

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:	Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	International Relations
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED5578M PIED5564M PIED5702M PIED5400M PIED5405M PIED5501M PIED5777M
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

N/A

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

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 sample of modules I saw indicated a programme operating at a high levels of quality and diversity, contributing to a coherent and appropriate set of learning outcomes. The standards contained in the modules, both in planning and in student work produced, comfortably meet the standards appropriate for this level.

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, the modules I saw meet this standard. The programme being run at Leeds is clearly on a par with national competitors of the top tier, and the strongest students are comparable to those at any institution.

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 assessment on modules was thorough and well-balanced: sufficient to allow development in response to feedback over time. The overall quality of output from the students indicates a solid baseline of quality in the core of the cohort, while also providing scope for the strongest students to excel. Work receiving grades at the top of the range was of impressive quality. Quantity of feedback was notably high compared to comparator institutions.

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. Students in the main showed the ability to relay a solid core of knowledge of the debates and issues on which questions were set, and at the upper end there was evidence of levels of independent thought and muscular analytical ability of the highest level.

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.

This was already apparent last year but even more so this year: Feedback through GradeMark seems to be working well, with no loss of quantity or quality of feedback compared to other formats.

The explicit 'feed forward' advice also maximises clarity and utility and is to be commended.

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 evidence of a clear connection between the research expertise of module leaders and the material taught/assessed on the modules, and this is to be commended.

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

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?

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

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?

I was unable to attend the MA board, but attended the BA one in June, which was extremely well organised. My dealings with administrative staff regarding the board were generally smooth and efficient.

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

Again, I did not attend the MA Board, but if it resembles the BA one then all is in very good order.

Other comments

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

Overall, I was very satisfied with the standard of work I scrutinised as external examiner, and with the School's administrative processes. The School as a whole, and the individual staff working on those modules I saw, are to be commended for the skill, professionalism and commitment they bring to the task of student assessment.

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Head of the School of Politics and International Studies
University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane,
Leeds, West Yorkshire,
LS 28 5PP

5 January 2017

Dear <<>>

I am writing to thank you for your external examiner's report on our MA programmes in the academic year 2015-16. We are very encouraged by your report. We are particularly pleased that you observed 'a programme operating at high levels of quality and diversity, contributing to a coherent and appropriate set of learning outcomes.' We are also pleased that you observed assessment practices that were 'thorough and well-balanced'.

May I take the opportunity to again thank you for this report and for your continuing service as external examiner.

Sincerely

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cc. pro-Dean for Student Education <<>>; Director of Student Education, <<>>; Head of Quality Assurance, University of Leeds