

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:	Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	<p>MA in History and Philosophy of Science: Philosophy of Science modules</p> <p>(Compulsory modules</p> <p>Philosophy of Science: Classic Debates & Current Trends</p> <p>Dissertation</p> <p>Optional modules</p> <p>Topics in the Philosophy of Physics</p> <p>Advanced Topics in the History and Philosophy of Biology</p> <p>Advanced Topics in Realism and Representation in Science</p> <p>Advanced Topics in Metaphysics of Science</p> <p>Analytic Philosophy</p> <p>Metaphysical Philosophy</p> <p>Mind, Language and Representation)</p>
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

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 ILOs were appropriate for an award at this level.

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.

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.*

Assessment was primarily by coursework essays for modules, and a dissertation, as standard in programmes of this sort, and as appropriate for assessing sustained critical engagement with module topics and independent thinking.

There was some excellent student work produced, indicative of high quality research-led teaching, and appropriate learning, and assessment methods.

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 were offered a range of topics to write on, and generally rose to the challenge. The range showed as one would expect for a good MA programme – I saw very little really weak work, a lot of solid work and some excellent pieces.

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.

N/A This is my first year as examiner.

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.

All of the modules I looked at showed evidence of research led teaching, with students responding to issues at the forefront of debates. There were some excellent dissertations suggesting that students were well-guided in their own research.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements**9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements**

Fine.

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 the material was sufficient.

- 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?**

N/A for the MA.

- 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. The markers comment sheets were particularly helpful in this regard.

- 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?**

Yes. I did not attend the MA meeting in person, but communication was good throughout and I was happy with the recommendations.

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

To the best of my knowledge.

Other comments

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

[Report sent to <<>> in October]:

I received scripts and marks for the following modules:

HPSC5140M: HPS Dissertation

HPSC5400M: Advanced Topics in History and Philosophy of Biology

HPSC5510M: Advanced Topics in Realism and Representation in Science

HPSC5610M: Advanced Topics in Metaphysics of Science

HPSC5620M: Philosophy of Science: Classic Debates and Current Trends

HPSC5910M: HPS Extended Dissertation

For all of these, I reviewed the feedback and compared feedback with marks. Additionally, I read a sample of the scripts from across the range of modules. In light of this I am happy to confirm that the marking procedures and standards appear to have been applied appropriately and that the marks are correct. I particularly commend the transparency in the comments in the 'Additional Information' section of the marksheet, which explained how agreement had been reached in cases of discrepancy between markers.

I note that one module (HPSC5620M) used a different set of mark sheets from the others, where it was clear that the two markers had marked and completed feedback independently before discussing, agreeing mark, and then producing a final joint feedback sheet. The other mark and feedback sheet was a document completed by the first marker after marks had been agreed. Either forms seemed OK, though it was clearer with this second set of mark sheets that the two markers had produced their initial marks and feedback independently and only then compared notes to come to a joint grade. As the Code of Practice on Assessment states that all PGT work is double-marked, after which an agreed mark is reached, I am assuming that this is the procedure that was applied for all the modules looked at, though this wasn't clear from the mark and feedback sheet. I see the point of producing a single feedback sheet with the first marker having responsibility for passing on the feedback, but given that there will in cases of double marking, always be two full sets of markers' comments, it would make sense to include two sections in the feedback on this form and reproduce both sets of comments there (and to clarify that markers completed their comments independently). In practice, markers did tend to c&p both sets of comments in to the form anyway, so why not make this clear with two boxes of comments, for first and second marker?

In terms of the content of the modules and quality of the work assessed, I have nothing but praise. Students are clearly being offered research led teaching at the highest standard, and are rising to the challenge of producing thoughtful and well researched responses to questions at the cutting edge of debates in the philosophy of science. I obviously cannot comment on the History of Science component, but in terms of the Philosophy of Science, this looks to be an excellent MA programme.