

# 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 Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Subject(s):	<i>Electrical Engineering</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	programmes relating to Electrical Engineering
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*

There are no matters requiring 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?*

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 and ILOs for the group of MSc programmes are commensurate with the requirements of MSc programmes

**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 for the group of MSc programmes are consistent with the level I would expect to see at comparable Universities in the UK and overseas. In many ways they exceed the standards set by my own University and there are many examples of very good practice.

**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 methods of assessment are well structured and represent a consistent approach to the assessment of the relevant modules

**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.*

From the material presented at the examiners meeting and the examination papers I have reviewed during the year I generally believe that the students have good opportunity to demonstrate their achievements against the ILOs for each module and the course as a whole.

**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 rather strange 2.0 to 9.0 grading scale used at the University of Leeds is out of step with other UK Universities known to me and is therefore a very odd characteristic of the University of Leeds.

**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 are obvious good and strong links between the focus of the research teams within the School and the strengths of the MSc programmes

**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, I feel that I had sufficient information on my role and responsibilities.

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, I was provided with the relevant draft papers and felt that the general level of these papers and mark schemes was very good.

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, the scripts I reviewed were well marked with annotations where appropriate.

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

We were supplied with access to many project reports using the VLE system and some in paper form.

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 examiners' meeting was very well organised and very efficiently chaired. The date of the meeting was altered at an early stage to suit my schedule, a flexibility that I am very grateful for – thank you. Each student was carefully considered and I feel that all the decisions were fair and correct

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

This is my last year in this role as External Examiner and therefore I would like to thank all the staff in the Department at the University of Leeds for making this job such a pleasure. I would also like to comment that I feel that many aspects of the process have improved over the last four years and I would encourage the team to continue to push for consistency and improving standards which are not expected by all students.

I noticed a unexpectedly large number of marks of 39% and 49%, particularly from modules outside of the Department. Whilst I have no reason to believe that these marks were incorrect they are module marks which are often avoided to reduce anxiety amongst students who may find they have failed their course by just 1% in one module.

MSc with 'Business' Projects – there was a lack of transparency and feedback in the marking of these projects. I found a number of cases where two students had very similar marks (in two cases with the same supervisors) but the reports demonstrated very different levels of understanding and depth of knowledge. I can accept that there may be good reason for these discrepancies within the marking scheme, but there was no information available to the examiners (or students?) to demonstrate the marking scheme applied.

**Director of Student Education**

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

4 January 2017

Dear

Many thanks for sending us your External Examiner's Report for the 2015-16 session.

I have asked our QA team to respond to your comment on the use of 2.0 to 9.0 grading scale, as this is an institution-wide approach.

The programmes which are jointly delivered with other Schools within the University do rely on the integrity and appropriate moderation of marking for the modules taught outside of our own department. Given the subjectivity involved in grading many forms of assessed work, especially descriptive written work, I agree that modules marks which are close to the pass threshold are undesirable. However, we have no control over the management of these modules, and all we can do is proceed on the basis that we have broad confidence in the marking as a whole, which of course we do.

The projects associated with the Engineering, Technology and Business Management programme will be kept under review (these projects are jointly marked by staff from the School of Business and own School). For future visits by External Examiners, we will take steps to ensure that the full marking process is visible so that the source of any apparent discrepancy is easier to identify. I suspect that, in the case you refer to, whilst the reports may have looked different in standard, there may well have been other aspects of the marking scheme that would explain the similar overall grade awarded to these students.

Beyond this, I am pleased that you have found that the standard of our courses and assessments to be of a high standard. As this was your last year in the role of External Examiner for our MSc programmes, I do very much want to thank you once again for your contribution, which we have greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Student Education

**Quality Assurance Team**

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

16 January 2017

Dear

I am responding on behalf of the University of Leeds to an issue you raised in your external examiner's report for Electrical Engineering programmes in the School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, received on 25 October 2016. I note this issue was also raised within your 2014-15 report.

Currently, the University of Leeds retains the two marking scales (0-100 percentage scale and 20-90 grade scale) and a common degree classification scale, as detailed in my letter of 19 October 2015. During the 2015-16 academic year the university undertook a review of the institutional approach to marking and classification and have agreed to implement a revised classification scale from 2018/19 academic year, removing the 20-90 grade scale.

We take very seriously the views of our external examiners and consider them thoroughly as part of our reflection on the standards of our awards and the quality of our students' experiences.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Quality Assurance

Cc: