

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:	School of Earth & Environment
Subject(s):	<i>Environment and Business</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Environment & Business SOEE2032, 2310, 2570, 2610, 3202, 3270 and 3310
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

Although this is only my second year as an external examiner, I need to stand down from the role at the end of this exam cycle. This is in no way a reflection of the programme, but rather because I have become Head of School at my home institution, and need to focus my time on that role.

This is already a well-developed and established programme. The learning and teaching provision seems extremely sound, and students seem to progress well through the programme. I did make some suggestions for areas to work on last year, and it has been very pleasing to see them being implemented this year. For example, there is much better differentiation at the top end (i.e. between upper second and first class marks) in some of the modules (e.g. SOEE2310), at least partly because the assessment for that module now seems benchmarked against the Business and Management QAA benchmarks.

My experience as an external examiner here has been made very easy by the top-notch admin support, which has allowed the attention to detail by internal markers and moderators to shine through. This is a novel programme that aspires to – and achieves – nationally-leading learning and assessment standards. I wish the team well as they continue to evolve the programme.

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 aims and ILOs are fully commensurate with the award of a BA. Good to see clear progression in ILOs and attainment from year 2 to year 3 of the undergraduate 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.*

Aims and ILOs are comparable with other UK institutions with which I am familiar (e.g. <<>>, <<>>, <<>>). The programme team has done a good job of reinforcing some of the assessment so that it lines up better with the General Business and Management QAA subject benchmarks, as well as the core Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies subject benchmarks used in most of the school.

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.*

No significant changes from last year, so I will repeat my satisfaction:
The programme includes a wide variety of assessment methods that allow comprehensive evaluation of students' performance against the ILOs. In some cases, assessment methods are quite innovative, and I will share these with the teaching team in my own institution (e.g. the individual data collection but then aggregated data analysis format in SOEE2570; hooking the SOEE 3202 coursework around a specified intervention).
Based on the combination of paper-based and VLE-based materials I saw, there appear to be excellent arrangements for marking and moderation that provide a high level of confidence in the assessment process.

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. As last year, the academic standard of the students, particularly by the third year, is impressive. I particularly enjoyed looking through some of the best student work in the Sustainable Consumption (SOEE3202) module and in the Environmental Enterprise Project (SOEE3310), where students demonstrated excellent research and writing skills for this level.
The changes made to the SOEE 2310 now differentiate between very good and truly excellent work.

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 not significant changes this year, as the programme already runs well. However, the incremental changes I recommended to better differentiate students at the top end seem to have gone well.

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.

Students undertaking research: the SOEE2570 course in "Research in Social Science" provides two excellent opportunities for students to hone their research skills through collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data. This module is excellent preparation for the Year 3 Environment Enterprise Project (SOEE3310). At the top end, there is some truly outstanding work for the undergraduate level.

Teaching informed by research: the school has a very strong research team in issues related to the economy, business and sustainability. It was great to see some of this coming through in the modules (e.g. steady state economy in SOEE2610).

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 – everything was clear and timely.

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 – everything I needed. No problem.

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 provided comments in February / March. Nature and level of questions were fine, though there is a reliance on short answer / MC questions in the first year.

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 of the paperwork was in excellent order. Congratulations to both the academic and admin teams on getting this done so well – you made my job easy.

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

Yes. It was great to see a wide range of contemporary topics in the Environment Enterprise Project. I looked at 7 dissertations together with the feedback provided. The marks and feedback were consistent and sufficiently detailed to both explain the marking rationale and to be useful to students. I saw evidence of a careful negotiation process between markers if marks diverged, including using third markers where needed. This level of attention to feedback is great to see.

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 – logistical arrangements and procedures at the board were all very smooth.

Yes, I was satisfied with the recommendations of the board and appreciated the focused discussion where needed.

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

Thank you for making this job both easy and pleasurable. It's great to see such care and attention to detail in the paperwork and entire process.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

School of Earth and Environment
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

21 September 2016

Dear ,

RE: Response to External Examiner's Report (Environment and Business) 2015-16

I would like to thank you again for examining our Environment and Business BA programme. Your comments are an essential part of our quality assurance mechanism and we appreciate your input into our teaching processes.

I am pleased to note that you continue to be impressed with the quality of our programme. You identified a number of modules that you were particularly impressed with – this praise was passed on to the programme delivery team. You also highlighted a number of specific points which I address below.

Examiner overall comments:

This is already a well-developed and established programme. The learning and teaching provision seems extremely sound, and students seem to progress well through the programme. I did make some suggestions for areas to work on last year, and it has been very pleasing to see them being implemented this year. For example, there is much better differentiation at the top end (i.e. between upper second and first class marks) in some of the modules (e.g. SOEE2310), at least partly because the assessment for that module now seems benchmarked against the Business and Management QAA benchmarks.

