

**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 and Environment
Subject(s):	<i>Structural Geology with Geophysics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc in Structural Geology with Geophysics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

**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*

. Overall this is an excellent course. However, a number of issues were raised by the students during the individual and group feedback sessions that should be addressed.

**Feedback:** **a)** Please ensure that all individual feedback is provided to students in a timely manner, and certainly within the School's 3 working week deadline. Please inform the students promptly in cases where there is good reason (e.g. staff illness) for delay and, where possible, provide students with a revised return date. **b)** Please ensure that all feedback makes it clear *why* a student achieved a particular mark. With reference to the marking criteria, explain what the student did well, and what the student needs to improve. **c)** Students highlighted group feedback sessions as being particularly valuable. I recommend that a short (e.g. 30 minute) group feedback session is scheduled to take place soon after *each* piece of assessed coursework is returned. Clearly there will be some logistical issues to overcome, but I think the benefits in terms of improved student learning and satisfaction will make it worthwhile.

**Weighting of assessed coursework:** Some pieces of coursework seem to involve a large amount of effort for a relatively small return, in terms of the total marks allocated. Specific examples where students raised this issue include the Kingdom seismic interpretation exercise, and the contour map exercise. Please review mark weightings and amend the weightings/course content as appropriate.

**Shared modules:** Students highlighted issues with classes shared between the Structural Geologists and Exploration Geophysicists. Specifically, students with a geology background felt that some geological elements of these modules were "a waste of time". Nevertheless, I can see academic benefits in revising and reinforcing fundamental concepts, and also efficiency/resource benefits for sharing material with the Exploration Geophysicists. A possible solution would be to "pair up" Structural Geology and Exploration Geophysics students. In this way, the geology student will be able to mentor the geophysicist and *vice versa*; the mentor/mentee role would alternate depending on the course content each week. Students should benefit from peer learning, and the student with the prior

geological (or geophysical) expertise would be forced to re-evaluate their own understanding in order to support their mentee. I recommend that the SG and XGP course teams look into this, or alternative, solutions for improving student experience and learning within the shared modules.

**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 Aims, Intended Learning Outcomes and content are appropriate to the Programme. The standards are commensurate with the level of MSc.
  
- 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 MSc in Structural Geology with Geophysics is unique in the UK. However, the Aims and ILOs are commensurate with other MSc programmes.
  
- 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.*

A range of assessment methods are used (e.g. poster presentations, practical work, oral presentations, written reports); these are appropriate to the ILOs. The standard of oral presentations was particularly high. I am satisfied that the arrangements for marking of modules and classification of awards are rigorous and fair to all students.
  
- 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.*

I read a sample (50%) of the MSc Dissertation project reports. The Dissertation project gives the students an opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme-level Aims and ILOs. The range of marks achieved in the Dissertation across the cohort is in line with expectations. The Dissertation allows the strongest students to excel and effectively differentiates the weaker from the stronger students.
  
- 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.*

The course team has introduced a new module in Integrated Subsurface Analysis, which pulls together previously disparate content. Students were generally very positive about the module, whilst recognising inevitable, but minor, "teething" issues. The Petrophysics element of this module was particularly praised by students.

I note that Dissertation projects are now marked by at least one supervisor, in line with my previous recommendation.
  
- 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 course team are research active and familiar with the latest developments in structural geology. The skills gained during the course will be excellent preparation for PhD research in structural geology. The Dissertation gives students the opportunity to undertake a semi-independent research project. Of the Dissertation reports I read, I think two contain research that is close to publishable standard.
  
- 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.*

Yes, I received access to appropriate materials. In addition to the Dissertations, I looked in detail at the Salt Tectonics exercise and Spain Field Trip poster presentations. These pieces of coursework helped to provide insight into the students' capabilities.

**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. My request for additional materials (student information pack for the Dissertation module) was promptly addressed by the School.

**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 asked to comment on the draft examination papers for SOEE5157M and SOEE5174. The nature and level of the questions were appropriate to the level and content of the modules.

