

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/English
Subject(s):	English
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single Honours English and Joint Honours with English
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?

Yes

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 Intended Learning Outcomes were entirely commensurate with the level of the award. The degree programmes for both Single Honours English and Joint Honours with English are excellently designed and comprehensively address various aspects of students' key learning. The marking was consistent and scrupulous and the criteria for awarding the degree classifications are rigorously and fairly applied.

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 programmes achieve a literary-historical coverage commensurate with English programmes nationwide. The range of available options is impressive, and the retention of core components at each level of study is an important and valuable aspect of the programmes and, in my opinion, should serve as a model to other English departments. The method (capping of marks) for ensuring submission of non-assessed work is strong and effective.

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.*

Considerable thought has gone into developing a variety of assessment modes – presentations and performances, as well as more traditional exams and assessed essays – that stimulate and address a range of student capabilities. The assessment methods correlate very well with the ILOs. The content and detail of feedback are exemplary, and the improvement in the standard of performance, especially from Level 2 to Level 3, which I observed in a high proportion of students, is a testament to that feedback as well as the academic staff's teaching methods. On a number of courses, the students were encouraged to frame their own question or otherwise encouraged towards critical reflection and analysis of their own creative or academic performances.

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.*

Student performance was generally strong: fails and 3rds were few and far between, with most students achieving solid 2.1. and upper 2.2. marks. The first-class work I saw was exceptional by any standards, achieving a sophisticated level of expression, but more importantly a genuine originality in content and approach: across courses, I saw a combination of close reading, the use of contemporary philosophical or theoretical frameworks, and contextual approaches. As a cohort, students compared extremely favourably with their peers nationwide.

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 making of the final-year projects compulsory is a welcome development, in furthering the emphasis on independent and self-reflective learning, already a distinctive aspect of the programmes.

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 programme achieves its literary-historical coverage in a way that bears the unique stamp of the School, and reflects the research strengths of its teaching faculty. The range of options, especially at Levels 2 and 3 derive directly from the research interests of the academic staff, and contribute to a rewarding and distinctive programme of study.

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.

I was given access to all the material I needed, and was supplied with additional material and information promptly on request.

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, this was entirely satisfactory. All requisite documentation was provided.

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 all draft papers. My only adverse comment here is that responses to my comments on draft papers were not relayed to me, although I was fully satisfied with the final shape of exam papers and assessments.

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?

Sufficient assessed and examined work was made available to me. First marking of scripts and essays was clear and full. My main criticism is to do with moderation. The implementation of the guidelines for moderation was not uniform, although in every instance, I satisfied with the final outcome. Sometimes, marks were adjusted by 1% or 2% on work that was clearly sent to the moderator only as a sample. Often, when advice was sought by the first marker and the final mark was based on the moderator's advice, the comment sheet that I saw did not reflect this process. Frequently, moreover, the spreadsheet of marks I saw for a module only covered the sample that was sent to me, rather than the marks of the whole cohort, which made it difficult to judge the cohort as a whole. However, the full range of marks for the cohort was always promptly supplied when requested.

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

The choice of subjects for dissertations were always appropriate for undergraduate-level research, and the assessment here, as in other modules, fair, consistent, and scrupulous.

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.

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

In the interests of consistency and transparency, I would urge that in all instances where work is moderated, the comment sheet reflects the basis for the first marker's doubts and the moderator's decision. Similarly, where modules are fully double-marked, I would urge that comments from both markers are recorded, not simply the agreed mark. For the purposes of internal and external auditing, the School might also wish to consider generating mark-sheets for modules that clearly show the first marker's, moderator's, and final marks, in keeping with the practice at comparable institutions.

