

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:	Faculty of Languages, Cultures, and Societies
Subject(s):	<i>French</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons)

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

There are no areas 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?

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 programme's aims and learning outcomes were all entirely appropriate for an undergraduate course in Modern Languages.

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, see above.

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 French Department at Leeds uses a wide variety of assessment methods that are wholly appropriate to the ILOs.

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.*

Students at Leeds perform to a level that is comparable to that achieved by students studying similar undergraduate courses throughout the UK. At the top of each cohort, students are producing work of a very high quality.

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.

I was able to scrutinise a new second-year undergraduate module devoted to translation and interpreting that was innovative in its content and assessment methods, while enabling the students to produce original and thoughtful work of high quality.

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.

The wide range of modules on offer in French are testimony to the wide-ranging research interests of the lecturing staff at Leeds.

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

The arrangement whereby, as a relatively experienced external Examiner at Leeds, I was able to help and guide a new member of external examining team was both helpful and effective.

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?

I was provided with full details of all of the modules I was tasked with overseeing. All necessary information was provided. Exam and essay questions were entirely appropriate to the content and level of each of the modules in question.

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?

All papers and scripts were available for me to scrutinise.

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?

All administrative arrangements were carried out efficiently and with due consideration to the importance of the decisions being made.

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

There was clear evidence of all mitigating circumstances having been taken into account in an appropriate fashion.

Other comments

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

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

18 August 2016

Dear

Thank you very much for your external examiner's report on the French subject area for the academic session 2015/16. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to thank you for your constructive comments on our teaching and assessment procedures. It is reassuring to know that our procedures and standards are commensurate with good practice in the UK. It is also satisfying to know that our students are able to take a wide range of modules and produce high-quality work at the top of the scale. I am pleased that the new Level 2 module, FREN2350/55 Introduction to Translation and Interpreting, has worked well in its first year and has enabled the students to produce original work. We appreciate your positive comments about the innovative forms of assessment for this module. This is an area that we are aiming to develop within our subject area and the School as a whole.

I would also like to thank you for all of your support and collegiality during the past year. It has been a pleasure to have you as our external examiner and we look forward to seeing you again next year. Thank you also for mentoring our new examiner this year.

With all good wishes,

Director of French,
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
University of Leeds
LS2 9JT
tel: 0113
email:

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>French (and also School Classification Board)</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single and joint programmes involving French / attendance at School Classification Board
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.

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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

During the four years of my appointment, I have been continually impressed by the quality of the programmes and modules over which I have had purview. The organisation and delivery of courses has been uniformly high, and the processes of assessment have been rigorous, consistent, and fair, and designed in a manner which challenges students to an appropriate standard across a range of skills.

The most considerable development during the period has been the extent of formative feedback provided to students across the forms of assessment employed. Already more than adequate when I started, it has now attained quite exceptional levels of detail, and seeks to incorporate various mechanisms to encourage students to reflect on said feedback. I can only hope that students take advantage of this excellent provision.

Another development has been the extension of submission of coursework via the VLE. Although this method has not yet been adopted in all modules (although I understand that such a policy may be introduced), in those where it has, I have been impressed by the efficiency and transparency of the process.

A less welcome development has been an apparent increase in the incidence of student complaints about assessment which, even when sometimes at least partly couched in terms which seem to comment on the process, are in reality fundamentally motivated by a desire to question marks awarded. Having been asked to adjudicate on a number of these cases, I have invariably been struck by the fairness of the assessment and the professionalism of the colleagues, and have found the complaints to be groundless. It is most unfortunate that circumstances have brought about this development, and can only hope that the institution retains faith in the academic judgement and exemplary conduct of its staff.

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, written examination, and oral 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.*

The overall level of performance in language and content modules struck me as similar to that found in comparator institutions. The best performances were truly outstanding, and accordingly awarded by high marks; the weakest performances were likewise treated accordingly. In comparison with last year, I was less struck by a difference in the level of performance between coursework and invigilated examination. The only exception in this regard was the level of grammatical accuracy in written French, where there often seemed to be a marked disparity between the strength of coursework and the relative weakness of examinations. While many factors might be at play here, the observation can only confirm the importance of rote learning when mastering fundamental points of grammar.

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.

New assessment forms offered carefully structured and extremely detailed feedback on work, and also incorporated sections which encouraged students to reflect on this feedback. While this is consonant with increasing student demand for feedback, and as such should be considered as best practice, one does wonder whether the amount of feedback now available is in danger of erring towards excess, in terms both of the demands imposed on markers and the amount that students can effectively assimilate.

