

**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:	English
Subject(s):	<i>English Language</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	English Language English Language and Literature English Language and Linguistics
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](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*

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?*

**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*

As this is a premature end to my appointment (after two years, instead of four), there has been relatively little time for major change. However, I have observed a greater variety in the language modules being offered and in the types of assessment being used. It is possible that this is a by-product of the modules I happen to have seen in each of these two years.

## 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 ILOs were appropriate to the modules and programme and appropriate standards were observed.

**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, your English Language programmes are comparable with those at other institutions and meet national benchmarks.

**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.*

In general, there are no concerns here. I have sent some minor module-specific comments to the School.

**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, on the whole. I saw a wider range of methodologies being used by students this year.

**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 use of presentations, pamphlets and posters is encouraging your students to develop a range of skills. It is clear that modules which include the possibility of creative thinking are particularly engaging.

**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.*

I saw four sample dissertations from 2013-14. These were varied in topic, demonstrating a good level of originality in the selection and design of research projects. Critical Discourse Analysis seems to have been the preferred approach, but a sample of this size may not be representative. Again, the marks were appropriate and the feedback detailed and constructive. The best dissertation I saw was extremely accomplished.

**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.

- 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.

- 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 made some minor comments which were, I think, taken into account.

- 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 very impressed by the quality and clarity of the feedback offered.

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

Yes and yes (see also 7)

- 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. The administration of this process has been exemplary.

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

I was not able to observe this in person, but reference was made to mitigating circumstances during the exam board and these were taken into account in determining degree classifications.

## Other comments

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

I am sending some more detailed feedback to the School on individual modules. It's good that your classification system is flexible in recognising students' strengths across the second and third year. This must motivate your students towards continued improvement in their final year. I was pleased to hear that you had reconsidered your policy of excluding students with penalties from consideration as borderline cases. The penalty of exclusion for cheating in an exam, which was discussed over dinner, seems extreme in comparison to the penalty for cheating in a piece of coursework (a zero or 40 for that module, depending on the severity of the offence). Without in any way condoning cheating, I think you could be more humane in allowing your students to make good on their mistakes.

27 February 2016

Dear

Thank you for your report as External Examiner on our BA programmes for 2014-15.

Your report has now been considered by the School's Taught Student Education Committee and I have incorporated the committee's response into my comments here.

We are pleased that you have found no cause for concern in our assessment methods, but have observed 'a wide range of methodologies in the work [you] sampled'. We are particularly pleased you saw demonstration of a 'good level of originality' in the dissertations and that you were 'impressed by the quality and clarity of the feedback offered'.

We note your view under 'other comments' on our practice with regard to penalties; and, in particular, the University practice with regard to cheating in examinations which we will pass on to our Student Office. I would also like to thank you for the more detailed comments you sent to colleagues in the School with regard to individual modules.

I am sorry that your tenure as External Examiner ended after only two years, but would like to thank you sincerely on behalf of the School for the contribution you have made in that time; and I wish you well in what I am sure will be a very successful Pro-Vice Chancellorship.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School