

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015 – 2016  
**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 Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
Subject(s):	<i>Religious Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Religious Studies and Global Development MA Religion and Public Life MA Theology and Religious Studies THE05050M Religions and Global Development THE05075M Dissertation (Religious Studies and Global Development) THE05175M Muslims, Multiculturalism and the State THE05325M Religion and Society: Research Process and Methods THE05355M Religion, Society and Public Life THE05580M Dissertation THE05900M Theology and Religious Studies: Extended Dissertation
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](mailto: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 matters for 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?*

I was provided with the previous 2 years reports.

***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*

NA – this is my first year

## 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 learning outcomes are entirely appropriate for a level 7 programme.  
The standards achieved by students in the programme are commensurate with M level awards.

### 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 programme design, learning outcomes and content meet the guidelines provided in the benchmark statement for the area (2014 Appendix A)  
The structure and content of the programmes meet the disciplinary expectations of comparable M level courses.

### 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

The assessment scheme for each module is appropriate to the content, and designed for students to achieve M level.  
The very thorough and commendably personalised feedback shows the detailed support and formative oversight of teaching, which enables students to achieve to their highest potential.

### 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 students achieved standards expected at level 7  
It is not possible to make judgements about overall cohort because of the small numbers of students examined on each module. Moreover, such comments should be evidence based, on data over more than one year – such as would be evident in a programme Annual Review.

### 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

NA

### 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.*

None known

### 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.*

It is clearly evident from the research profiles of colleagues at the University of Leeds that their interests overlap with elements of the MA programme design. It is commendable to see evidence of the research interests and research skills of academic teachers in their critical formative feedback to students.

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

NA

## 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

NA

## 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.*

The electronic handbook and core guidance for external examiners from the University are sufficient to make the required judgements.

It may be useful to define quite specifically a set (or electronic pack) of materials that should be provided to external examiners in addition to the quality assurance guidance in the EE Handbook: to include 2 or 3 years of previous EE reports, and programme responses, and at least the last year's programme Annual Review, and any developments or changes to the programmes. This would provide the EE with a better understanding of the programme and provide appropriate evidence to answer the questions in the EE report form. (This may require an extension of 2.5 of the EE Handbook; while 2.5.2 allows for EEs and heads of schools to specify extra material, it may be useful to standardise what this includes – especially the programme Annual Review)

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, these were sent to me with the scripts and mark sheets.

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?

These would have been provided to my predecessor.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes.

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

There was a good range of topics, entirely appropriate to the varied foci of the MA programmes examined. The assessment of the dissertations was in accord with national expectations. Grading of the assignments was detailed and thorough.

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?

The paperwork prior to the meeting was sent rather close to the board event.

I did not attend the meeting as I was advised this was not expected and I was informed of the date of the meeting too close to include it in my diary.

I was not informed of the final recommendations of the board, but I would not expect to be unless there was some discrepancy that required my input. However, I would expect to see minutes of the recommendations and outcomes of the board.

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

Unknown as I did not attend the board.

## Other comments

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

There is some really excellent work across the modules and programmes by the students.

The marks assigned are appropriate and marking is robust with carefully considered judgements according to the marking criteria.

Processes for marking are sound, but there could be a little more consistency in use of templates and explicit evidence of decisions to reach agreed grades where there were discrepancies between first and second markers.

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**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

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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*

No matters require 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?*

**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 programme aims and ILOs were entirely appropriate for an M level degree in the modules which I examined. The standards are certainly in line with comparable institutions for which I have examined.
  
- 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 were in line with the national benchmarks for the subjects concerned.
  
- 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs**
  - *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
  - *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

The assessment methods were perfectly satisfactory. The markers' comments were usually very detailed and provided clear justification as to how the mark had been awarded. Usually there were also helpful comments by the second examiner (though not in the case of THEO 5100M). It is also a good policy to bring in a third marker when there was substantial disagreement between the first two markers (as happened in the case of THEO 5325M). For the most part the scripts were well-researched and well informed which suggests that the candidates have been well taught. The design and structure of the assessment methods and the arrangements for marking were perfectly satisfactory.
  
- 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, students were given ample opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs. The strengths of the students as a cohort: good use usually made of secondary material; the assignments were generally well written and well researched; weaker candidates tended to present assignments which lacked coherent structure and were more descriptive than analytical.
  
- 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 not asked to mark M level students last year.
  
- 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.*

It is clear that the research interests of the individual lecturers had been fed into the teaching of the assignments which they supervised. Some of the projects undertaken were very ambitious – perhaps overly so in some cases for a Master's programme.
  
- 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

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 provided with a copy of the documentation relevant to each of the programmes which I examined and my role and responsibility as examiner were clearly defined.

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 – perfectly satisfactory.

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 detailed assessments and the projects undertaken were generally appropriate for a Master's degree.

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 – and the scripts I received were very clearly marked and annotated with great detail and care. This aspect was particularly commendable.

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

Yes – though in a couple of cases the choice of subject was perhaps too ambitious for a Master's degree programme. The standard and methods of assessment were entirely appropriate.

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 attend the examination board and the recommendations were entirely fair. The administrative arrangements were extremely satisfactory.

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

Yes – this was another aspect which was particularly commendable.

Other comments

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