**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 – see (10) above.

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

Yes. The choice of subjects was appropriate. Two Dissertations contained a smaller component of structural geology than might have been expected, but with valid/appropriate reasons.

**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 attended the Board of Examiners meeting and was satisfied by the administrative arrangements and recommendations of the Board.

**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**

The programme continues to offer unique, MSc level training in Structural Geology within the UK. Areas of best practice include: 1) the Integrated Subsurface Analysis module, and in particular the Petrophysics element; 2) the group feedback sessions currently offered by certain members of staff; 3) the assessment and format of the Spain field trip; and 4) the diversity and quality of Dissertation projects on offer.

Other issues to consider are as follows.

Length of the course: Students mentioned that the final week of the course (presentations, vivas and feedback) extends beyond the length of typically student accommodation tenancies. It might be helpful if the course team flags this issue to new students at the start of the year, and asks the University to provide a list of cost-effective B&B options available in student residences for the final week.

Administrative and technical support: Without exception, students highlighted the high quality of administrative and technical support provided within the School. Students were particularly appreciative of assistance received from the School's Student Education Service Officer/Taught Postgraduate Administrator and Geoscience Software & Data Support Officer. These individuals clearly contribute to the continued success of the programme and should be commended.

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



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

16 December 2016

**Re: Response to External Examiner's report – MSc Structural Geology with Geophysics**

Dear

I thank you sincerely for your extremely helpful comments and feedback on this course as well as your visit to Leeds during the presentations week. Your commitment to helping us maintain the standard and quality of the course is greatly appreciated.

I was happy to read from your report that overall you found the course appropriate in terms of the intended learning outcomes, that in general it is working well and that it offers a good learning experience based on staff expertise and industry connections. I acknowledge that you have raised some concerns, to which we respond below.

You raised concerns that some feedback was delayed by a significant amount beyond the School rule of 15 working days and that there was no communication to the students of the cause or expected extent of this delay. I agree that this was a significant issue this year in semester 2 and it will be addressed in the coming year by regular communication with the staff in question to ensure that timely feedback is provided. We will also look into providing a group feedback session for each piece of coursework as suggested, as this is already done in many modules and is recognised as an effective way of providing feedback. We have also already adjusted weighting of some assessed coursework as suggested, as this issue was recognised to have occurred in semester 2.

In terms of the shared teaching with XGP, this is done as a part of the new integrated module SOEE5174M and as such is currently still being reviewed and modified. We will look into separating some of the teaching so that both the XGP and the SGeol students will be able to use their time more efficiently in terms of module content and learning outcomes, while maintaining the need to revise fundamental concepts. Pairing up students from the different courses could certainly be one way of achieving this.

The accommodation concerns potentially occurring during their final week were flagged up by the PL during the induction week. Inexpensive accommodation is available on campus on a short term basis.

I am glad to note that the changes made in the past year based on comments from your previous report have been effective, as these same issues have not arisen this year. Most importantly, providing guidelines to the supervisors regarding a minimum number of

supervisory sessions has been effective, and the data quality for the projects has been satisfactory throughout.

The recommendation to have at least one supervisor to mark the projects has also been taken on board.

We completely agree with the comment about the high quality of the support staff and would not like to see any changes happening to the make-up of the team.

Finally, my sincere thanks again for your contribution this year and in the coming year. We aim at maintaining and continually improving the high standards of the programme, and this process would not be possible without your valuable input as external examiner.

Yours sincerely,

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**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:	Environment
Subject(s):	<i>Structural Geology with Geophysics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
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**Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**

**Completed report**

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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  
I think the course is in a good place but do think some minor improvements could be made. Its up to you to determine if they are urgent or not.*

**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.*

I am quite satisfied that the aims, content and learning outcomes of the course are of the appropriate level for an MSc qualification.

**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.*

I am not in position to comment on this.

**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 believe that the assessment methods fair and appropriate, however the occasional build-up of course work may be a problem, e.g. this year's students felt this was a problem during the period leading up to Christmas. This need to be monitored and addressed appropriately.

