

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

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

Faculty / School of:	Modern Languages
Subject(s):	<i>Italian</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Italian studies
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

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

Italian Studies at the University of Leeds has a reputation nationally as one of the very best Departments for studying Italian. My experience of working with the Department over the last 4 years confirms this reputation as very well deserved: an innovative and stimulating curriculum, which has a strong core, but does not remain static; research-led teaching embedded strongly into the programme, especially at final year, but without compromising a broad curriculum; detailed feedback provided to students across the full range of modules; scrupulous first and second marking; innovation in teaching methodologies and a wide range of assessment types; thoughtful and critical engagement with changes, whether originating from within the Department or from outside. While Languages have had a difficult few years nationally, the positive attitude, innovation and dynamic activity – including the leadership over two terms of office – of the School – which has been shown by this Department, puts it in a very strong position.

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.*

All fully commensurate

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

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.*

As I have mentioned over previous years, the range of assessment is excellent (ranging from traditional essays through commentaries and presentations). The range of modules is commendable, and students seem genuinely engaged with them. It's a very interesting programme. I suggest that for the commentaries, in particular, that staff consider discussing with students models of both good and bad practice.

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.*

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.

Made in Italy is worthy of mention. This is a new module that brings together cultural studies and business studies, and is most interesting. It is a time-intensive module with a lot of assessment attached to it (dissertation, translation, business language work) that has proved very popular with students. While the emergence of business orientated modules in a programme whose identity has been traditionally associated with culture necessarily leads to questions (such as 'What is Italian studies? What expertise can Italian support and should it develop?'), this module seems to me very far from a classic Business language module, which is highly instrumental and often, in my experience, ineffective and dumbed down. This, on the other hand, allows for a cultural studies approach to be applied to business and marketing strategies in Italy (such as for the fashion and design industries) and may provide an effective model for how a language department, which has the expertise to support such a module, can work with business studies in an intellectually coherent way.

The second innovation that I take this opportunity to commend is the use of the Common European Framework in language teaching. This development is the result of a project developed at Leeds, with HEA funding, on integrating the Framework into teaching and assessment. It is innovative, timely and significant. In fact, with my Head of Department hat on, I have asked <> to come to <> to disseminate the project's findings, which I believe are significant for the development of languages nationally.

There is a move towards a compulsory dissertation, something that is now established in Languages at UoB and works well. We discussed this and I recommend that staff workloads are taken into account during the development of the new module (e.g. capping numbers of dissertations per staff member; reducing the amount of work read at pre-submission stage).

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.

A number of the modules clearly derive from the research interests of the staff, particularly in final year. The balance between research-led and other modules is commendable.

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

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.

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

Yes.

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. As in previous years, it all runs wonderfully smoothly, a credit to those working behind the scenes to ensure everything in place. The examination meeting is led very well. I am grateful for the printing out of online material as per my request two year's ago.

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

Yes

Other comments

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

Just to formally express my thanks to colleagues at Leeds for their hospitality, and for sharing with me the excellent practices at Leeds over the past 4 years. It's been a pleasure to work with such able and enthusiastic colleagues. Their students are lucky.

Italian School of Modern Languages and Cultures

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds, 25 aprile 2016

Dear

Thanks for your report, and for sending it to us so quickly. Writing on behalf of all staff in Italian, I wish to thank you warmly for all positive comments you made on our work for the Single Honours and Joint Honours BA Programmes in Italian at the University of Leeds (2014-15). In particular, I am happy to read you appreciated the two main innovations introduced to the curriculum over the past years: the use of the Common European Framework for Languages as a underlying structure for all language teaching in Italian, and the new 'Made in Italy' module for finalists – which, as you write, aims at presenting students with a cultural-studies approach to national, international and transnational economies, via the Italian study case.

We will continue to work on research-led teaching and we will continue considering new ways to be cost-efficient in the delivery and assessment of modules. The guidelines for level2 commentaries will be looked at in detail as you suggest. Thanks also for discussing with us the issues related to the introduction of a compulsory final year project, and how this has been already organised at the University of ; I am passing your recommendations regarding staff workload at school level (e.g. capping numbers of dissertations per staff member; reducing the amount of work read at pre-submission stage).

Finally, I wish to than you formally on behalf of Italian and of the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds for being our external examiner over the past four years. We have greatly benefited from your feedback on several important areas, and I believe that the many

qualities of our work that you kindly praise are also the result of this fruitful interaction. It has been a pleasure to work with you: we will miss your presence here with us in the (short) Leeds summer.

Best regards,

Director of Italian (SMC)
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