

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:	Modern languages
Subject(s):	<i>East Asian Languages</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	South East Asia papers.
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

Nothing 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?

Yes

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.*

Aims and ILOs were commensurate with the level of the 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.*

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.*

Modules are generally assessed by exam only, or a combination of coursework (essay) and exam. These seemed quite adequate in assessing the students' attainment and for classifying awards.
Student performance was across a good range as would be expected. It is clear that teaching and learning activities are of a high standard and at an appropriate level.

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.*

The mixture of coursework and exams allowed students to demonstrate their achievement of Aims and ILOs. Some students who were JYA students clearly had added challenges when having to write timed exams, mainly it seems because of language issues, but perhaps also because of unfamiliarity with the exam method

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.

This was my first year of examining. So I cannot comment on this.

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.

It is clear that staff have integrated aspects of their research into the teaching. Students have also been encouraged to read widely and on some courses to adapt coursework question in accordance with their specific interests. The one dissertation I looked at showed a good level of independent research

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, it was sufficient

- 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 – all fine and well organised
- 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. The questions were appropriate.
- 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. The scripts were clearly marked and annotated. The only problem arises with the design of the exam booklet that does not have space for the moderator's marks in addition to those of the 1st marker.
- 14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?**
- Yes – though only saw one.
- 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, all excellent
- 16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**
- These had been considered at a previous meeting I understand

Other comments

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

My general comments that follow were also raised at the meeting. I was impressed with the organisation of the meeting and with all processes in advance of the meeting. The Section is to be congratulated on this. The exams set by staff and the work produced by students was of a good standard and shows an impressive engagement with social sciences, history and study of religion with respect to SE Asia and the Asia Pacific. I did note that while there were several courses on literature and film of East Asia, there were not apparently any such courses on the literature and film of SE Asia that seems a shame.

I felt that the marking range of 20-90 did not seem to be being fully utilised. I saw hardly any marks above 73 or 74, and if the range of possible marks is 70-90 for 1st class work then it seems strange that so little work is reaching a standard below the lower quartile of that range.

It was not always clear to me whether exam papers had been 2nd marked or moderated. It would be good to have a clearer explanation of the process, and to make sure that all markers are following the same process.

On one exam, I felt that the requirement to answer 4 answers in 2 hours was probably too much (Intro to E Asian Religions). Some students had clearly run out of time, and many students provided quite unsatisfactory answers, well below the standard of their coursework. This may of course be due to lack of preparation.

I am not sure of the validity of asking students not to answer question in exams on the same subject that has been tackled in essays. This seems to raise questions regarding anonymity. What would be the penalty if students did not follow this requirement, or only partially? Can this really be fully implemented? Is it right that the rule only applies for some examinations and not all?

While student coursework often engaged very strongly with secondary sources and with the key scholars who have engaged with debates, exam answers rarely only rarely made reference to scholars, their arguments and contributions to the subject etc. I am sure this is not unique to Leeds but says something about the nature of timed exams, but maybe the importance of engaging with academic debates might be flagged up to students in revision classes.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

25 April 2016

Dear

Response to External Examiner's Report, 2014-2015

Many thanks for your Examiner's Report for the academic year 2014-2015.

I was very pleased to note your comments about the high standard of teaching and learning activities, the clarity of assessment procedure and administrative processes, and the integration of EAS research into teaching, and the impact this has on students' answers.

I note your comments on the 20-90 marking scheme and the apparent reluctance of staff to use the full range of these marks for the best pieces of work. I will pass this on and encourage all colleagues to remember to do this. I will also forward you comment on encouraging students to demonstrate engagement with secondary sources in exam, as well as coursework, essays.

I have passed on your specific suggestion for assessment for the module Introduction to East Asian Religions to the convenors.

I apologise for any lack of clarity on whether exam papers had been second marked or moderated. The Leeds terminology now appears to call 2nd marking 'double marking' and moderation 'check marking'. I assume you have a copy of the Code of Practice on Assessment, but will attach another copy to this for convenience. The relevant section is 6.5. In essence, all our Undergraduate modules should be 'check marked' (moderated) and dissertations should be 'double marked' (though not necessarily blind marked). The definition of how the School uses these terms should be clear in the CoPA – please let me know if any ambiguity remains. In relation to this I note your point about the exam booklet design not allowing for space for the moderator's mark. These as you will understand are University-wide booklets, but by means of this response I will pass the comment up to Faculty level for consideration, so thank you for flagging it up.

Thank you also for raising the interesting question of the validity of asking students not to answer the same topic in essays and exams, and how this may affect anonymous marking. I will raise this at School level and let you know the outcome of any discussions on this.

It only remains for me to thank you very much for all your very constructive and helpful input to our Asia Pacific Programmes this year.

With thanks and very best wishes