Head of School
School of English
The University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

Direct Tel +44 (0)113
Fax +44 (0)113



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24.11.2016

Dear

I am writing to thank you for your dedication to the School in the first year of your appointment as external examiner for the Single Honours English programme, and Joint Honours programmes and English. I came into post on 1st August 2016 as Head of School, and it was heartening for me to read in your report that you found the degree programmes excellently designed in ways that comprehensively address various aspects of students' key learning. I am glad to hear that you found marking to be consistent and scrupulous and that, in your view, the criteria for awarding the degree classifications were rigorously and fairly applied.

You are not alone in finding the range of options on offer impressive, but it is always good to have this confirmed. We note your support of the retention of core modules at each level of study as an important and valuable aspect of the programmes which, you say, could and should serve as a model to other English departments.

I was also encouraged by your acknowledgement of the considerable work that has gone into developing a variety of assessment modes that stimulate and address a range of student capabilities. I can tell you that we in the School are focussing this year on 'less assessment done better', in the context of a university strategic directive to ensure that we do not over-assess the same skills in our students but, on the contrary, concentrate on the development of a range of rigorous but varied modes of assessment to test a range of skills, following scrutiny of assessment patterns at programme level.

Thank you for affirming that the content and detail of feedback are exemplary, and for drawing attention to the improvement in the standard of performance, especially from Level 2 to Level 3, observed in a high proportion of students. Again, I am heartened that the first-class work which you saw was 'exceptional by any standards, achieving a sophisticated level of expression, but more importantly a genuine originality in content and approach' and that 'As a cohort, students compared extremely favourably with their peers nationwide'.

I believe that externals' comments on draft papers are relayed to the relevant teams and acted upon where helpful and appropriate – I do not think responses to suggestions are routinely sent to externals, although in particular cases this can occur. I am glad to hear, however, that you were fully satisfied with the final shape of exam papers and assessments.

I take very seriously your sense that the system of moderation in place raises a concern, in particular where you feel that implementation of the guidelines for moderation was not uniform, even given that, in every instance, you were satisfied with the final outcome. We will endeavour to address the issue that the comments sheets which you saw did not seem to reflect the process of moderation or discussion between the colleagues involved. We note

your recommendation that, in all instances where work is moderated, the comment sheet reflects the basis for the first marker's doubts and the moderator's decision. Where you recommend that, where modules are fully double-marked, comments from both markers are recorded, and not simply the agreed mark, we are committed to the merging of comments in student-facing feedback, and to the recording of 'agreed' as a comment when there is no difference between markers. We will consider your advice that, for the purposes of internal and external auditing, the School might generate mark-sheets for modules that clearly show the first marker's, moderator's, and the final (agreed) marks, in keeping with the practice at comparable institutions.

Your comments and report will be discussed at the appropriate fora in the School. I look forward to meeting you again in June.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

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:	English
Subject(s):	English
Programme(s) / Module(s):	English Literature; English Language & Literature; English Language; etc
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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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?

I do not recall having seen 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

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 believe the Aims and ILOs are entirely appropriate for the programmes involved, and addressed suitably in the materials and approaches taken in the modules I have examined. Standards are entirely appropriate for the level of the awards.

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 Leeds English BA programmes are at very much the national standards for such degrees at the better universities.

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.*

At this admittedly early stage, I am entirely satisfied that the design and implementation of assessment and feedback are of a high standard, and that members of the English department are providing rich and supportive teaching and learning opportunities to their students. In English Language (the area of particular relevance to my appointment), I have reviewed first and second semester work in several modules, including Power of Language, Forensic Approaches to Language, Language in Society, Language of the Media, and several of the final year 40-credit independent dissertations. The syllabus of each taught module is suitably challenging, and has led to some excellent work in the assessed essays and exams.

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.*

Students at Leeds taking English would seem to be quite comparable in performance and preparedness to those we have here in <<>>, those at <<>>, <<>> where I was until recently an external examiner and, I suspect, most other Russell Group universities. My impression is that there is not quite as wide a range of performance at Leeds as at, e.g., <<>>: you have few if any fails or even 3rd class performances, which is to the students' credit of course, but you also have slightly fewer students at the top end, in the 1st and high 1st range. That at least is my first impression, and I hasten to emphasize that it is based on a still-limited acquaintance.

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

NA

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.

NA, since I am a new examiner at 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.

This is most evident in the range of often quite fresh and original language topics students have undertaken in their final year dissertations—some of this work shows excellent grasp of the fundamentals of independent research, of a kind that should be transferrable to various kinds of employment as well as being a foundation for MA dissertation work should the student continue to postgraduate work.

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

NA

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

NA

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, all of this was sent to me, and helped me greatly in orienting myself within the assessment process.

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.

I did, promptly, with helpful guidance by email also.

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; they were.

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?

Ample assessed work was sent to me, with accompanying feedback sheets.

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

Yes; yes.

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?

I was entirely satisfied with arrangements, attended the 22nd June meeting, and was satisfied with all recommendations.

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

I believe appropriate procedures are in place—certainly, there was careful, extensive discussion of a very few cases where an adjustment to a class of degree to be awarded was considered. (Appropriate confidentiality was observed.) A senior external examiner had been sent the students' work and was more directly involved than me. At <<>> an Extenuating Circumstances, operating at arms' length from the Exam Board, classifies each Ext. Circs. application for the severity of the presented problem and also makes their own recommendation as to what the Exam Board might consider (e.g., classify the student's performance in affected Module X at a higher degree class, comparable to their performance elsewhere, despite the achievement of marks at a lower class in that module). I assume that something similar operates at Leeds.

Other comments

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

Head of School
School of English
The University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct Tel +44 (0)113
Fax +44 (0)113

Dear

09/05/2017

First, I must apologise for writing to you so late in the year. I'm afraid I thought that you had received a response to your external examiner's report dated 29th June 2016 – I was mistaken and my attempt to rectify this situation is now rather delayed, and has produced an unacceptable interval between receipt of your report and my reply.

I am extremely grateful for your careful scrutiny of our undergraduate programmes, and glad that you found that there were no matters for urgent attention in your report. I am especially pleased that you were able to confirm the high standard of assessment and feedback, particularly as we are in the process of considering the extent to which we could, at programme level, develop a culture of 'less assessment, done better'. Thank you for identifying modules in English Language for comment, and for confirming that the content of individual modules is challenging and has produced some 'excellent work in the assessed essays and exams'.

I appreciate the importance of your observation that, as a School, we have fewer students graduating with first-class, and high first-class, honours degrees compared with our peer institutions. We are, indeed, aware of this and it is a feature of our discussions about assessment, progression, marking standards and the scale to which we mark. We are shortly to introduce a 0-100 scale to replace the 20-90 scale which you would have been used to at Leeds, and our reflections on the introduction of this scale will inflect our discussion of 'range of performance' of any given cohort.

It is heartening to read that our students are undertaking 'fresh and original language topics' for their Final Year Projects, in work which represents an excellent grasp of independent research principles. Thank you for drawing attention, too, to the fact that we are committed to developing employability within our programmes, as well as laying excellent foundations for MA study.

It is good that you found our guidance materials for external examiners helpful. I note that you were not provided with copies of previous relevant examiners' reports, or the School response, and I will ask for these to be forwarded to you.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

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:	English
Subject(s):	<i>English Literature</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Single Honours and Joint Honours programmes in English Literature and English Language.
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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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

This year I was appointed as examiner for an extra year in exceptional circumstances. For my end-of-appointment comments please see this section of last year's (2014-15) report.

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.*

Learning outcomes are well-matched to the nature of the programmes and standards are highly appropriate to the awards.

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 National Subject Benchmark criteria (English) are more than adequately met by these programmes; the programmes compare favourably, in terms of quality standards, student experience and achievement, to similar programmes at other UK HE institutions in my experience.

