

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:	Faculty of Arts, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	Classics – esp. Roman History and Latin
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA in Classics

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. At any rate, the programme has now been discontinued and replaced by an MRes in Classics.

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?

No – I do not think that would have been relevant to the purposes of the PG Board I attended on October 26th.

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 learning outcomes and the marking criteria were clearly stated and fully commensurate with the level of the degree programme.

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 standards used for the MA in Classics are fully in keeping with those in use at my own institution and at the institutions with which I am directly familiar.

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 range of the assessment methods struck me as reasonably broad, and perfectly in line with what one would normally expect to come across at MA level. The overall student performance was that of a cohort that is well looked after by the teaching staff, and receives valuable guidance in the research-based projects.

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 work I marked showed on the whole high academic standards and very clear commitment on the part of a small, but diverse cohort of students. It also reflects well on the dedication and professionalism of the colleagues who taught on the programme.

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.

n/a

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.

There is a clear and demonstrable link between teaching and research in the Leeds graduate programme, which will be even more strongly apparent in the new MRes programme.

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.

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?

Not applicable – I was asked to look at coursework pieces.

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 asked to look at all the coursework that was under the Board's consideration.

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

Yes – on both counts. I was especially impressed with the quality of the feedback that students received on their submitted work.

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 we had a very constructive and thorough discussion of the issues that required further scrutiny.

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 had a useful correspondence with the Chair of the Board before the meeting, and my written comments on two pieces of coursework were discussed in detail at the Board. We reached conclusions that I found perfectly acceptable, and I was pleased by the care with which colleagues engaged with my remarks. We also had a detailed and useful discussion on the degree classification of a border-line candidate, which led to a satisfactory conclusion.

Dear <<>>,

Thank you for your External Examiner Report on the Classics MA for 2015-16.

Although this was the last year of the programme, it was still good to hear that there were no areas that required urgent attention and that the degree awards and arrangements were fully in keeping with national standards.

We are pleased that you were satisfied that the learning outcomes and marking criteria were clearly stated and fully commensurate with the level of the degree programme. We have worked hard for many years to develop and publish transparent marking criteria to support markers and to try to ensure that students fully understand not only why they have achieved the marks they have but also how to meet the intended learning outcomes of individual modules and the degree overall.

We were particularly glad to receive your comments about student and staff performance. That students are 'well looked after' is important to us and it is heartening that you could see across the assessments that staff have given 'valuable guidance' for these research-based projects. It is also welcome that you were 'especially impressed with the quality of the feedback' we give on assessments. In terms of student performance, our Masters groups have over the years consistently achieved high academic standards and we are working to continue this tradition in the new MRes. As you know, students who choose postgraduate study in Classics tend to be very committed to and indeed passionate about our subject. So our task is to provide a taught postgraduate degree that can stimulate and develop them further as Classicists.

On the new Masters of Research programme, as you observe, there is an even more strongly apparent link between teaching and staff research interests. Creating the new Classics MRes has allowed us to articulate even more clearly that we are aiming to train the students to be – by the end of the programme – confident, independent researchers, aware of current research in the various disciplines of Classics and of their own evolving research identities within those disciplines.

To follow on from our discussions last term about practical arrangements: we will be moving this year to a new pattern of confirming module marks. Instead of confirming most module marks at the autumn Marks Meeting/Classification Board, we will be asking both Externals (for Greek and Roman areas) to confirm semester 1 moderated marks in Spring, semester 2 moderated marks in June, and the remaining module work thereafter at the November marks meeting, prior to MRes Classification. We will be supported in this by the new online access Externals have to submitted work and to feedback via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Despite the concerns about 'remote examining' that we share, I am reassured that we can reach timely judgements on semester 1 marks by online communications but still preserve appropriate opportunities for in-person discussion between all markers and Externals as we confirm the majority of module marks in both June and November at the formal meetings.

With thanks for your scrutiny and for offering some very good ideas on programme development at our autumn meeting. We look forward to working with you again this session.

Yours sincerely,

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Associate Professor of Classics and Programme Manager Classics MRes