

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:	Mechanical Engineering
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Mechanical Engineering; Automotive Engineering; Mechanical with Nuclear Engineering
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BEng / MEng

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

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 ILOs for the modules reviewed are appropriate for each level of the programme, and contribute in a coherent manner to each programme's overall aims and structure.

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 programmes' aims are comparable with those of other highly regarded universities and meet the requirements of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

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 are appropriate for the aims of the programmes and provide good discrimination of student ability. It is commendable that many modules include a substantial coursework element which will have a formative role as well as assessing performance outside a traditional exam environment. The marking standards appear to be fair, consistent and reliable.

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.*

Academic standards are high: degree classifications are a true measure of achievement.

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.

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 substantial individual and team projects are mostly related to academics' research and reflect the high quality of research being undertaken in the School.

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?**

Draft examination papers were received in good time, enabling my comments to be considered by the module examiners. I suggested a number of minor changes which were actioned. Otherwise questions were appropriate and of the expected standard.

- 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 exam scripts for modules contributing to the degree award, all individual and team projects, and a selection of other coursework were available to me. This was ample to make a confident evaluation.

Marking was clear and auditable. Despite the complexity of the multiple databases, and the unusual practice of mapping to the 2.0 to 9.0 scale, I was able to follow example marks through from exam/coursework scripts to module marks.

This year, for the examples inspected, the annotation on the front of exam scripts was complete and the evidence of checking consistent with documented procedures was much better.

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

The subject matter for projects was wide ranging, with a high degree of challenge. The marking was fair, and it is encouraging that a wide marking range is achieved, evidencing that the marking scheme facilities are proper degree of discrimination.

- 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 able to attend the meeting, and was happy with the recommendations of the board.

We were able to access marks electronically in the morning before the board, being provided with module and programme results lists in spreadsheet form.

Although we were provided with access to the VLE, and instructions on how to drill down to find individual pieces of coursework, the process was quite complex and not possible to master in the short time available on the day. A little more 'hand holding' would be useful.

I was able to talk to one student about their experiences; I find being able to talk to students a very useful part of the process, and thank you for inviting me to meet students in May (although I was not able to come along). The student I met was very positive about the course.

- 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

In contrast to last year, the exam scripts inspected followed procedures in terms of marking and checking. The overall mark was clearly stated on the front of each exam script, and it was clear how the mark was arrived at. The checking process, and any subsequent corrections, were also clearly documented for each exam.

On the morning of the exam board, it would be useful to have a hardcopy of the programme structure as a reminder and to put the various modules into context. (This could just be in the form of copies of the 'mini-handbooks' given to students in each year of study).

It was pleasing to see that the problems with Thermofluids 3 last year had not reoccurred, and that the module ran smoothly this year.

As previously commented, the range of module mean marks is quite large. I would consider a mean mark in the range 50-70% to be 'normal'. Last year 13 modules had means outside this range, whereas this year it was down to 10 (and of these 3 were just fractionally over 70.0%), so an improvement. However, I would still be concerned that (for example) a student opting to do MECH5510M with an average of 77.3% (71 students) would have had an unfair advantage compared to a student opting to do MECH5570M Introduction to Tribology with a more reasonable mean of 61% (55 students).

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

16 November 2016

Dear

Response to your External Examiner's Report for our Product Design Programmes

Thank you for your recent report. We were pleased to note your generally positive views of these programmes and the procedures used to assess them. In response to the specific queries in your report our responses are as follows.

Need for information on the programmes of study early in academic year

We will provide a pack of information on our programmes of study early next academic year. We will also provide the handbook for every PDES module.

Further Assistance with your access to coursework

This is a very useful suggestion and next year we propose to provide you with a representative sample of coursework from the VLE in a convenient, electronic format.

Reading Lists

Next year we will ensure all module leaders provide a reading list for students.

Inappropriate use of first person in reports

We advise students to use 3rd person in past tense and will provide a copy of the guidance we give to students on this matter.

I would be very happy to provide any further information or talk to you in person if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

Head of School