

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:	Arts/School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>PORTUGUESE</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All programmes involving Portuguese modules/ All Portuguese modules Translation Studies courses involving Portuguese
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

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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?

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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

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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 found the Aims and ILOs appropriate for the programmes/modules and for the structure and content of the programmes, and standards appropriate for the award under consideration.

Students are taught intensively and assessed in a way that ensures they are constantly improving. They know what they should be aiming for and are taught how they might achieve such outcomes. The excellent marks awarded this year are proof of that.

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 found the Aims and ILOs comparable to those of other institutions with which I am familiar and to national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

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 my opinion the means of assessment of both language skills and cultural awareness (content modules) were appropriate and effective for the marking of modules and the classification of awards. I liked the use of track changes to comment on essays and I particularly liked the feedback forms and feedback action plans. There is clear evidence of two markers and the way they have decided on the final mark.

Marking descriptors (particularly for oral assessments) would be useful not only to staff in order to attribute marks, but also for students to know what staff are looking for.

Language capabilities are tested by a range of assessments, both coursework and exams: translation into and out of the language, composition and summary (in Portuguese of a text in English), two oral assessments, grammar tests, class presentations. I consider that the assessments are weighted appropriately.

I noticed that the finalists' exam compositions covered ambitious topics and showed that they had lots of ideas. Overall in language work I observed that at the weaker end students showed the common problems of Spanish interference and a lack of Portuguese vocabulary with which to express themselves fluently. At the stronger end, results were excellent and showed confidence and eloquence in Portuguese.

Literature/culture courses are tested via a combination of coursework and exams. Students choose from a range of options involving literature and film, and have access to material from across the Portuguese-speaking world (from Angola to Timor), from Renaissance literature to contemporary film. Students are introduced to complex theoretical concepts and their essays showed that they are fully able to process them and apply them to texts. This variety helps the students understand that Portuguese is a global language with centuries-old cultural traditions. Such a spread across the Portuguese-speaking world is offered by very few universities and should be prized by Leeds and fully supported. I am glad to hear that a new appointment has been made since the retirement of<>, and I hope that in the future the Teaching Fellowship will be upgraded to a full time lectureship.

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 students reached high standards in both language skills and cultural appreciation, performing well in relation to students on comparable courses.

This cohort performed extremely well in final year exams. Seven out of sixteen students achieved first class results, with marks ranging between 57 and 79.

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 back since taking maternity leave between January and July 2014.

In my first report (2013), I noted that students had been allowed to use dictionaries in translation exams for the first time. This practice seems to be working well, since it dissipates the fear of encountering an exotic piece of vocabulary. However, it entails unexpected problems in that most students access online or virtual dictionaries and do not have access to paper dictionaries to take into exams with them.

In regard to last year, and the comments made by last year's external for Portuguese, I have nothing to add.

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 impressed by the variety of material covered in modules, from Renaissance poetry to short stories from the former Portuguese empire. Modules clearly reflect colleagues' research interests but make them accessible to undergraduate students. Students showed awareness of secondary critical material and there was plenty of evidence of them doing their own 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.

The External Examiner Handbook provided clear guidance as to my role, powers and responsibilities, enabling me to act effectively as an External Examiner.

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.

Documentation relating to programmes which I was asked to moderate and observe was available for me to consult when I arrived in Leeds.

This was the first time I have been asked to act as External for a practical Translating/Interpreting degree and I very much enjoyed the experience. Colleagues provided me with relevant information, such as marking criteria. It was very useful to access the oral assessments virtually, although there were a few technical hitches.

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?

I was provided with draft examination papers and found the nature and level of the questions to be absolutely 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?

I was provided with all coursework and examination scripts when I arrived in Leeds. I looked at samples of top, middle and bottom marks, as well as any borderline cases, and was happy with the way that marks had been resolved between markers.
There was clear evidence of double marking and useful comments to show how marks had been awarded.

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

I looked at two extended essays on appropriate and interesting subjects. 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?

The administrative arrangements were satisfactory. I was unable to get to Leeds until the afternoon before the Board Meeting and therefore had only just enough time to look through a good sample of papers. I did attend the meeting, and I was satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.
I was invited to attend the Translation Studies Board after having booked my train ticket back to Oxford and was therefore unable to attend, but I was able to speak to colleagues before leaving.

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

The mitigating circumstances and medical evidence had been dealt with at a previous meeting and was mentioned during the Board when necessary. This seems to me to be correct procedure.
It sounded as though there was a large increase in the number of candidates claiming mitigating circumstances. This appears to be a pattern across the country, since the same is happening in my own institution and Edinburgh, where I am also external examiner for Portuguese.

Other comments

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

It would have been useful to receive the oral examination recordings in advance (on cd or other files), since listening to them is time-consuming.

School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Spanish, Portuguese and
Latin American Studies



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

25 April 2016

Dear

Now that all External Examiners' reports have been internally processed, I would like to respond to both the general comments from all Externals and the specific recommendations which you made in your report in relation to the academic session 2014/2015.

I would first like to thank all Examiners for their positive comments about the overall quality of the subject area's work, the diversity of modules we offer supported by a strong research culture, the variety and rigour of the assessment procedures, and the efficiency of the marking, feedback and exams administration. In return I would also like to thank all Externals for their work and support both during the year (approving draft exam papers) and during the day of moderation in Leeds before the Exams Board.

We are delighted to read your praise about the various improvements to our language and translation programmes this year, such as the incorporation of tasks to develop employability skills.

As requested, this year we will make an extra effort in order to make the content of oral examinations available to you as soon as they have been internally assessed, marked and monitored so you can focus on the written assignments on the moderation day prior to the summer Marks Meeting. We also note your concern with regard to the on-going use of temporary posts to meet staffing needs in Portuguese teaching and would like to reassure you that we will continue to press for further investment in this area.

Your positive comments about the Department's work and, in particular, the Portuguese-language teaching section have already been passed on to colleagues.

Finally, I should like to thank you once again for your generosity, hard work, professionalism and support over the course of the last years and look forward to maintaining our successful collaboration with you during this academic year.

Yours sincerely,

Lecturer in Spanish History
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