

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:	POLIS
Subject(s):	Security, International Relations
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED5213M Conflict, Complex Emergencies and Global Governance. PIED5323M European Defence and Security PIED5410M Middle East Contemp Politics PIED5504M Contemporary Issues in Nuclear Non-Proliferation and WMD PIED5510M Insurgency PIED5537M Policing Post-Conflict Cities PIED5563M Terrorism PIED5777M POLIS MA Dissertation
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA International Relations

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

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

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

I continue to be impressed with the high quality work of the students at Leeds and this is also a credit to the staff who clearly provide a comprehensive, challenging and stimulating learning experience. There is abundant evidence of excellent research and intellectual inquiry as well as core writing skills.

The moderation process is exemplary and an example of good practice for other institutions to follow. Marks are appropriate and it is obvious that in cases of disagreement a third marker is used and the correct mark arrived at through discussion. The exam boards were a model of diligent professionalism with <<>>, <<>>, <<>> and others conducting a rigorous process swiftly and appropriately.

I have no negative comments to make and did not identify any issues. Overall, it has been a pleasure to serve as external and I wish everyone every success in the future.

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.*

No concerns in this regard. All standards were appropriate and outcomes visibly commensurate with the work undertaken.

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

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.*

As previously noted, there could be more variation in assessment methods to provide students with the opportunity to develop key skills of comprehension and communication that would be more useful in the workplace (e.g. reaction papers, shorter analytical pieces, presentations, blogs etc).

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. Much of the student work I saw was of the highest quality and indicative of very impressive learning and teaching.

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.

I was not aware of curriculum changes. The use of grademark seems to have improved processes and the level of feedback continues to be outstanding.

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.

The programme is clearly taught by well-informed and research-active staff and reflects the latest developments in the field.

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.

No problems in this regard.

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. No concerns in this regard.

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. No concerns here.

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

Yes. Assessment was appropriate in all cases.

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?

Exemplary. Very professional and creates a hugely positive impression of the programme and the University as a whole. I did attend the meeting and was satisfied with the board's recommendations.

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

Hugely rigorous process that would be a model for other institutions. Transparent, fair and exhaustive.

Other comments

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

Module outlines could be given a more rigorous revision each summer to ensure that the reading is not just a top up – otherwise major changes in the field and new developments in world politics might not be addressed adequately (PIED5537M).

Feedback is provided at a really extensive level. PIED5537M is exemplary in this regard!

<<>>

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

05 January 2017

Dear <<>>

I am writing to thank you for your external examiner's report on our MA programmes for academic year 2015-16. We are encouraged by your report. We are particularly pleased that you consider our moderation processes to be 'exemplary'. We also welcome your comment on the use of grademark, which you say has 'improved processes' while maintaining an 'outstanding' level of feedback.

We also note your view on the need for more variation in assessment methods, especially as they relate to skills transferable to the workplace. We will be examining how best to do this and to that end I would note <<>> has recently been awarded fellowship by the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence to explore this further.

I understand this is your final report for us. May I take the opportunity therefore to thank you not only for this report but also for your contributions during your full term 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