

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:	Arts/School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>PORTUGUESE</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All programmes involving Portuguese modules/ All Portuguese modules: SPPO 1080, 1081, 1083, 1190; SPPO 2091, 2411, 2421; SPPO 3110, 3094, 3430, 3040, 3560
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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

Provision must be provided to ensure there are enough Portuguese options running, since the School is losing a Teaching Fellow (who was on a one-year contract).

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

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to oversee this period in the development of Portuguese at Leeds. I have seen the introduction of using dictionaries in some exams (which has proved to have advantages and disadvantages) and I have seen a number of new courses introduced as changes have taken place in staffing. <<>> has provided the backbone to the course, with a rigorous language course that tests students and brings out the best in them, and <<>> is to be congratulated. <<>> continues to incorporate her groundbreaking research into <<>> teaching, by introducing students to developments in cultural studies, media and film. <<>> offers the most fully lusophone course in the UK, including texts in Portuguese from across the globe. It is to be hoped that the University sees fit to continue to support this growing language area by appointing another member of staff whose teaching can complement that of the existing team and cater for the ever larger number of students.

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 found the Aims and ILOs appropriate for the programmes/modules and for the structure and content of the programmes, and standards appropriate for the award under consideration.

Students are taught intensively and assessed in a way that ensures they are constantly improving. They know what they should be aiming for and are taught how they might achieve such outcomes. The excellent marks awarded this year (11 out of 19 students achieved first class grades for the language module) are proof of that.

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 found the Aims and ILOs comparable to those of other institutions with which I am familiar and 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.*

In my opinion the means of assessment of both language skills and cultural awareness (content modules) were appropriate and effective for the marking of modules and the classification of awards. I liked the use of track changes to comment on essays and I particularly liked the feedback forms and feedback action plans, no matter whether the students take action or not. There is clear evidence of two markers and the way they have decided on the final mark.

Language capabilities are tested by a range of assessments, both coursework and exams: translation into and out of the language, composition and summary (in Portuguese of a text in English), two oral assessments, grammar tests, class presentations. I consider that the assessments are weighted appropriately. I particularly liked the variety of tasks students had to carry out: not just oral presentations but radio programmes, interviews and the composition of a Digital Encyclopedia of Lusophone Culture. I liked the literature reviews done as part of some of the content modules.

I noticed that the finalists' exam compositions covered ambitious topics and showed that they had lots of ideas. Overall in language work I observed that at the weaker end students showed the common problems of Spanish interference and a lack of Portuguese vocabulary with which to express themselves fluently. At the stronger end, results were excellent and showed confidence and eloquence in Portuguese.

Literature/culture courses are tested via a combination of coursework and exams. Students choose from a range of options involving literature and film, and have access to material from across the Portuguese-speaking world (from Angola to Timor), from literature to film. This variety helps the students understand that Portuguese is a global language with centuries-old cultural traditions. Such a spread across the Portuguese-speaking world is offered by very few universities and should be prized by Leeds and fully supported. I hope that in the future the Teaching Fellowship, now vacated, will be upgraded to a full time lectureship.

The extended essay is a great opportunity for those students interested in research to carry out a more sustained piece of writing. This year an essay on the World Cup achieved outstanding results.

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 students reached high standards in both language skills and cultural appreciation, performing well in relation to students on comparable courses.

This cohort performed extremely well in final year exams. Eleven out of nineteen students achieved first class results and the highest mark for an extended essay was given to a piece of work written in Portuguese.

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.

Many members of staff had been on sabbatical last year, which had meant that there were fewer modules with Brazilian content available, but the balance has been restored this year. As in previous years, I urge the University to continue to invest in resources for Portuguese, particularly a new member of staff.

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.

I continue to be impressed by the variety of material covered in modules, from across the Portuguese-speaking world and in a range of genres. Modules clearly reflect colleagues' research interests but make them accessible to undergraduate students. Students showed awareness of secondary critical material and there was plenty of evidence of them doing their own research.

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

I was asked to mentor <<>> in <<>> first year as external for Spanish language modules. <<>> is a colleague of mine from <<>> so we were able to meet in person to discuss the role and what would be expected of <<>>, not to mention practicalities (how long it takes to get from <<>> to Leeds). <<>> and I also corresponded via email when questions arose and I showed <<>> my report from last year.

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.

The External Examiner Handbook provided clear guidance as to my role, powers and responsibilities, enabling me to act effectively as an External Examiner.

I also spoke to the tutors directly if I had any questions relating to a particular case or module, and they explained the situation fully.

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.

Documentation relating to programmes which I was asked to moderate and observe was available for me to consult when I arrived in Leeds.

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 provided with draft examination papers and found the nature and level of the questions to be absolutely appropriate.

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 was provided with all coursework and examination scripts when I arrived in Leeds. I looked at samples of top, middle and bottom marks, as well as any borderline cases, and was happy with the way that marks had been resolved between markers. There was clear evidence of double marking and useful comments to show how marks had been awarded.

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

I looked at two extended essays on appropriate and interesting subjects. The method and standard of 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?

The administrative arrangements were satisfactory. I did attend the meeting, and I was satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

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

The mitigating circumstances and medical evidence had been dealt with at a previous meeting and was mentioned during the Board when necessary. This seems to me to be correct procedure and is in accordance with what I have observed at other institutions.

Other comments

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

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Spanish, Portuguese and
Latin American Studies



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

10 February 2017

Dear

Now that all External Examiners' reports have been internally processed, I would like to respond to both the general comments from all Externals and the specific recommendations which you made in your report in relation to the academic session 2015-2016.

I would first like to thank you for your positive comments about the overall quality of the subject area's work, the diversity of modules we offer supported by a strong research culture, the variety and rigour of the assessment procedures, and the efficiency of the marking, feedback and exams administration. In return I would also like to thank you for your hard work dedication and support both during the year (approving draft exam papers), and during the day of moderation in Leeds before the Exams Board.

We are honoured by your positive comments on the range of topics covered by our Final Year examination questions as well as your reflections on the quality of the dissertation you assessed. Your encouraging comments about SPLAS's work and, in particular, the Portuguese-language teaching section, have already been passed on to colleagues.

As requested last year, we have made an extra effort in order to make the content of oral examinations available to you as soon as they have been internally assessed, marked and monitored so you have the opportunity to exclusively focus on the written assignments on the moderation day prior to the summer Marks Meeting. We also note your consistently expressed concern with regard to the on-going use of temporary posts to meet staffing needs in Portuguese teaching and would like to reassure you that we will continue to press senior management for further investment in this area.

Finally, I should like to thank you once again for your generosity, hard work, professionalism and support over the course of the last years and look forward to maintaining our successful collaboration in the future.

Yours sincerely,

SPLAS Exams Officer

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