

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>French</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single and joint programmes involving French
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

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?

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

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.*

The structure and content of the modules that I scrutinised were entirely appropriate. Outcomes were clearly stated, and the supporting documentation clearly explained how the proposed learning activities would help to achieve them. Modules selected for periodic review very helpfully provided overviews of each teaching session and materials studied, which confirmed the high quality of the modules offered.
The standards were likewise entirely appropriate.

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.*

The aims and outcomes were very similar to those at comparator institutions, and similarly pitched relative to CEFR.

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 modules that I scrutinised were assessed primarily by a combination of written assessed coursework and written examination. These assessments were entirely appropriate in terms of length and difficulty relative to the given Level. The assessment modalities adopted still permitted diversity within the overall programme (length and language of exercise, range of analytical and argumentative skills being tested, etc.)

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.*

Student performances this year (in comparison with the previous two years of my appointment) seemed to exhibit a greater variation across modules, which was well captured by the variation in average marks awarded for individual modules: in other words, the modules that I reviewed which presented a higher or lower average did so by reason of the strength of the work submitted rather than because of a disparity in the harshness of the marking. Generally speaking, there seemed to be fewer exceptionally good performances this year in the modules within my purview, although some candidates had certainly produced excellent work which was appropriately rewarded by assessors who judiciously used the full range of marks available.

This year, for modules which included both ACW and invigilated examinations, I was a little more struck by how much stronger the performance in the coursework appeared to be. This is not a cause for concern, and some difference is entirely natural, but it might raise the question of whether further preparation in the modality of assessment (e.g. more timed practice answers for modules assessed by invigilated examination) might be worth considering.

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.

There were few changes in the modules that I assessed, nor did I consider such modifications necessary.

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 again delighted by the sheer range of modules offered to students, particularly in Final Year, and it was clear that students had benefited from the extent to which these modules mapped onto the research interests and specialisms of the teaching staff (e.g. a fascinating palaeographical / codicological project prepared for a medieval module, reflecting both the initiative of the student who formulated it and the expertise of the colleague who assessed it).

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.

Scripts, marking grids, and course documentation were provided for the modules scrutinised, and this information was entirely sufficient for my role. The provision of statistical data for the marks awarded for each module was particularly useful for the purposes of moderation.

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 (see above)

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 received and commented on assessments for the modules within my purview, and my recommendations were incorporated to my satisfaction. The level of difficulty was entirely 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 had access to all the assessed work and was satisfied that my random sampling of this allowed me to be confident of assessment practices within and across the modules. Annotation of examinations and ACW was full and transparent, with excellent use of feedback forms. A few modules had made use of Grademark and provided very detailed feedback through the mark-up procedure; although there is a learning curve in using the technology, colleagues might be encouraged to adopt this mode of marking / feedback more widely. The moderation forms provided were very insightful, and recorded where any adjustments had been required; I approved entirely of the decisions reached after consultation between first and second markers.

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

Yes in both cases.

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?

I attended the French Board, and was entirely happy with its conduct. In contrast to the practice at my previous institution, student names were visible, which allowed meaningful comments about particular cases to be made (and also facilitated the recognition of noteworthy candidates). I commend this lack of anonymity wholeheartedly, and noted that it always

functioned to the benefit of the students involved.

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

Particular praise is due to the French exams officer and support staff for their efforts in making my task as efficient and enjoyable as possible. I continue to be impressed by the range and quality of teaching and learning within the discipline, and would like to commend colleagues for the professionalism that they exhibit in all aspects of their practice.

From:
Sent: 16 July 2015 21:48
To:
Subject: Repsonse to External Examiner's report
Categories: External Examiners

Dear

Many thanks for your External Examiner's report, and for the care you have taken over the scrutiny of our modules and procedures. We are delighted to see that you commend the wide range of modules, the quality of teaching and learning and the professionalism exhibited by colleagues. We set great store by the variety and quality of modules on offer and their delivery and it is encouraging to see these qualities being commended externally. It is pleasing, too, that you commend our examination and marking procedures and the usefulness of documentation provided to you. I will pass on your thanks to our exams representative, and to our programme administrator.

Thank you for your observations on relative performance in coursework versus invigilated examinations. We will draw colleagues' attention to this and will recommend we act on your suggestion of further preparation for the latter modality of assessment. Your praise for the codicological project for a medieval module was most welcome, and has been relayed to the colleague concerned.

Thank you too for your comments about the use of Grademark and the facilitation of feedback to students thus provided. As you may imagine, this has been under occasional discussion before. Your comments and recommendation will be passed to colleagues and we will carefully consider the usefulness of using this mode of marking more widely.

Thank you also for commending our use of student names in the exam board and your confirmation that this is always to the advantage of the students concerned.

Finally, I should like to thank you for the care you have taken in monitoring our procedures and for the invaluable way in which you have shared your knowledge and experience with us. We very much look forward to continuing to work with you again next year. Looking ahead to next year, will continue as Exams officer, but my colleague will take over from me as Director of French, as I retire this summer.

Best wishes,

Associate Professor
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Consultation hours: please email me for an appointment