

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:	Biological Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>Biodiversity and Conservation</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc/MRes Biodiversity and Conservation
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc/MRes

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

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.*

Both the MSc and MRes programmes have appropriate aims and ILOs. A broad range of modules that cover conceptual and empirical approaches in ecology and conservation, field courses, practical skills, and research opportunities are provided.

- 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.*

This programme is comparable to other MSc programmes covering similar topics elsewhere in the UK.

- 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 breadth of assessment methods employed in this programme continues to be impressive and appropriate to the ILOs, and the marking guidelines are all clear.
Student performance is again very strong, highlighting the quality of teaching and assessment that is provided.
The only area that I felt could potentially be strengthened is student understanding of the structure of a good abstract in their Dissertations, and the need to clearly link the study concept with study design so that the reader can immediately see how the issue has been 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.*

The academic standards of the students were clearly demonstrated through coursework and dissertation research projects. The performance of the students was similar to those on comparable courses with which I am familiar. The cohort was good quality, with most students achieving merit or distinction grades.

- 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.

- 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 don't think there have been any changes to any of the modules in this year.

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

The strong research base of the faculty remains a very important component of the delivery of this high quality programme. Strong research approaches are emphasised in all relevant modules, and this clearly comes together well in the research projects. The direct links of many projects to the research interests of faculty is highly beneficial to the design and delivery of projects of direct relevance to conservation ecology.

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 had access to all necessary materials and information.

- 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, I had access to all relevant documentation for the programme, including handbooks, module descriptions, marking criteria and sample coursework.

- 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?**

N/A

- 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 had access to all of the research projects (with marks and comments) and to samples of a wide range of coursework assignments, which was again very helpful in demonstrating the level of feedback on assignments that is provided to the students.

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

Yes, the range of subjects available for projects was appropriate and impressive, and the standard of assessment was thorough and 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?**

Yes, all arrangements were satisfactory. I did attend the Exam Board meeting and I was satisfied with all recommendations.

- 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

I continue to be impressed by the range of modules available to students on this programme and the skills that these modules help to develop. The module range means that students can essentially 'design' the programme that is best suited to their needs, and this is very likely to contribute to the great success of the programme. The administrative support for External Examiners is also excellent.

Faculty of Biological Sciences
Student Education Service

Student Education Office
Irene Manton Building
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT, UK



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

22 December 2016

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2015/16
MRes/MSc Biodiversity and Conservation

Thank you for your report and for the continued very positive comments on our programmes. We were pleased to note that you highlighted the strong research approach, the range of research projects and the range of modules available as important components of the success of the programmes.

There was one small issue for consideration, the students' understanding of the structure of a good abstract for their summer project. This is currently covered in a session on scientific writing in semester 1, but this message may need to be reinforced the following summer – we will highlight this in their project guidelines, and also via project supervisors.

Yours sincerely,

Programme Leader

Tel: 0113
Email: