

**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**

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](mailto: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?*

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 3<sup>rd</sup> class performances, which is to the students' credit of course, but you also have slightly fewer students at the top end, in the 1<sup>st</sup> and high 1<sup>st</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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

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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 29<sup>th</sup> 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