This is my third year undertaking this role and it's clear that the students find the course intense, but highly informative and enjoyable. I would not like to see the course become any more intense (with regards workload) to the point at which it starts to have a negative impact on learning experience. The length a module takes to complete should relate, to some extent, the level of knowledge gained (or the potential impact of the knowledge gained) and also reflect the amount of marks as stake. Could you please give this some thought?

We had consistent feedback from the students, who as a group were of the opinion that some of the teaching staff was disinterested in the subject they were teaching– this is unacceptable and need to be addressed.

**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, coursework, exams and summer dissertation provide ample opportunity for student to demonstrate their ability. Given the current economic climate and lack of job opportunities its clear the students, as a group, worked very hard throughout the year.

**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.*

It was great to see the integrated module included in the course this year. The module was clearly appreciated by the students and is a welcome addition to the course.

**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.*

NA

**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.*

Yes it 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?

I did not receive any this year (or they didn't reach me)?

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.

I don't remember seeing any marks or annotations on the scripts.

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

I thought the scope of the projects was varied and that data made available to students was again of a high standard.

The course from a geological prospective is about structural geology although I accept that a more geophysical oriented project could also be appropriate. Notwithstanding that I think that the thesis should reflect the title of the course and have a high structural content. While It's fine to integrate other aspects of geology, it should not replace the structural content. I would encourage supervisors to keep students reminded of this.

I would also encourage supervisors, to encourage students to assess (and discuss) alternate structural models with some discussion of the merits of each before settling on a final model – it's a trap I see people fall into all too often in industry and one a number of students fell in this year..

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

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

Support staff are a critical part of the team and are as important as academic to success of the program. I have been informed some changes may be made this year. I would like to take this opportunity to say its clear the course is well administered and runs relatively smoothly and that every year we consistently get positive feedback from students. I think it would be a mistake to break up a good team.

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



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

09 November 2016

**Re: Response to External Examiner's report – MSc Structural Geology with Geophysics**

Dear

Firstly, I wish to sincerely thank you for the time and effort you have put into your review of the course and your extremely helpful comments and feedback as well as your visit to Leeds during the presentations week, they are all greatly appreciated.

I was happy to read from your report that overall you found the course appropriate in terms of the intended learning outcomes, that in general it is working well and that it offers a good learning experience based on staff expertise and industry connections. We acknowledge that you have raised some concerns, to which we respond below.

You raised concerns that there was some deadline bunching toward the end of semester 1. This was caused by staff illness and was therefore an exceptional outcome and not planned. However, we have made some changes to the distribution of the assessed coursework deadlines so that this issue will hopefully not occur this year. We agree that the intensity of the course is at its upper limit and we have no plans to increase the workload. We do believe that the learning outcomes do reflect the current workload and the length of the modules: the students gain a significant amount of information in the short time of the modules and the course as a whole. However, we are aware that this needs to be continuously monitored, and in coming months this structure and practices related assessment will receive particular scrutiny as a result of a University project on Assessment, endorsed strongly by our new Deputy Vice Chancellor for Student Education.

You have reported that students identified that some staff appeared 'disinterested in the subject they were teaching'. The lack engagement of some teaching staff had already been raised directly by students and we have made some changes in order to try to address that. Reduction of the assessment workload of the staff in question and better communication are the most important of these changes; we anticipate that this will improve engagement and will monitor this in future.

We are glad to note that the changes made in the past year based on previous report's comments have been effective, as these same issues have not arisen this year. Most importantly, providing guidelines to the supervisors regarding a minimum number of supervisory sessions has been effective, and the data quality for the projects has been

satisfactory throughout. We will keep emphasising the importance of alternative models to all students throughout the year, and hope that an increasing number of students apply that in their final projects.

We fully concur with you on the high quality and dedication of the support staff.

Finally, our sincere thanks again for your contribution this year and in the coming year. We aim at maintaining and continually improving the high standards of the programme, and this process would not be possible without the valuable input from the external examiners.

Yours sincerely,

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