

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 Computing
Subject(s):	<i>Applied Computer Science, Computer Science, Computer Science w/Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science w/Distributed Systems, Computer Science w/Mathematics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	<i>COMP1440, COMP1551, COMP1641, COMP2444, COMP2446, COMP2941, COMP3222, COMP3811, COMP3900, COMP3910, COMP3920, COMP3940, COMP5700, COMP5710, COMP5810, COMP5820, COMP5850, COMP5880, COMP5930, COMP5940, final year dissertations</i>
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc, BEng, MEng

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

There are no areas requiring urgent attention before the programme is offered again. The School has consistently improved its processes and practice over the years I served as external examiner.

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 programme aims and ILOs for all modules examined are appropriate, with structure and content that reflects the state of the art and best practices in the respective areas of study. The applied standards are high and appropriate for the awards under consideration.

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.

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 applied now include an appropriate blend of coursework and exams. This varies between modules, which is perfectly sensible. The assessment methods have continuously improved over the four years I have served as external examiner, with impressive progress made in the rigour and methods of assessing final year projects. Issues regarding major differences between marks in some projects have been dealt with consistently and effectively.

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

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.

Over the past three years the School has been taking on board all comments made by the external examiners. Major changes implemented thus far (e.g. with respect to coursework, project marking, format of exam papers) have now been established in the School's programmes and appear to work well.

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 School maintains very strong linkages between teaching, research, and industry. Student testimonials this year clearly indicate that the School cares deeply about their students, and supports close and personal interaction between students and staff

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.

The material given as guidance to External Examiners is clear and sufficient.

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 necessary documentation was available online and through mail communication. All documentation is made available in a timely and consistent manner.

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. Questions for the modules examined were appropriate with a reasonable distribution of difficulty between problems. All comments have been addressed promptly.

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. Scripts were clearly marked/annotated and there were no issues in the modules scrutinised by this examiner.

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

Yes, subjects were appropriate and some dissertations produced truly impressive results. The method and standard of assessment was excellent and reflected major improvements over the past years.

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 Board of Examiners is extremely efficient. I was able to attend the meeting and was satisfied with all recommendations of the Board. I only had minor concerns about the scaling applied to one module (uniform increase of marks of all students to address overall low marks in the module).

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

Yes, appropriate and rigorous procedures are in place for the consideration of mitigating circumstances and medical evidence.

Other comments

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

The School is in a good place and I complete my term as external examiner with the very best of impressions.

Dear

Thank you for completing the external examiner's reports for last session and the supportive comments you have made on our programmes and procedures.

In your report you raised a concern about the scaling of marks for the MSc Advanced Distributed Systems module. As the individual marks for this particular module were out of line with the other marks obtained by the students in other modules the board felt that something must have gone wrong with the delivery or preparation for assessment of the module this session and therefore the marks should be adjusted so as not to disadvantage the students. We have spent some time reviewing both the delivery of module material and how we can apply such changes more consistently across modules in the future should any such changes be required.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for your input to our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes over your period as external examiner to the school. We are very grateful for your support and hope you feel we have acted to address all the points you have raised.

Yours sincerely

Director of Student Education