

**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:	School of Chemical and Process Engineering
Subject(s):	Materials
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Materials Science and Engineering
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](mailto: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?*

New programme, so no previous reports

**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 MSc Materials programme is well structured, and designed to include broad coverage of the discipline at the appropriate level for its learning outcomes at masters 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.*

The coverage of topics and ILOs for the programme are comparable to those for other Materials Masters level programmes at other UK Universities. Whilst there is no Masters-level benchmark statements specifically for materials, the programme does appear to meet the appropriate standards in the FHEQ and postgraduate MSc Engineering benchmark/UK-SPEC. There is a focus on metals, although aspects of other materials are covered, and appropriate aspects of engineering design..

### 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 programme has been designed with an assessment strategy that includes a variety of non-exam assessment methods appropriate for the topics covered and the ILOs, with a mixture of homework assignments, class-tests, laboratory work, projects and design group-work. This is the first year the MSc programme has run, with a small group of just five students, all of whom were clearly very bright, motivated and engaged, and they all performed at a high standard across almost all the assessments. Clearly the teaching and assessment methods were very suitable for these students.

### 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.*

As mentioned in section 3, there was a small group of students in the first year of running this new programme, and the students all performed to a very high standard. The high standard was particularly notable for the dissertation reports, reports for the Interdisciplinary Design module (CAPR5700), and the case study reports required for many of the modules (e.g. CAPE5711, CAPE5705, CAPE5715, CAPE5720, and others). I hope the programme continues to be successful with larger cohorts.

### 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 is a new programme. I am not aware of any changes made to pre-existing modules.

### 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 contains a number of modules which are linked to research activities of the staff teaching them. It was particularly good to see the summer dissertation projects all were experimental-based and were significantly informed by the research specialisms of the teaching staff.

### 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

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, except one or two module descriptors were not provided with the materials for review on the day of the exam board. It would be good if all module descriptors could be available to consult on the day.

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?

N/A (No exams for the MSc).

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 provided with clearly-marked coursework examples for all modules.

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

Yes. I was very impressed by the dissertation reports. I agreed with the marks awarded, and was reassured by the moderation process for dealing with situations when there had been a significant difference of opinion between the two markers. My only comment would be that a couple of the dissertations had abstracts which were either overly long or failed to summarise any of the findings, and so were somewhat out of step with the distinction mark awarded overall for the dissertation (and which was justified in both cases). The Abstract is such an important part of a good report that it possibly warrants more emphasis in the marking criteria.

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, everything was efficiently organised and ran smoothly.

My only comment is that I was surprised that the exam board had to consider (and vote on) a case of academic integrity. I appreciate it was a very exceptional case, but the vote was a split decision and effectively the outcome depended on who was attending the exam board at the time of the voting. Whilst the external examiners were not involved in the voting, and I believe the outcome was the correct one, this does not seem to be good practice in achieving a consistent outcome in such cases. A different exam board on a different day could well have come to a very different decision, which would have had significant consequences for the student concerned. Perhaps the University should review this process.

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

1 June 2017

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Dear <<>>,

**MSc Materials Science and Engineering 2015-16**

Thank you for your work as external examiner in this, the first year that the MSc in Materials Science and Engineering has run and also for your very helpful and supportive comments. Your concern regarding the emphasis placed on the abstract for the project dissertations has been noted and passed on to the module manager who will consider whether the assessment weighting should be amended to place more emphasis on this section.

We are happy that, for the most part, the administrative arrangements were good and that the process ran smoothly. However, we offer our apologies for the missing module descriptors – whilst these are available on-line we will ensure that these are available for your visit next year. With regards to your concerns with the academic integrity issue (albeit regarding a student on a different programme), we were also rather unhappy with the process which was the result of consultations between the School and the Student Cases team on how to handle a (very rare) scenario where an academic malpractice penalty awarded by the School would have resulted in the candidate failing to graduate (an outcome which appears to be beyond the penalties permitted to the School). We will share your concerns with the University Quality Assurance and Student Cases Teams which will, hopefully, result in a more satisfactory procedure.

Once again, many thanks for your valuable assistance with the quality assurance of our programme.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School