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.

Level 3 courses in particular offer a shining example of the incorporation of research specialisms into the curriculum. One of the great strengths of the French modules at Leeds is the breadth of coverage in terms of period and material, reflecting the range of colleagues' research interests, and I would counsel very strongly against any attempts to reduce this range of modules (e.g. on the grounds that certain modules do not recruit in great numbers).

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

From my perspective (as mentor), the arrangements were fine, and I was available to offer support prior to and during the scrutiny session and meeting. In this instance, the support required was minimal, given the extensive experience of the colleague in question.

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 assessed coursework was full and transparent, with excellent use of feedback forms. Some modules had made excellent use of submission and feedback via the VLE. 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 and 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?

I attended two meetings: the French-specific meeting, and then a week later the two-day School classification meeting (one day in person, and the second day via Skype). In contrast to the previous three years, this allowed me to observe more clearly how the outcomes of the subject board meeting interacted with the final School meeting.

I was impressed by the efficiency and thoroughness of the conduct of both meetings.

The French meeting effectively ensured the robustness of the marks which were issued, and identified all potentially problematic cases.

The School meeting was exemplary in the treatment of final classification. The guidelines for classification, distributed in advance, were also carefully explained at the beginning of the meeting, and were followed with great care and diligence. I was particularly impressed with the implementation of guidelines for the consideration of borderline cases falling under academic discretion: in every case, discussion resulted in a unanimous decision.

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

All cases of mitigating circumstances were clearly flagged, without any revelation of the student's individual circumstances. The process of consideration was invariably rigorous and sympathetic.

Other comments

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

It has been a great pleasure and honour to work with colleagues at Leeds during the last four years. The academic and support staff have been exemplary in their commitment to all aspects of the assessment process, including their hospitality towards external examiners. The University can be proud to have employees of such quality, integrity, and diligence.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

09 August 2016

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for your external examiner's report on the French subject area for the academic session 2015/16. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to thank you for your thorough, detailed and constructive comments on our teaching and assessment procedures. It is reassuring to know that our procedures and standards are commensurate with good practice in the UK. I am very pleased that you commended the range of our final-year modules and the standard of formative feedback, although I note your point about the need to avoid excessive information. I am also interested in the point you make about the discrepancy between written language in coursework and exams, which will feed into our ongoing review of our language teaching.

I would like to thank you as well for all of your support, collegiality and effort over the last four years. It has been a pleasure to have you as our external examiner and we hope to welcome you to Leeds again in the future.

With all good wishes,

Director of French
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
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email:

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

19 August 2016

Dear _____,

External Examiner report (Classification Board) 2015-16

Many thanks for your External Examiner report and helpful feedback on our Classification Board and procedures. I am delighted to hear that you found our processes efficient and thorough and that you were particularly satisfied with our handling of mitigating circumstances cases. I am also very pleased to know that you found our application of the criteria for academic discretion to be careful and diligent.

On behalf of the LCS may I thank you for your assistance at our Classification Board, for your thoughtful judgement in helping us decide some of the more complex cases, and for all your work for the School this year. I am particularly grateful for your flexibility in response to change of dates. Both the French section and the School have benefitted from your support and judgement, and it has been a great pleasure to work with you.

Yours sincerely,

Exams and Assessment Officer
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

cc.

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 Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>French</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single and Joint Honours including French
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Completed report

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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

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 ILOs for the modules I looked at are entirely appropriate, commensurate with the level of the award, and in line with other UK HE institutions. The degree programme is very well structured, and the students benefit from a wide range of modules taught by staff who are both subject experts and very dedicated teachers. The diversity of modules enhances student choice and contributes to the production of excellent results, through a combination of research-led teaching, student interest, and smaller group-sizes for specialist modules, particularly in the final year.

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 ILOs of all of the modules that I saw were comparable with the national subject benchmark, the FHEQ and with programmes in other HE institutions with which I am familiar.

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.*

All assessments were well designed in order to test students' achievement of the ILOs. They used a combination of target-language and English-language assessments to reveal both the standards of written language and the highest possible intellectual quality. Student work was meticulously marked by the first marker. Detailed and constructive feedback was provided, with a focus on guiding the student to improving their performance in subsequent pieces of work. The feedback form invites students to reflect on the feedback they are given, and I think this is very useful, particularly when students want to discuss their feedback with the marker. The moderation form is useful for setting out which pieces of work the moderator looked at, what they thought about them, and the subsequent discussion between the two markers. Where moderators disagreed with the marks in the sample they saw, the whole group's marks were raised or lowered, as is appropriate in sample moderation. The essay and exam questions were wide-ranging, interesting and demanding. They demonstrated high levels of subject expertise of the teaching staff, and student responses demonstrated very effective teaching and learning. Almost all of the work I saw was of a good/very good standard, and at the top end, there were many excellent and a few outstanding pieces.

