

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:	Mathematics
Subject(s):	<i>Statistics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Statistics MSc Statistics with Applications to Finance MSc Medical Statistics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

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

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.*

In general, the programme is good, with a nice range of topics available for students.
The aims and standard are generally appropriate. The majority of examination papers seemed fair.

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 benchmarks are met.

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.*

A choice of three out of four questions for master's exams is appropriate.

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 range of examinations allowed students the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement

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.

The procedures were efficient this year.

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.

Examples from applied statistical work of staff allow students to see something of applied research. Theoretical research is not really accessible. The dissertations give students an opportunity to learn independently and apply what they have learnt.

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.

The material was 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

- 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, yes, yes

- 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, for the M.Sc dissertations there was sufficient information. For examinations, my comments regarding examinations are relevant, and are repeated here.

1) I was very surprised to be asked to sign off final marks before having seen scripts. I only signed after seeing the borderline sets of scripts.

2) I am concerned that scaling is too frequent and local. I would not wish to see the same modules scaled up each year.

3) There is no sign that scripts have been checked. At the exam board, we were told that the front of scripts were initialled by the checker, who might be a PhD student. I suggest that the School of Mathematics consider the approach used by several universities: Scripts are marked in red ink, with marks in the form '2/4', '3/3' circled for each section, and the total mark for the question '14/20' given. All of these marks are to be written in the left margin. Each page should be checked and ticked in green ink. A summary sheet for the examiner, moderator and checker to sign might be helpful. The summary could include a seven number summary of marks, the distribution of marks across classes, and the reason for any scaling given. For example, there might be a minor scaling of 39 to 40 after examining scripts and deciding that those at 39 have demonstrated sufficient knowledge to pass.

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

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?**

The academic and support staff were very helpful and efficient. I attended the Board of Examiners meeting which considered examination results, but not the dissertation examination board.

- 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

No further comments.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Response to the Statistics External Examiner's Report
on Taught Postgraduate Programmes in Mathematics, 2015/16**

We thank [redacted] for [redacted] work as an external examiner throughout this academic year, and for [redacted] comments on the quality of our programme and its relationship to statistical research.

[redacted] reiterated, from [redacted] report on undergraduate programmes, [redacted] comments on the signing-off of module marks, scaling, and examination script annotation.

As we noted in response to [redacted] undergraduate report, we have discussed internally the timetable for signing off module marks and produced a revised timetable for external examiner visits, which we hope will assure [redacted] and the other external examiners, that they can raise any concerns they have at an appropriate stage.

In respect of modules that are repeatedly scaled, we have taken action by informing relevant Heads of Department and asking them to advise staff appropriately.

The issue of examination script annotation was discussed at a recent School TSEC. The approach that describes is broadly the one that we instruct lecturers to follow. We agreed that we would strongly remind lecturers of the importance of ensuring that marks are clearly noted, and that each script is signed off explicitly by the transcription checker.

Head of School of Mathematics
February 2017