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.*

Assessment methods are fair and rigorous and there is evidence that the teaching team are diversifying their modes of assessment in order to enhance student learning. The generally high quality of student performance in English (literacy skills, close reading of texts, intellectual ambition of argument and levels of research) that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods is 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.*

As indicated above, academic standards demonstrated by students are high and surpass those of similar institutions/programmes in my experience. The students show themselves to be adept at handling shorter (e.g. 1700 words) essay formats and tend to perform better than average in examination settings. Standards of written English and composition skills are high and this directly reflects the emphasis staff place in their written feedback on students' levels of literacy.

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.

Enhancements to the programme this year are not immediately evident. Areas of good practice have already been identified but as a comment on the structure of English programmes as a whole I would note the excellent sense of balance between core and elective modules.

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 Leeds School of English is strongly research-driven and this is reflected clearly in the undergraduate curriculum and in the range of choices on offer to students, as well as in the exemplary quality of teaching. Cutting-edge research feeds into topical modules, giving the curriculum an indexical feel (i.e. it refracts what's going on in contemporary literary studies). This year I had occasion to note two features: a sense that some highly specialist elective modules are presented as ongoing research projects, in effect, inviting the students into this experience; and a greater sense of the availability of 'affect' as a critical tool and mode of response to literature in student writing, applying to certain modules in particular (e.g. *Telling Lives, States of Mind, Invested Objects, Disposable Lives*).

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, 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.

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 and yes. I have consistently commented upon the thoughtful and stimulating examination papers produced by the School.

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 in both cases.

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

Yes on the whole, although I saw one final year project whose title was ungainly/unwieldy and might have been further refined through tutorial guidance.

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 I attended the meeting and was satisfied with the Board's recommendations. The administrative support provided by the School of English has been highly professional and is exemplary in this respect.

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

Apparently yes. This year I saw two borderlines profiles which in each case were granted the higher award on the basis of mitigating circumstances. In one of these cases, evidence of the upper quality was manifest, but in the other case it was not so convincing. In the light of this latter case, and given that mitigating circumstances themselves are not available for external examiner scrutiny (and understandably so), it is worth noting that the external examiner cannot comment upon the extent to which mitigating circumstances protocols have been applied appropriately to these individual student cases.

Other comments

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

None other than to commend the School again on maintaining its very high standards in the delivery of undergraduate English.

Head of School
School of English
The University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct Tel +44 (0)113
Fax +44 (0)113

Dear

Thank you for your very helpful report as External Examiner on our BA programmes for 2015-16. I must thank you, too, for extending the tenure of your appointment as an examiner given the exceptional circumstances which we faced, and I note that your end-of-appointment comments were submitted fully in your report for 2014-15.

The School notes your strong sense of the research-driven undergraduate curriculum and the fact that 'Cutting-edge research feeds into topical modules' so that the curriculum 'refracts what's going on in contemporary literary studies'. Your examples, particularly that of modules which build on the culture of the research project, are extremely helpful in encouraging the School to consider further the intersections of research and teaching, and to develop research skills and a research culture at undergraduate level. We note, too, your sense of the positive relationship between core and 'elective' modules which indicates a pleasing degree of coherence in our programmes. It is extremely gratifying to hear that the academic standards demonstrated by our students are high and even surpass those of cognate institutions, and to have confirmation of your view that academic feedback to students is reflected in high standards of written English in students' work.

I note that one dissertation title caused you some concern, and suggested a need for tutorial guidance. I can report that the structure of Final Year Project tuition was amended for 2016-17 and we hope to review it again at the end of this academic year. Regarding mitigating circumstances procedures, they have also been subject to some efficiencies this year, but I fully understand that it is difficult for external examiners to comment on these operations without having been present at the relevant meetings; and given the need for confidentiality in these matters.

My colleagues and I would like to thank you for continuing your excellent work on our behalf for an additional year, and for having acted as an exemplary external examiner in every respect.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School