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 work was of a high/very high standard, with many excellent and a few outstanding pieces at the top end. There was considerable evidence of students understanding and engaging with the course content, reading widely, and constructing informed answers to the questions set. Some fell down on their ability to express their arguments in nuanced analytical language, and this applied when they were writing in English, as well as in French.

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.

As this is my first year, 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.

The influence of research is evident in the curriculum of all of the modules, in the design of the assessments, and in student work. Students are clearly benefiting from the subject expertise of the teaching staff, and from academics' abilities to pass on their research-based knowledge and inspire in their students intellectual curiosity and a deep interest in the subject. Students' own research skills are demonstrated, particularly in final-year work, including, but not restricted to, the dissertations. The dissertations were of a very high standard. The marks were high, and this was entirely appropriate. The moderator commented that 'the proper use of the 70-90 scale for first class and excellent work is justified by the quality of the dissertations', and I agree. The first marker's comments on one dissertation, which was awarded a mark of 85% stated that 'this is not too far from publishable quality, which is exceptional at this 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**

I was allocated a mentor as soon as I was appointed, and this made me feel very well supported. It turned out that there was absolutely no need to consult my mentor, given the tremendous support that I received from academic and administrative colleagues in the department. All information was conveyed in a clear and transparent fashion, and any questions I might have had were pre-empted by very detailed and helpful explanations of all the course content, structure, processes and procedures.

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.

I was very impressed with the way in which all marked work is made available to the externals. This demonstrates the confidence that colleagues in French rightly have in the rigour of their assessment procedures, marking and moderation. It enabled me to gain an overview of all of the work that is done in the area for which I am responsible.

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.

Absolutely. I received everything that I could possibly need in order to carry out my role, and all communications were exceptionally clear and helpful.

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, I received all draft exam papers and coursework questions, and commented very positively on all of them. I was impressed with the demanding nature of many of the questions, which demonstrates the high level of teaching and learning in French. Minor suggestions, largely typographical errors, were responded to immediately.

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, everything was made available to me, and very clearly presented. All work was clearly marked, with constructive feedback for the students, explanations for how the marks were arrived at, and any discussion between the moderators recorded. During my visit, I saw only good practice in assessment, marking and moderation.

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

Yes, students had chosen excellent dissertation topics, and clearly worked very hard with their supervisors to achieve some very good outcomes. The marks were high: an average of 74 with a range between 64 and 86, but these high marks were entirely justified by the quality of the work.

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 Board was very well organised and run. Echoing the comments of my predecessor, I am very pleased to see that the student results presented to the Board are not anonymised, as they are in some other institutions. Since the Board receives, rather than decides, marks, and a separate panel considers mitigating circumstances, this cannot produce any discriminatory outcomes, and it allows teaching staff to see the results of their work throughout the year.

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

I cannot praise too highly the dedication and professionalism of the academic and administrative staff in French. From an external's point of view, the system works very well, student performance is at least in line with departments in other institutions. It is very pleasing to see that students still have access to a wide range of modules, enabling them to benefit from the subject expertise of active researchers and dedicated teachers. This is a very important aspect of subject health, and should continue to be supported. The organisation of the work of the four externals is excellent, and the very high standards of scrutiny that I saw this year could not be achieved with any fewer external examiners, so I strongly urge the University to ensure that the external who has reached the end of his term this year is replaced.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

02 September 2016

Dear

Thank you very much for your external examiner's report on the French subject area for the academic session 2015/16. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to thank you for your thorough, detailed and constructive comments on our teaching and assessment procedures. It is reassuring to know that our procedures and standards are commensurate with good practice in the UK. I am very pleased that you commended the range of our final-year modules and the quality of formative feedback. I am also pleased that you commented on the overall high quality of our final-year dissertations. I note your comments about the difficulties that some students have in expressing themselves in written English, as well as in written French. We work on essay-writing skills in our first year module FREN1020 Introduction to French Studies and encourage students to take advantage of the support offered by the Library. This is an area that we can emphasize in our support of new students, through building it into their feedback in a more explicit fashion where needed.

I would like to thank you for all of your support and collegiality during the past year. It has been a pleasure to have you as our external examiner and we look forward to working with you again next year. Thank you also for agreeing to mentor our new external examiner in 2016/17.

With all good wishes,

Director of French
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
University of Leeds
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fax: 0113
email:

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:	Languages, Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	<i>French</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	French Studies, with responsibility for the following modules: Level 1 – FREN1010, FREN1020 Level 2 – FREN2120/2125, FREN2160/2165, FREN2340/2345, MODL2001/2005 Level 3 – FREN3010, FREN3480, FREN3555, FREN3585, FREN3740, FREN3751, FREN3770
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Completed report

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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 aims and outcomes for the programme are clear and well articulated, and the programme is very well designed in order to facilitate them. The programme offers clear progression and pathways, from introductory and survey modules at Levels 1 and 2, to more specialist and research-led modules at Level 3. At the same time, modules at earlier stages of the programme, such as FREN2160/2165 Francophone Africa, reflect the research interests and strengths of the teaching team. There is no doubt that standards are appropriate for the award of a BA in French Studies.

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 design and aims of the programme compare very favourably with programmes in French Studies at comparator institutions with which I am familiar (<<>>,<<>>,<<>>)

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 programme uses an appropriate range of assessment methods at all levels of the programme. Assessment often involves a combination of assessed coursework and written exam, which remains an effective way of testing different types of skills and students' ability to marshal knowledge and understanding. There are various examples of creative approaches to assessment, such as the exercise in autobiographical writing for FREN3740 (Écrire et S'écrire: Women's Writing in C20/C21 France) and the opportunity to write a commentary on a photographic image of the students' own choosing in FREN3585 (Camera Lucida). Also notable is the requirement typically for at least one piece of assessment to be completed in French. A good number of students displayed impressive mastery of more sophisticated vocabulary and concepts in French, which reflects very well on the language-learning element of the programme. Marking of assessed work was consistently rigorous and judicious, with clear evidence of careful discussion between first marker and moderator. The feedback provided was consistently helpful, well focused and supportive. Student performances across the Level 3 modules I reviewed were very strong, reflected in mean and median marks typically in the 65-67% range. This is a clear indication both of strong student engagement with module content, and excellent teaching.

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. The strongest students are producing work which is comparable with the best students at other institutions with which I am familiar. A number of essays were thoughtful, well structured and showed excellent understanding of key themes in French culture. Less strong students displayed typical weaknesses (difficulties with structuring essays and developing arguments), but they were generally very well supported by helpful and focused feedback. I saw evidence that several students had improved their marks from one piece of assessment to the next, suggesting that they are benefitting from the feedback provided. As noted above, mean and median marks in the mid-60% range at both Levels 2 and 3 are a good indication that the cohort is responding well to stimulating modules and excellent teaching (though see also the final section below for additional comments on mark profiles for the Level 2 courses I reviewed).

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.

As the range of modules offered in French is impressively broad, I am still not familiar with all of them; but it is clear that the programme continues to evolve in ways which reflect current trends in French and Francophone Studies, whether it be the development of more practically-oriented or vocational strands (e.g. French as a Professional Language or modules in

translation and interpreting), or in courses which reflect the interdisciplinary approaches increasingly defining research in Modern Languages (e.g. Gender, Sex and Cinema).

For the first time this year, I also reviewed MODL2001/2005 (Linguists into Schools), which is an excellent example of how Modern Languages departments can shape vocationally-oriented modules and prepare the ground for future career pathways. The module involves a varied range of assessments (reflective account based on a learning journal, teaching materials and a presentation) to take into account the practical experience gained from working in a school classroom. The students produced some very interesting work, with evidence both of extensive reflection and growing confidence in how to approach reflective learning.

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.

There is clear evidence that the research interests and expertise of the teaching staff inform all levels of the curriculum. This is most obvious at Level 3, where there is an exciting and diverse range of specialist modules reflecting current trends in French Studies and adopting interdisciplinary approaches to the study of cultural production (Gender, Sex and Cinema; C20 French Literature and the Visual Arts). Modules at lower levels are also clearly grounded in the research strengths of the Department (e.g. FREN2160/2165 Francophone Africa), which helps create clear and coherent pathways through the programme. Consistent use is made of modes of assessments which encourage students to develop skills of independent research and thinking, such as the photo-essay in FREN3585 (Camera Lucida), and the piece of autobiographical writing accompanied by critical reflection in FREN3740 (Écrire et s'écrire).

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 – any suggestions made were taken into consideration.

