

# 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:	POLIS
Subject(s):	Security, International Relations
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED2558 Security Studies PIED3405 Israel: Politics and Society PIED3407 Israel: Politics and Society PIED3750 UG Dissertation
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA International Relations

#### 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*

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*

I have been consistently impressed with the organization of the external process at Leeds. <<>> and <<>> team have communicated with me in a timely fashion, sent me materials in an orderly fashion and maintained high standards of professionalism throughout. The moderation and assessment process is an example of good practice across the board. Special cases are treated rigorously and every effort is made to ensure that the process is fair and transparent. When concerns were raised about the standard of isolated modules steps did appear to have been taken to remedy any issues raised. The only consistent issue I raised which does not seem to have been addressed is variation and modernisation of assessment methods. The material I was provided with was uniformly in the form of essay or exam. A more dynamic range of assessments might enhance the quality of the student experience and learning. Other than that, it has been a pleasure to be the external for such a well-run and intellectually rigorous 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.*
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.*
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.*
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.*
5. **For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum**
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.*
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.*
8. **Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

## 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 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.*

**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. Module leaders need to ensure that questions do not simply repeat previous years and there should be some variation between original questions and resits.

**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. No concerns here.

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

Yes. Assessment was 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?**

Exemplary. Very professional and creates a hugely positive impression of the programme and the University as a whole. I did attend the meeting and was satisfied with the board's recommendations.

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

Hugely rigorous process that would be a model for other institutions. Transparent, fair and exhaustive.

**Other comments**

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

Module outlines could be given a more rigorous revision each summer to ensure that the reading is not just a top up – otherwise major changes in the field and new developments in world politics might not be addressed adequately.

The programme might wish to consider step marking – this has been a useful mechanism to reduce inconsistent marking across modules and seems to work in other universities.

Feedback is provided at a really extensive level. Examiners could be encouraged to highlight good as well as bad aspects of writing more systematically.

<<>>

Professor of International Relations  
Head of the School of Politics and International Studies  
University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane,  
Leeds, West Yorkshire,  
LS 28 5PP

27 October 2016

Dear <<>>

I am writing to thank you for your external examiner's report for academic year 2015-16. I have taken over from <<>> as Head of POLIS. <<>> passed on your report, which I have read. It has also been discussed in the School's Committee on Student Education.

We are encouraged by your report. We are particularly pleased that you observed high quality student work and you thought this was 'indicative of very impressive learning and teaching'. We also welcome your comment on the use of videos as pedagogical tools and the clear instruction this gives to students on issues such as referencing and plagiarism. We are reassured that you found our administrative process to be 'exemplary'.

We also note your view on the need for more variation in assessment methods. We agree that this would provide students with greater opportunity to develop key transferable skills. I would respond by noting that examiners who focused on other parts of the school have noted a wide-variety of assessment practice. Our students are exposed to these methods of assessment on other parts of their programme. However, your advice is well-taken and it has been passed on to the relevant tutors. We also take on board your comment on the need to ensure that questions do not simply repeat previous years and there should be some variation between original questions and resits.

I understand this is your final report for us. May I take the opportunity therefore to thank you not only for this report but also for your contributions during your full term as external examiner.

Sincerely

<<>>

cc. pro-Dean for Student Education <<>>; Director of Student Education, <<>>; Head of Quality Assurance, University of Leeds

**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:	Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	International Relations
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED2501 Theories of International Relations PIED3502 The Responsibility to Protect and to Prosecute PIED3750 UG Dissertation
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*

N/A

**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 sample of modules I saw indicated a programme operating at a high levels of quality and diversity, contributing to a coherent and appropriate set of learning outcomes. The standards contained in the modules, both in planning and in student work produced, comfortably meet the standards appropriate for 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, the modules I saw meet this standard. The programme being run at Leeds is clearly on a par with national competitors of the top tier, and the strongest students are comparable to those at any institution.

**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 on modules was thorough and well-balanced: sufficient to allow development in response to feedback over time. The overall quality of output from the students indicates a solid baseline of quality in the core of the cohort, while also providing scope for the strongest students to excel. Work receiving grades at the top of the range was of impressive quality.

In some cases, e.g. IR theory, the quantity of feedback given was exceptional, e.g. individual question comments from two different markers on exam questions. This is admirable, staff are to be commended, and it exceeds what I think occurs at comparator institutions. I wonder if you might be able to do just a little less in this area, sparing staff time accordingly, without a diminution in the quality of service perceived by students. But that is for you to consider in light of other priorities.

**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 in the main showed the ability to relay a solid core of knowledge of the debates and issues on which questions were set, and at the upper end there was evidence of levels of independent thought and muscular analytical ability of the highest level.

**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.*

This was already apparent last year but even more so this year: Feedback through GradeMark seems to be working well, with no loss of quantity or quality of feedback compared to other formats.

The explicit 'feed forward' advice also maximises clarity and utility and is to be commended.

**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 evidence of a clear connection between the research expertise of module leaders and the material taught/assessed on the modules, and this is to be commended.

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

## 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

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?

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. The School was extremely well-organised in its dealings with me and events on the day were conducted with care and efficiency.