My experience as an external examiner here has been made very easy by the top-notch admin support, which has allowed the attention to detail by internal markers and moderators to shine through. This is a novel programme that aspires to – and achieves – nationally-leading learning and assessment standards. I wish the team well as they continue to evolve the programme.

On behalf of the programme delivery team I would like to thank you for your efforts in this role as external examiner. Your comments, feedback, and suggestions have helped to improve the programme and to reinforce current good practice.

1. QAA Benchmarks

Examiner's comments: The programme aims and ILOs are fully commensurate with the award of a BA. Good to see clear progression in ILOs and attainment from year 2 to year 3 of the undergraduate programme.

Aims and ILOs are comparable with other UK institutions with which I am familiar (e.g. ...). The programme team has done a good job of reinforcing some of the assessment so that it lines up better with the General Business and Management QAA subject benchmarks, as well as the core Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies subject benchmarks used in most of the school.

Thank you for this comment. Based on your recommendations from last year, the aim is to ensure that there is a focus on ILOs and QAA benchmarks across General Business and Management as well as core Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies. This dual focus is essential to the success of the programme and I am grateful to you for highlighting it.

2. Assessment Methods

Examiner's comments: No significant changes from last year, so I will repeat my satisfaction: The programme includes a wide variety of assessment methods that allow comprehensive evaluation of students' performance against the ILOs. In some cases, assessment methods are quite innovative, and I will share these with the teaching team in my own institution (e.g. the individual data collection but then aggregated data analysis format in SOEE2570; hooking the SOEE 3202 coursework around a specified intervention).

Based on the combination of paper-based and VLE-based materials I saw, there appear to be excellent arrangements for marking and moderation that provide a high level of confidence in the assessment process.

I thank you for the positive feedback, and for highlighting areas of best practice, particularly in modules SOEE2570 and SOEE3202.

3. Achievement of Aims and ALO

Examiner's comments: Yes. As last year, the academic standard of the students, particularly by the third year, is impressive. I particularly enjoyed looking through some of the best student work in the Sustainable Consumption (SOEE3202) module and in the Environmental Enterprise Project (SOEE3310), where students demonstrated excellent research and writing skills for this level. The changes made to the SOEE 2310 now differentiate between very good and truly excellent work.

Thank you for your positive feedback and constructive ideas last year. It was great to see that the implementation of your feedback showed a much clearer differentiation for students at the highest level in SOEE2310.

4. Enhancements since previous academic year

Examiner's comments: There were not significant changes this year, as the programme already runs well. However, the incremental changes I recommended to better differentiate students at the top end seem to have gone well.

Thank you for these positive comments. Your recommended changes were very successful in achieving this differentiation.

5. Research-Led Teaching

Examiner's comments: Students undertaking research: the SOEE2570 course in "Research in Social Science" provides two excellent opportunities for students to hone their research skills through collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data. This module is excellent preparation for the Year 3 Environment Enterprise Project (SOEE3310). At the top end, there is some truly outstanding work for the undergraduate level.

Teaching informed by research: the school has a very strong research team in issues related to the economy, business and sustainability. It was great to see some of this coming through in the modules (e.g. steady state economy in SOEE2610).

The programme delivery team has a strong research focus and it is validating to receive the recognition that our research is being integrated effectively into our teaching. Thank you for these positive comments.

6. Examination Papers

Examiner's comments: *Yes, I provided comments in February / March. Nature and level of questions were fine, though there is a reliance on short answer / MC questions in the first year.*

Yes, all of the paperwork was in excellent order. Congratulations to both the academic and admin teams on getting this done so well – you made my job easy.

The use of MC/Short answer questions will be visited in the next programme delivery team meeting to ensure these methods accurately evaluate our students' learning outcomes. Thank you also for your feedback on exams, which has continued to improve the quality of the exams and the opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning outcomes.

7. Choice of subjects for dissertations

Yes. It was great to see a wide range of contemporary topics in the Environment Enterprise Project. I looked at 7 dissertations together with the feedback provided. The marks and feedback were consistent and sufficiently detailed to both explain the marking rationale and to be useful to students. I saw evidence of a careful negotiation process between markers if marks diverged, including using third markers where needed. This level of attention to feedback is great to see.

The changes to the dissertation module over the last three years has added more flexibility for students in choosing an appropriate topic. Thank you also for the positive feedback on the marking and evaluation of these.

8. Administration

Examiner's comments:

Thank you for making this job both easy and pleasurable. It's great to see such care and attention to detail in the paperwork and entire process.

Logistical arrangements and procedures at the board were all very smooth.

Yes, I was satisfied with the recommendations of the board and appreciated the focused discussion where needed.

Thank you for the feedback and acknowledgement of the administrative team of the school. Their care and attention to detail is exceptional!

I would like to thank you again for your helpful comments relating to this programme.

Yours sincerely,

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