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. All assessed work and exam scripts were available for scrutiny. As last year, there was clear evidence of robust marking and moderation, with good evidence of dialogue and agreement between first and second markers. The marking of FREN2120/2125 (Foundations of Modern French Thought) was particularly noteworthy in this regard, with careful calibration and adjustment of marks between the three members of the marking team. Revised arrangements adopted last

year for the French-English translation component of FREN3010 (Advanced Language), including marking and moderation of an initial sample of scripts by the marking team, continue to work well.

I raised one query with the Department's Exams Officer regarding consistency in moderation practices. In several instances, there was explicit acknowledgement in the moderation report that actions following moderation (e.g. raising or lowering of marks) should apply to the cohort as a whole. Actions taken to calibrate marks in FREN2120/2125 would be a case in point. However, there were some instances where it seemed that adjustments were being applied to particular scripts which had formed part of the moderation sample, rather than the whole batch of scripts. I agreed with the Department's Exams Officer that it would be useful for the department to review its moderation policy, and the difference between moderation and second marking, before the start of the assessment round in the next academic session.

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

N/A – I did not have responsibility for reviewing dissertations this year.

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 was unable to attend the Board of Examiners this year, due to a clashing commitment at another institution. However, I spent a full day in the Department prior to the Board in order to review modules for which I was responsible. The day was very well organised and run by the Department's Examination Officer, and I was able to complete my work in good time. Administrative arrangements over the course of the year have been excellent.

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

N/A

Other comments

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

1. I was asked this year to pay particular attention to FREN1010 (Language Awareness and Skills). This is the core language module for Level 1 students, and therefore fundamental to the undergraduate programme in French. It is a very well structured course, involving systematic revision of the core areas of French language through a fortnightly grammar lecture, reinforced with weekly grammar seminars and oral/aural classes. A comprehensive programme of private study and language revision exercises is provided via the institutional VLE, accompanied by a clear statement on the importance of private study at university, and very helpful guidance on the amount of time students should expect to devote to it. The structure and modes of delivery of the module are typical of core language courses at Level 1 – my own institution, for example, makes use of regular grammar lectures as a way of covering the foundations of the language and ensuring that students are moving at a broadly similar pace. The mark profile of the course (mean of 61%, median of 62%) is in line with expectations for a core language course at this level and with a large cohort of students of varying ability. While the course is clearly working well, I understand from discussions with the module co-ordinator that it will be reviewed for next year, with the aim in particular of aligning the content of some of the exercises with the themes covered in the Level 1 culture courses. This promises to be an interesting and useful development.

2. As part of my review of the three Level 2 courses (FREN2120/25, FREN2160/65, FREN2340/45), I considered the mark profiles of each, where the data was available (FREN2120, FREN2340/45 and FREN2160). I noted that the profile was FREN2120 was notably lower than those for FREN2340/45 and FREN2160/65:

FREN2120 – mean 56%, max 71%, min 20%, median 59%
FREN2340 – mean 63%, max 75%, min 20%, median 66%
FREN2345 – mean 60%, max 74%, min 20%, median 65%
FREN2160 – mean 64%, max 77%, min 20%, median 68%

No data was available for FREN2125 or FREN2165. Various factors could explain the divergent mark profile for FREN2120, and I agreed with the Department's Exams Officer that it might be useful for the department to review the mark profiles for these modules for the past 3-4 years, to see if any trends are present, and what might account for them, or whether the data for 2015/16 represents an anomaly.

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

02 September 2016

Dear

Thank you very much for your external examiner's report on the French subject area for the academic session 2015/16. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to thank you for your thorough, detailed and constructive comments on our teaching and assessment procedures. It is reassuring to know that our procedures and standards are commensurate with good practice in the UK. I am very pleased that the students' performance reflects well on the quality of teaching, especially with regard to examples of improved performance within a module after formative feedback. I appreciate your positive comments about the examples of more creative forms of assessment and about the pathways available to students within the degree programme. This is an area that we hope to develop in the next few years, as is the link between our two core Level 1 modules.

Thank you also for drawing attention to two instances of discrepancy within our assessment procedures. The first example – the fact that some colleagues are asking moderators effectively to act as second markers on specific scripts but not a whole sample – will be discussed in our first staff meeting of the year. The second example – the noticeably lower marks for FREN2120 Foundations of Modern French Thought when compared to the Level 2 average – will be discussed as well. As you suggest, we will look at previous years to see if this is a pattern or just a one-off.

I would also like to thank you for all of your support and collegiality during the past year. It has been a pleasure to have you as our external examiner and we are very pleased that you have accepted the offer to return for a fourth session next year.

With all good wishes,

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