

## 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):	MA Religion and Public Life, and MA in Religious Studies and Development Studies, MA Theology and Religious Studies  Modules: THEO5050 Religions & Global Development, THEO5175 Muslims, Multiculturalism and the State, THEO5100 Contemporary Issues in Theology, Religion and Gender, THEO5325 Religion and Society: Research Process and Methods, THEO5330 Religion, Politics and the Future, THEO5355 Religion, Society and Public Life, THEO5420 Research Project, THEO5615 Master Level Supplementary Study and MA dissertations (THEO5075, THEO 5580 and THEO5900)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

**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](mailto: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.

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. A lack of training in methodology was addressed and a new module developed. The use of undergraduate modules and supplement them with an additional essay was this year not very successful and might be addressed in future. Overall, however, the Mas have been successful and led to some impressive dissertations.

## 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 MA programme Theology and Religious Studies. The modules on the whole reflect a standard that is appropriate for the MA 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 benchmark expectations are met. The aims and ILO are in line with the national benchmark statement for Master level. The Department offers students a good mixture of comparative topics and themes that reflect the points made in the TRS Benchmark statement as well as the Master level statement.

**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 general assessment method is essays which is the norm in other MA programmes in the UK. In most modules students have the freedom to create their own topic in order to precede their own research interest. However, this is carefully monitored by the module tutor.

**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 the academic standard. The essays and dissertations demonstrated deep interest in the topic of the module and a good engagement with the academic literature.

**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 (on methodology) which had very good outcomes and is a great addition to the 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 influence of research was in particular visible in the dissertation module but also in the research project and methodology 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

## 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, 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.*

Yes, I received the material.

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?

N/A (no exam papers set for any MA module)

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 received all coursework for the modules listed above on paper, together with both feedback sheets and the agreed mark.

I was very impressed with the feedback process. I received extensive comments of both markers as well as an explanation how an agreement was reached in case of a discrepancy. It shows that good procedures are in place and that they work.

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 the disciplines.

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?

I was not able to attend the Board of Examiners on October 26 but submitted my comments on the coursework and dissertations to the exam officer in advance of the board.

The papers arrived quite late and I had to rush working through them, in particular as I received more than twice the amount of coursework and modules than before. However, I was informed that the late delivery was due to staff illness and therefore unavoidable.

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

No case discussed

## Other comments

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

n/a