

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:	Mathematics
Subject(s):	<i>Applied Mathematics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Mathematics MSc Atmosphere-Ocean Dynamics MSc Mathematics and Computer Science
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

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

None

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.*

Learning outcomes were appropriate to Master's level for all Masters-coded modules I was asked to look at, and standards are appropriate for a UK university MSc mathematics programme.

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. The standard of those modules I looked at, I found to be comparable to those at other UK institutions. The MSc project topics all allowed the possibility of engaging with and understanding research-level mathematics and the possibility of the student conducting some original research.

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.*

The assessment is divided between examination (2/3) and project (1/3), which seems to me to be an appropriate mix for a taught MSc level mathematics course. The examination levels and student exam performance and dissertations indicate that the teaching and learning methods are of good quality.

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. All examined modules contained some unseen material enabling students to demonstrate a genuine understanding of the ILOs. The best projects contained some components of original research, and the weaker (passing) projects demonstrated some clear understanding of research-level mathematics

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 is my first year at Leeds.

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.

Almost all of the Master's level courses taught at Leeds are influenced to a great extent by staff research interests (as is natural). These courses constitute good preparation for students preparing for independent study at PhD level.

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, sufficient material was promptly provided.

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. Such comments that I made on examinations were responded to / taken into account by the examiners in a prompt fashion.

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?

The projects I saw were on research-level topics that were entirely appropriate for Master's level. The projects were assessed by the use of mark-sheets which break down the marking into different categories, allowing for a systematic approach by examiners and reasonable consistency of marking. I noticed that some examiners were a little harder than others, and this was fed back to the examiners, and responded to.

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 examinations process was administered very efficiently by the examinations officer and I was satisfied with the recommendations of the board. (I did not attend the meeting, but the taught courses were covered in the undergraduate meeting, which I did attend).

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

Yes. Detailed evidence of mitigating circumstances was made available to the external examiners

Other comments

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

None.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Response to the External Examiner's Report
on the MSc Mathematics, MSc Atmosphere-Ocean Dynamics and
MSc Mathematics and Computer Science programmes 2014/15**

We thank _____ for _____ thorough work in examining our programmes. We welcome _____ positive comments on the overall standards of our teaching and assessment. We are particularly pleased by _____ favourable remarks on the level of student achievement in the dissertations, which _____ found well-aligned with the research interests of the staff and providing the students with an opportunity to conduct some original research.

Head of the School of Mathematics
May 2016