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

Yes. A separate meeting was held to consider such cases, and this was done with exceptional care, thoroughness and diligence. As I have noted before, and wish to again: there are many impressive things about the process at Leeds, but I have always been especially and exceptionally impressed by the care, consideration and thoroughness with which cases requiring consideration on these grounds are handled. What I have witnessed in this area during my visits to Leeds sets a gold standard for the sector.

## Other comments

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

Overall, I was very satisfied with the standard of work I scrutinised as external examiner, and with the School's administrative processes. The School as a whole, and the individual staff working on those modules I saw, are to be commended for the skill, professionalism and commitment they bring to the task of student assessment.

<<>>

Professor of International Relations  
Head of the School of Politics and International Studies  
University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane,  
Leeds, West Yorkshire,  
LS 28 5PP

27 October 2016

Dear <<>>

I am writing to thank you for your external examiner's report for academic year 2015-16. I have taken over from <<>> as Head of POLIS. <<>> passed on your report, which I have read. It has also been discussed in the School's Committee on Student Education.

We are very encouraged by your report. We are particularly pleased that you observed 'a programme operating at high levels of quality and diversity, contributing to a coherent and appropriate set of learning outcomes.' We are also pleased that you observed 'exceptional quantities of feedback', which in your view went beyond what occurs in comparator institutions. Your comment that our processes set 'a gold standard' is very pleasing.

May I take the opportunity to again thank you for this report and for your continuing service as external examiner.

Sincerely

<<>>

cc. pro-Dean for Student Education <<>>; Director of Student Education, <<>>; Head of Quality Assurance, University of Leeds



## 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:	POLIS
Subject(s):	<i>International Relations</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED2463, 2703, 3503, 3505, 3565, 3603, 3701, 3403, 3402, 3705 (dissertation – part).
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

**Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner****Completed report**

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## 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 intended learning outcomes are fully appropriate to the content and structure of the modules, and the standards were appropriate for the 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.*

The aims and ILOs were comparable with similar programmes at other institutions and conformed to national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

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.*

I looked at the same modules as last year, and my comments are very similar. The assessment mainly consists of exams and essays, with some modules having some different kinds of assessed coursework. The variations in assessment were quite appropriate (for example the different forms of assessment on the Analysing Data module), and in some cases – the ‘critical analysis’ in the Political Psychology module – may provide some ideas for other module leaders that they could use to have more variation in assessment. In the cases of the more conventional assessed work, they still seemed very much to purpose in terms of achieving ILOs, as the very strong student performance demonstrated. The feedback given by academics on coursework and exams was also very strong: helpful for students and also a good indicator of why particular marks were given. As with last year, I found the ‘feed-forward’ idea especially useful for showing students how to use the feedback for future work.

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.*

In line with the previous academic year, the standard of work was quite strong overall, especially at Year 3. The outcomes compare well with student performance on comparable courses.

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.*

Much of what was done was identical to last year, so there is not much to add here.

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 final year modules demonstrate more influence of research in the curriculum, where the breadth of the programme really allowed for some interesting specialist modules.

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

**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 given more than enough material to make judgements in line with my role. In many cases I was provided all coursework that was submitted and marked through grademark.

**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.*

I received all necessary documentation, and the role was very well-defined. I should add that the administration of POLIS was exemplary in ensuring the correct material and documentation was sent, in line with the role. I was asked to perform the exact tasks as specified in the policy guidance for external examiners, all of which was very clear and in line with what most institutions require.

**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 sent all draft examination papers and assessment questions. The level of questions was entirely appropriate, and in cases where I thought minor modifications were necessary I communicated this.

**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 received more than enough work to make confident evaluations. All the material I received – both exams and coursework – had comments/feedback. I thought the use of feedback forms for exams made the process much easier.

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

The dissertations I looked at were all quite strong, and the subjects did indeed look 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?**

As with last year, I was very impressed with the efficiency of the administration, and the exam boards were run very smoothly, and had a good balance between reporting and allowing for the discussion of more difficult cases, including input from the external examiners. The regulations for things like borderline candidates were made very clear, and the regulations at Leeds are very clear and sensible overall. I was able to attend the meetings, and was very satisfied with all the recommendations made.

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

As with last year, it is helpful to have the externals at the board dealing with both mitigating circumstances and borderline candidates, which gives insight to the process and consultation on bigger decisions. Overall, the decisions made in this process were done exceedingly well, with much care and attention to the students.

**Other comments**

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

<<>>

Professor of International Relations  
Head of the School of Politics and International Studies  
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27 October 2016

Dear <<>>

I am writing to thank you for your external examiner's report for academic year 2015-16. I have taken over from <<>> as Head of POLIS. He passed on your report, which I have read. It has also been discussed in the School's Committee on Student Education.

We are encouraged by your report. We are particularly pleased by your comments on the feedback we provide on student coursework, which you described as very strong and helpful. The 'feed-forward' idea does appear to be especially useful. We are also pleased by your description of our documentation and processes as exemplary.

I understand this is your final report for us. May I take the opportunity therefore to thank you not only for this report but also for your contribution during your full term as external examiner.

Sincerely

<<>>

cc. pro-Dean for Student Education <<>>; Director of Student Education, <<>>; Head of Quality Assurance, University of Leeds