

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:	Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science
Subject(s):	<i>Philosophy, HSPC</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Ancient Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, and Schopenhauer & Nietzsche, Aesthetics & Philosophy of Art, Advanced Topics in Value Theory, PPE 1 st Seminar, Introduction to Ethics, Introduction to Ethics Discovery, Introduction to Political Philosophy, Ethics of Life and Death, Hume, Metaethics, Feminist Philosophy, Philosophy & Literature, Political Philosophy, History of Modern Philosophy, Science Communication, and a number of dissertations.
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

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

I have been impressed by the sustained excellence of the assessment process – the marking, monitoring, and administrative procedures – throughout my four years as an external. In many ways there hasn't been obvious development and enhancement of learning and teaching, because it was extremely good four years ago and continues to be extremely good today. It compares very favourably with the programmes at similar institutions. I do think that the examination board is more efficient this year than it was three years ago, since there is very little discussion of discretionary and medical cases, which are now dealt with separately. This is to be applauded. But overall, I can only convey my very high impression of how things are done in the School, and the outstanding administrative support that the School provides to the outstanding philosophers teaching in Leeds.

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 Intended Learning Outcomes were entirely appropriate for the modules and commensurate with the level of the award. The structure and content of the modules were excellent, and the standards entirely appropriate.

- 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 Aims and ILOs met the expectations of the national subject benchmark, and the programme compares very favourably with undergraduate work I have examined at comparable institutions.

- 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 materials provided were sufficient for me to make an external assessment. Course syllabi were clear, detailed, and in many cases offered (or repeated from the handbook) good advice on essay writing and assessment criteria. The comments from markers and monitors were excellent and in some cases impressively detailed. I was particularly impressed with the care and attention taken by monitors, across the range of modules, to focus on borderline scripts and failing scripts, and to ensure that the marking in all bands was consistent. I would suggest that *all* monitors make a brief comment on the overall grade profile (especially if this seems anomalous, e.g. a high/low number of firsts) on the monitoring forms, and discuss the overall profile with the marker. Perhaps the head of teaching could look over these each year to form an impression of overall profiles as well. But I am very confident in the rigour and quality of assessment.

I regard the assessment system to be clear, rigorous, fair, equitable, and to accurately measure student achievement against the individual learning outcomes for the modules. Finally, the marking in these modules was entirely appropriate for the levels concerned. The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment methods as indicated by student performance was very high.

- 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

- 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum**

- 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.

There were no notable enhancements to the programme and modules since the previous year; given how highly I think of the programmes and modules, this is not meant as a criticism. Instead, the range of modules given, the quality of the materials provided, and the detailed feedback are all excellent. And the very high standards in marking, monitoring, and administration have continued in 2015-16.

- 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 curriculum is well-informed by current research; this is very welcome, and not surprising. Philosophy at Leeds has an excellent reputation for research, and it is good to see that they use some of their excellent research materials in the courses they teach.

- 8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

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**

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 materials were available both in print form and online, and these were sufficient to enable me to act effectively. I was given opportunities to meet and discuss the modules with all module leaders in advance of the examiners' meeting, which is a welcome feature of how things are organized at Leeds. (I didn't take up the offer to meet with conveners, since I was very satisfied with all of the marking and monitoring I saw.) The online provision was very good and worked well, and staff were extremely efficient in answering queries I had about the process. In this and in other matters, the support and guidance offered by the department and the school were excellent.

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 materials were made available either in print form or online; materials were in general very impressive.

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. The nature and levels of questions were entirely 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?

Yes – I was given sufficient access to a wide range of assessed and examined work to have confidence in my judgement of the standard of work and rigour of marking. The scripts were clearly marked, and in very many cases the standard of feedback on assessed work - and detailed comments on examined work – were exemplary.

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?

The administrative arrangements were excellent. I travelled to Leeds the day before the meeting, and that afternoon had a look at final assessed work and dissertations. I then attended the meeting of the Board of Examiners, and was satisfied with its operation and with the recommendations of the board. The meeting was conducted with efficiency, clarity, and fairness, and the process struck me as robust.

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

Yes, and I welcome the fact that these cases were discussed thoroughly prior to the meeting, so that one of the externals had full information about these cases. That procedure seems rigorous and robust, and made the examiners' meeting run smoothly.

Other comments

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

I have once again been very impressed by the range of modules on offer to the students, the helpfulness and thoroughness of written comments, the operation of the online system for submission of essays and for marking and monitoring, the procedures for marking and moderation, and the professionalism with which the modules are administered and the external examining process conducted. It has been a pleasure to act as external examiner at Leeds in the past four years, and the staff in the School deserve great credit for their work.