

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:	Languages, Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	Greek, Latin, Classical Civilisation, Classics
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All Single and Joint Honours BA programmes in Greek and in Latin (main examination diet and resit examination diet), MA Dissertations, and the language part of the MA in Classical Studies
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA, 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?

N/A (this is my final year as external examiner)

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

Although I thought that session 2014-2015 was my last year as external examiner in Greek/Latin/Classics courses at the University of Leeds, in October 2015 <<>> contacted me and asked me if I would be willing to extent my stint as external examiner for one more year, namely session 2015-2016, in order that I may see the last linguistic cohort of students out, since the language degrees were being phased out from the curriculum. I accepted this invitation and scrutinized the following papers: Beginners' Latin, Advanced Latin Grammar 1 and 2.

As I have said previously, it was a pleasure for me to have helped the colleagues in Classics at Leeds throughout my four/five-year term of office as external examiner. During this period I witnessed the introduction and successful running of interesting "linguistic pathway" courses

and of the imaginative course entitled “research project for linguists”, which in my final or penultimate year as external examiner proved to be extremely fruitful for students who took the initiative to break free from the “commentary format” that such projects tended to take in the past. These courses constitute major opportunities for independent research at undergraduate level, especially since they are the ideal stepping-stones to students preparing for postgraduate studies. Research-led teaching is an undeniable feature of Classics at Leeds in all shapes and forms, and I hope that the University will continue to give colleagues the opportunity to engage with this important aspect of the curriculum.

From the perspective of procedures, my experience in Leeds was mixed and it is undeniable that there were ups and downs in the way in which the examining system was administratively run. Now that the subject area of Classics is part of a larger school that has established structures and strong administrative support I was pleased to see that the integration of past practices into the new system was done smoothly and effectively, and that there was a mutually beneficial process of exchanging ideas regarding how best to enhance the student experience. Making sure that students are not disadvantaged in any way should, in my view, be the ultimate criterion for the implementation or discontinuation of administrative procedures at all levels, including the consideration of mitigating circumstances and the return of feedback. I wish colleagues in Classics all the best in their new environment, which, I am sure, will profit from the experience of a dynamic and engaging subject area.

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 were appropriate for the awards given in the language papers I 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.*

Yes, they did.

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 (coursework exercises, class tests, and examinations) are entirely appropriate to the ILOs of the courses I examined. Internal marking was done efficiently and internal moderation was excellent.

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 standards were (on the whole) comparable to the standards of last 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

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.

See my comments under question 3.

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.

Classics / Greek / Latin students in Leeds benefit from first-rate, research-led teaching conducted by colleagues of international reputation, whose books are included in undergraduate reading lists in HEIs in the UK and abroad.

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, this was sent to me by <<>> as 2/11/2015.

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, all this was supplied very efficiently.

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 to both questions.

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 to both questions.

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

Yes to both questions.

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 cannot answer part of this question; I was unable to attend the examiners' board because it clashed with another engagement I had to attend; however, I am confident that my views were accurately reported and fairly represented at the meeting.

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

I have no idea. Please see question 15.

Other comments

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

On 9 June 2016 <>> in <>> capacity as examinations officer very efficiently and politely contacted me and asked me the following: "On the general question of how best to record your input to the module marks meeting *in absentia*: may I suggest that you write up a short report (including remarks on the above question if you see fit)? I can then read this out in the meeting under agenda item 7. (I know that such issues as the marking methodology might be better addressed in your formal report, but it would be very helpful to us to have your input sooner rather than later.)" I responded with the following comments on the marking of language modules:

"The question you ask me had already been put to me last year (I believe, and perhaps even the year before last, I now cannot remember). Then as now my view is/was that the most appropriate way forward is to apply judgement relevant to the Grade Descriptors and arrive at a Millican mark for each section of the question paper (*not* for each question within a section but for each section as a whole; so if there are Sections A, B, C, D in an examination paper, and each Section has 23 grammatical questions, there should be on the coversheet of the examination script ***only*** four Millican marks, one for each Section). The mark should be arrived at NOT subjectively, as you say in your email below and in the attached document. "Subjective" is a misleading adjective in this case and should be qualified. The final grade for each Section should be arrived at with relation to the Grade Descriptors for the Excellent, Very Good, Good, and so on Bands and also bearing in mind the Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes of the course. All these do exist in your documents and are publicly available to the students, and so what I had said to colleagues in Leeds last year is that I would favour the grading process that awards one Millican mark for each Section with relation to Grade Descriptors, and that each language marker would thus need to put in very few words at the end of a Section in an examination script using Grade Descriptor vocabulary and giving the overall Millican mark (for example, "inadequate attainment of such-and-such skills, but good grasp of such and such, I recommend 58"; do you see what I mean?). In this way the grading process could be explained easily not only to externals and to moderators but also to the students themselves in case they wanted to look at their script or appeal a decision.

To be fair, though, I had also said last year that colleagues could use their own algorithmic method as long as all the stages in reaching the final grade and then in converting it to the Millican scale were transparent and easily accessible to all parties concerned for QA purposes. For me though the process I described above is more congenial, more consistent, fairer, and easier because I relate it to the vocabulary of the Grade Descriptors (and am I right in thinking that you have special Grade Descriptors for marking Language papers and different Grade Descriptors for marking In-Translation papers?).

I hope I have expressed myself clearly, but if I have not please feel free to get back to me for any clarification. Please forward this email to the other colleagues who asked for my advice/opinion on this matter, and feel free also to record it in the formal part of the examining consultation process."

14 November 2016

Dear

Thank you very much for your external examiner's report on the Classics subject area for the academic session 2015-16. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to thank you for your thorough, detailed and constructive comments on our teaching and assessment procedures.

We welcome your comments on the quality of our language offering, and are reassured by your positive remarks on our research-led teaching and the opportunities provided to our students to work as independent researchers.

Thank you, too, for your comments on exams administration and procedure. As the practices of Classics become more fully integrated with those of the School as a whole, these processes will be continue to be refined.

I can confirm that your views on the modules you covered were relayed in full at the Classics module marks meeting held on Thursday 16 June 2016.

Finally, your advice in relation to the marking of language assessments on the 20-90 scale has been invaluable to us. On the basis on your advice, the issues were thoroughly discussed in Classics programme meetings in October and November 2016. We are now confident that we have in place rigorous and consistent norms for the use of the scale in additive marking.

I would like to thank you for all of your support and collegiality during the past year: it has been a pleasure to have you as our external examiner. I would like to extend a particular expression of gratitude for your generosity in agreeing to extend your term for the 2015-16 session..

Yours sincerely,

Lecturer in Comparative Literature
Exams Tutor for Italian and Classics
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT