

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	Russian
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Conference Interpreting and Translation Studies; PG Diploma Conference Interpreting
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.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Academic Quality and Standards**
Academic Quality and Standards Team
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

There are no matters requiring urgent attention .

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

Standards in this programme have always been high and remain so. This applies to student performance which has been consistently very high; by inference it also applies to the delivery of the programme which has enabled students to attain these very high levels. I have been especially impressed by the quality of feedback to students which has been exemplary – lengthy, detailed, constructive and a model of clarity in terms of expression and presentation. The only negative comment I would make is that numbers on this course have been small; indeed, in one year during my tenure it did not run at all. This is no doubt more or less inevitable in this kind of programme; even so, it is matter of regret.

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 do not believe that I received the programme Aims and ILOs.

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.*

I have been external examiner at many UK (and Irish) HE institutions; on the basis of this extensive experience and my own experience within the subject I am confident that the programme is fully comparable with equivalent programmes at other institutions.

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 terms of the work I had to moderate I found the design and structure of the assessments, and the arrangements for the marking of the modules entirely appropriate. I found the quality of the student work very good indeed, and infer that the quality of the teaching was very high.

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.*

See 3 above. In addition to my comments there, I would also note that the level of linguistic attainment by some students was outstanding, with the marks in some modules being exceptionally high.

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.

Nothing to note.

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 was not aware of this influence as such; this said, by its very nature purely language programmes do not reveal the influence of research with the same transparency as those dealing with culture, politics, history etc.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. 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

9. 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 have received sufficient guidance to perform my role effectively.

10. 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.*

I do not feel that I received sufficient documentation.

11. 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 received draft assessments, and was able to comment on them as relevant. The assignments were appropriate.

12. 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?

Sufficient assessed work was made available to me to enable me to have confidence in my evaluation of the standard of student work: indeed, I believe I received *all* student work.

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

N/A

14. 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?

As ever, I was unable to attend the Board of Examiners. Perhaps consideration could be given to the possibility of moving it to a time that is more convenient for external examiners.

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

I have no information about this either way.

Other comments

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

As will be evident from the above, I have two rather contradictory impressions from my involvement with this programme:

1 The performance of the students has been very high, from which I infer commitment on their part and on the part of staff who taught them, as well as high professional standards in the delivery of the programme.

2 On the other hand, the administrative arrangements have been weaker; more broadly, it has been somewhat difficult to form an overview of the overall arrangements for this programme.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

25 April 2016

Dear

External Examiner Report (2014/2015)

Many thanks for your External Examiner report and your comprehensive and helpful comments on our programme, modules and methods of assessment. We are very pleased to hear that once again you were impressed by the achievements of our students and that the standard of our students' work has been consistently high during your role as External Examiner for Russian at Leeds. Your comments about our final-year dissertations and oral exams were particularly encouraging. We are also pleased to hear that things have run smoothly this year from an administrative perspective. As you know, several members of staff have needed to take leave for personal reasons and on some occasions we have not been able to meet deadlines for setting assignments; therefore, I would like to thank you once again for being so understanding this year.

I am also glad that you were happy with the arrangement for sending you students' work for moderation at various points in the academic year. I will pass on your reservations about the base-room system as well as your recommendation that external examiners attend the final-year oral exams at least once during their appointment to the School Exams and Assessment Officer. There has been some informal discussion within GRASS about external examiners' attendance at final-year oral exams following your suggestion at the 2013/2014 Module Marks Meeting. For Russian all students are examined by the same members of staff and the external examiner can attend all exams. There are issues, however, in subject areas with larger cohorts of students (e.g. French, German, Spanish) which have multiple teams of examiners and in which several oral exams may run at the same time. The external examiner(s) could attend only some of the exams and students whose oral exam the external examiner attends might see this as a disadvantage. Nevertheless, this is something that can be discussed further at School level.

Thank you also for raising your concerns with our programme and highlighting ways in which we can improve student feedback. Following your advice from the first GRASS Module Marks Meeting that you attended, we have tried to provide more typed feedback to students, but, as you commented this year, we can do more in this respect. "Macro-level" issues, as in previous years, are (1) module structure ("short-fat" vs. "long-thin" modules), (2) our range of non-language modules and (3) the staffing situation in Russian at Leeds. The points that you make in this year's report, as well as those in previous reports, are very valid, and we have taken steps to vary both the structure and range of our modules in the last two academic years.

As we noted in last year's response to your External Examiner report, we have introduced several "short-fat" modules at Level 3 and we are considering the introduction of a number of new Level 1 single-semester modules. Some modules, however, are best delivered over the course of an academic year and we believe that a mixed model is most appropriate for our Russian programmes. Our Level 2 modules, for instance, must be delivered as "long-thin" modules because of our unique 15- and 20-credit merged module format.

We agree that a wider range of non-language modules would benefit our students; however, we are restricted in the number of content modules that we can run in an academic year owing to both staff and student numbers. We do believe that our selection of academic content modules is comparable to that of other similar-sized departments of Russian at UK HEIs, and our students have the opportunity to develop their interests in the areas of Russian literature, culture and visual culture for which we run modules at all levels. In addition, the School has introduced several "cornerstone" modules at Level 1, most of which have a focus on Russia, and students have access to modules relating to Russia offered elsewhere in the University (though, as we have discussed, enrolment on these modules is not always straightforward for our students). This year we sought students' direct input into the programme, asking student reps at all levels to let us know what kind of optional modules students would like to be introduced. Thanks to this initiative we have introduced a beginners' Czech

module, available to students at all levels, and a Level 3 modern history module that focuses on Russia from perestroika to the annexation of Crimea.

With regard to the staffing situation in Russian at Leeds, I note your concerns that (1) staff numbers are low and (2) temporary short-term appointments are not a “long-term” solution, and I will draw them to the attention of colleagues at School/Faculty level.

The LCS Classification Board and the 20-90 scale are also issues that need addressing at the School/Faculty and University levels; therefore, I will forward your comments to the relevant individuals.

On behalf of all colleagues in Russian and GRASS, I would like to thank you for your hard work this year and throughout your post as External Examiner for Russian at Leeds. Your helpful comments and suggestions have not only allowed us to make improvements to individual assessments but they have given us a valuable insight into our programme. I have been GRASS Exam Tutor for most of your time at Leeds and it has been a pleasure working with you. I wish you all the best in the future.

Best wishes,

Director of Russian
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
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Leeds LS2 9JT

Email