

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:	Sociology & Social Policy
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Social and Political Thought, International Social Transformation, Social & Public Policy, Social Research, Racism and Ethnicity Studies
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCert, PGDip, 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.

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

N/A

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.*

Programme/module aims and ILOs are appropriate for the level of study. Structure and content are designed to help students to make continued progress towards completion of their chosen award.

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.*

Aims and ILOs commensurate with similar programmes at other institutions and meet national benchmarking.

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 are appropriate and assessment criteria are consistently applied. Students benefit from imaginative and rigorous assessment and, in the vast majority of cases, relevant and informative feedback. As much detailed feedback is given to exceptional students, as to those who need support and guidance.

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 standard of student submissions is commensurate with similar institutions and is of the standard required by national benchmarking. Impressive combination of theoretically-rigorous and research-informed work.

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.

I viewed student work from a range of courses, and was again impressed by the breadth of topics/approaches covered and range assessment methods used. Students in these programmes benefit from a research-led approach to learning and teaching that encompasses social theory, empirical research, and policy/practice. This not only allows for diversity and flexibility within the Masters programme, but enables the most able students to make connections between these various domains.

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.

Students benefit from staff expertise and current research projects. They are offered a range of research training, and have a number of opportunities to pursue empirically-based projects.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

I do not know whether the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, but I am confident that the training offered prepares promising students for doctoral level research by educating them in the skills of the discipline, as well as the intellectual and ethical foundations of research. The assessment methods develop capacity for independent study.

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.

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?

All of the courses I am responsible for are coursework-based. I was provided with details of the assignments via the course handbooks, which I received alongside the samples of scripts.

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 received copies of all distinctions and all fails, as well as a representative sample of other work.
Yes, the scripts were generally clearly marked and annotated.

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

Yes, the choice of subjects for dissertations was appropriate.
Yes, the method and standard of assessment was appropriate.

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 administrative arrangements were first rate and the scripts arrived in a timely fashion. The administrative staff were helpful and supportive, and responded swiftly to any queries I had.

I did not attend the BoE meeting in person, but sent informal feedback in advance and was available via telephone to deal with any queries.

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

Yes, special circumstances were handled sensitively and fairly.

Other comments

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

I was very grateful for the opportunity to feedback my comments via e-mail, rather than having to take the <<>> return journey from <<>> to Leeds to attend the Board of Examiners meeting. Given the brevity of last year's meeting this seems like a more sensible use of resources.

<<>>

Dear <<>>

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2014/15 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School.

Like the previous year, the School is encouraged by your positive comments. We note that you are particularly praiseworthy of the range of assessment methods used and how students benefit from the close synergy between research and teaching within the curriculum. I was also pleased to see that you felt that the training offered helps to prepare promising students for doctoral level research by educating them in the skills of the discipline, as well as the intellectual and ethical foundations of research.

As discussed last year, we are in the process of revamping the content of our MA programmes. This has gathered pace over the present academic year, but your feedback is immensely helpful in this regard.

I hope you continue to find your experience with us as an external examiner useful and rewarding. We are pleased that the arrangements we have in place are a good use of everyone's time. On behalf of my colleagues and myself I thank you, once again, for your hard work. Your contribution is appreciated by the whole School of Sociology and Social Policy here at Leeds and we look forward to working with you in the forthcoming year.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School
School of Sociology and Social Policy