

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:	Leeds University Business School (LUBS)
Subject(s):	Management
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Programmes: MSc. Business Analytics and Decision Sciences MSc. Engineering Technology and Business Management MSc. Information systems and Information Management MSc. Global Innovation Management MSc. Management MSc. Strategic Management in a Global Environment MBA Programme Modules: LUBS5869M01 - Management Decision Making LUBS5709M01 - Management Decision Making LUBS5586M01 - Quantitative Analysis LUBS5253M01 - Advanced Decision Making LUBS5582M01 - Research Methods LUBS5318M01 - Evidence Based Consultancy LUBS5221M01 Effective Decision Making LUBS5202M01 - Risk Perception and Communication
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MBA; 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

. No

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 – Year 2 of appointment

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 – Year 2 of appointment

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 found the aims and ILOs to be appropriate for the programme and modules that I examined. I believe that the standards of the programme and modules were appropriate for the award and award elements that were 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 – I believe that they are commensurate with other HEIs in the UK.

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.*

I believe that the assessment methods are appropriate and rigorous in terms of their structure and content. Similarly, the arrangements for marking and the classification of awards are appropriate, robust and well-founded, as are the teaching, learning and assessment methods.

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. I thought that the standard of student work was generally high, with some very good pieces of coursework and exam essays.
Not being involved in other Business Studies programmes, I cannot comment on the relative performance of LUBS students to students on comparable programmes at other HEIs.
From what I have examined, I believe that the standard of students at LUBS is very good and I did not notice any weakness in the cohort.

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 internal moderation process is transparent and robust and seems to work even better than it did last year. I also liked the practice of inserting a sheet containing comments from the marker on exam papers that failed to meet the 50% pass mark criterion, which I do not recall seeing last year. However, it would have been even better if these comments were a little less generic and rather more tailored to individual scripts. Given that there didn't seem to be a large number of 'fail' exam scripts for my modules, I think that giving more tailored feedback would not be too onerous a task for markers.

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 was some very good evidence of the influence of research on learning and teaching in modules such as LUBS5318 which concerns case studies of organisations.

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

I have been engaged in mentoring only at undergraduate level this year (of <<>>, <>). This process has run well, with me and <<>> being in contact via e-mail once prior to the assessment board in June, at which I answered a couple of procedural-orientated generic questions that were posed by <<>>. The mentoring process and arrangements were very well explained in the documentation I received from the university initially and this aided the smooth running of the mentoring process considerably.

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 provided with all necessary information and documentation, which was all I needed to operate effectively as an external examiner.

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 – I was provided with such documents and I approved the majority of them without suggested amendments. In the few cases where I thought the documents needed to be altered in some way, my comments were addressed satisfactorily by the relevant lecturer.

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 scripts were provided for me to make a considered evaluation of the standard of student work. I made the comment last year about the lack of in-text comments on scripts and this was still evident on some modules this year (though not all modules, which is an improvement on last year). I made comments on this subject at an individual module level on the module feedback sheets I filled out and submitted on the Validation Day at LUBS on 25 October.

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

N/A - I didn't examine any dissertations.

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 attended the Board of Examiners' meeting and found that everything was conducted in a proper fashion at it.

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

There was designated space on the Board of Examiners' meeting agenda to discuss mitigating circumstances and medical evidence and these things were discussed at the meeting.

Other comments

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

As was the case last year, I am impressed by the way in which student assessment is conducted and administered in general at LUBS. In particular, the practice of providing generic feedback on exam papers to cohorts of students through the VLE system and the adherence to the prescribed marking criteria with respect to coursework assignments and exam essays is commendable, as is the written dialogue between markers concerning quality assurance. In addition, the high marked pieces of work (exam and coursework assignments) are often of very good quality and are a pleasure to read, which speaks volumes about the quality of the students at LUBS.

I do feel, however, that there is some room for improvement in relation to specific feedback to individual students on coursework assignments, the majority of which didn't seem to include any in-text comments and for some of those that did, the feedback was rather too generic and not that helpful in terms of student academic development (e.g., 'okay').

In addition, the generic, 'front sheet' feedback on coursework assignments could have been improved in general, I believe. For example, the words used on assignments with different degree class marks did not tend to be sufficiently discriminating (e.g., 'very good' for 1st and 2:1 scripts) and were sometimes too positive on scripts with marks of less than 80 where the answer is obviously not a perfect one (e.g., 'excellent' for an essay with a mark of 70). Similarly, it would have been good to see a line or two in the generic comments on what the student needs to do to improve their performance on future similar assignments; this was not evident on any of the scripts I reviewed.

My views on the feedback given to students are outlined on the comments sheets for the relevant modules that I filled in at the Validation Day.

Here's what I think would benefit students in terms of comments and feedback on coursework assignments.

For generic comments, I would like to see three elements covered consistently across modules and markers. Firstly, what was done well. Secondly, what was not so good. Thirdly, what needed to be done to improve the quality of the current assignment and should be done to produce better similar assignments in future. In addition, it would be good if different phrases that distinguish marks in different degree classes were to be used consistently across markers and modules (e.g., 'excellent ...' for 80 pluses and 'very good ...' for 70 pluses).

For in-text comments, I would like to see a little more detailed comments (positive as well as negative comments) presented in rather more of a conversational tone (e.g., 'You needed to elaborate more on this theory'), with at least one comment being evident per paragraph.

I believe that taking these steps would be beneficial for students in terms of providing upbeat, informative, tailored feedback that aids learning from past mistakes and recommends how future assignments could be improved.

<<>>

31 March 2017

Dear <<>>,

Thank you very much for your comments on our programmes. We were pleased that you felt the assessment methods, examination arrangements and assessment techniques were generally appropriate. We were also happy to note your remarks regarding the high quality of student work you saw and the evidence of influence of research on learning and teaching

We noted the following comments:

- **that for those scripts that failed to meet the 50% pass mark and so included a comment sheet from the marker, those comments should be less generic and more tailored to individual scripts;**
- **regarding specific feedback to individual students on coursework assignments, that for some modules, in-text comments were absent or too generic;**
- **that the generic, 'front sheet' feedback on coursework assignments could include constructive comments about how a student might improve future work and could also be more consistent in their use of descriptors of achievement.**

Response: These comments will be referred to the MSc programme team for discussion and to ensure greater future consistency across modules. In particular, for assignments, markers will be encouraged to identify strong and weak aspects of the work through comments on individual paragraphs, together with an indication of anything that might be done better in future similar assignments.

On behalf of the Division may I again thank you for your suggestions and comments. We greatly appreciate the assistance you have given to us.

Yours sincerely,

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