics, new members were also enabled to develop new topics that enriched the subject.

3) Development of Teaching Curriculum

The departure of several members of staff (two retired and one left) caused some changes during the four years. However, the overall profile of TRS and its focus on contemporary issues in religious studies remained. It was good to see, for instance, that Sikhism, which was taught in my first year by a member of staff who then retired, is back on the teaching grid. Africa, another topic of a now retired former member of staff is also taught by a new member though with a slightly different focus.

Another strength of TRS at Leeds is the engagement with work placements, religious mapping of Leeds and other modules that enable students to gain further skills outside the university. These modules have been revised slightly in the last years with regard to the ethical research framework which is crucial for all interaction with religious communities. These changes will enhance the students' experience even further and prepare them for postgraduate research as well as work outside the university.

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 was satisfied that the programme covered the ILOs of the BA programme Theology and Religious Studies. The modules on the whole reflect a standard that is appropriate for the BA award and also enable students to achieve the adequate learning outcomes.

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 TRS national benchmark expectations were met. The School offers students a rich variety of topics, both thematic and with focus on selected religions. Students gain an important insight in the wider field of contemporary religions.

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 methods are diverse and ranged from examination/essay, extended essay, presentations, team work, reports, logs, dissertations and more. They introduce students to a range of methods that will further their skills.

On the whole I was satisfied with the variety of the assessments and the standard the students demonstrated.

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 satisfied with academic standards demonstrated by the students. I noticed a good awareness of theoretical understanding on level 3. Despite some weak essays I can confirm that on the whole students demonstrated good understanding and writing skills.

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.

The School introduced a new module and another module was re-introduced though in a revised nature. Both additional modules enhanced the range of topics offered to students and enriches the contemporary focus of the BA programme.

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 are firmly linked to the research area of the module leader and students respond well to the link (e.g. by referring to publications of the lecturer).

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.

Yes, I received all material.

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.

While overall I received the relevant material, it was less efficient in semester 2 due to a change of exam officer and I had to ask for additional information. Each of my requests for additional information was very effectively handled by the administrator and I received the papers without any delay.

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?

In semester 1 I received all draft exam paper but not the essay assignments, and I was informed that it is no longer policy to send out essay assignments. In semester 2 however I did not see the draft exam papers. While on the whole the exam papers were appropriate, I had some (minor) problems with one set of questions and raised them at the board.

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?

I was able to sample most papers myself via Blackboard. However, in semester 2 there was a problem with the VLE access (my account was cancelled by the IT office) which caused some delay and stress as I had less time for evaluating the work before travelling to Leeds. In addition I received in semester one hardcopies of exam papers and other material not assessed via VLE by mail and can confirm that they were sufficiently sampled. In semester 2 I was given all exam scripts with feedback and moderation sheets upon arrival in Leeds. On the whole I was satisfied with the procedure, despite the glitches in semester 2. However, I would welcome a more harmonised way to provide feedback on VLE as each lecturer had his/her own way to provide feedback.

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

Yes, the dissertation topics were all appropriate for Religious Studies and the dissertations were assessed according to the academic standard

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?

Overall the administrative arrangements were satisfactory. The main administrator was always helpful and very efficient in getting back to me.

I attended the Board of Examiners on June 24 and was satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

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

The School developed a new way to consider mitigating circumstances which is very efficient and guarantees confidentiality. I am confident that special circumstances were considered appropriately during marking and at the Board.

Other comments

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

n/a