

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of History
Subject(s):	<i>History of Medicine</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA History of Medicine and Health
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

**Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**

**Points of innovation and/or good practice**

*Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box.*

I have been impressed over the course of the year with the level of feedback given to students. It is thorough and constructive, with clear points for consolidation and improvement. The second marking process looks solid and reliable, almost always including transparent evidence on the process and the reason for the final agreed mark. It was a pleasure to see some of the students building on the work they had done in taught modules in their final dissertation. Communication with the administrative team was efficient and friendly. The module handbooks are clear and 'student friendly' and the teaching staff clearly put in a lot of time to supporting the students. I was impressed with all aspects of the way that the course as a whole (and the individual modules) was presented to students.

Most of the pieces of work I saw were of a fairly traditional nature (this is not a criticism; it is usual at MA level in a subject like this), but I also saw book reviews and source analyses, which was good. Students are clearly being asked to develop different styles of writing and critical thought, and it was evident that they were challenged by these to produce interesting work. I mentioned in one of my sets of comments that I would have liked a bit more information on the nature of some of these shorter pieces, and whether it would be possible to see more materials from the oral presentations in the Medicine and Warfare module. I received a full and positive response to this, and hope that it can be implemented next year as it would help to make sense of the written work (as well as to gain a fuller picture of what the students are doing).

In terms of the modules on offer, I think that the team have done an excellent job of putting together a programme which combines core skills and themes in the History of Medicine, with interesting and appealing themes modules. It was good to see that one of the dissertations engaged with primary sources being opened up by one of the tutors. It is clear that students are benefiting from the expertise of their tutors, and building on it to develop their own interests. There was a range in the quality of the work, but at the top end it was excellent, and I certainly got the impression that there was significant improvement across the board from those whose work I saw through to the dissertation.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

*Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.*

NA – this is a new programme

**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

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment**

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	N*
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	N

\*This is a new programme

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y / N
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y / N
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y / N
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

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**

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

The structure of the programme is clearly laid out and comprises core skills and themes, accompanied by elective themed modules. It allows students to develop research interests while also enhancing their skills with different types of writing and analysis. This in turn allows both the programme and the students to achieve the learning outcomes.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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Please explain how this is/could be achieved (examples might include: curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research)

Students are clearly asked to engage with up to date literature; this is reinforced by feedback and reflected in their marks.

Several of the modules follow the research interests of the teaching staff, and in the first, core, module, the marking is done by the closest subject expert. This ensures that recent research is incorporated into teaching and assessment.

The students engage in primary research throughout the program, culminating in the dissertation, but also via self-selected source analyses and essay/presentation research.

The Medicine and War module is an example of a theme which follows current research trends		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: 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>		
<p>Assessment methods varied from essays, primary source analyses, oral presentations and a research dissertation. It is clear that the range of assessment is appropriate to a taught MA, and allow the development and consolidation of a range of skills, especially given the full feedback available to students. They also build in scope and length so that the students approach the dissertation having already demonstrated and received feedback on their skills.</p> <p>The second marking is reliable and transparent. On the core initial module the first marking was done by the nearest subject expert with the course convenor doing all the second marking. This seems like good practice to ensure comparability across the cohort, especially given that this was the largest module in terms of student numbers. In the subsequent modules the first marker always gave very full and supportive feedback, while the second marker's comments, though briefer, always clearly show that there has been a full appraisal of the work. It was always clear how the final mark was agreed on.</p> <p>The quality of the teaching is excellent, as evidenced in the programme handbook and module materials; also in the feedback to students. Students are clearly engaged by the tutors' own research, as shown in the fact that several build on it in their own work. There seems to be a good level of team involvement in the teaching and the marks were uniformly very appropriate.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<i>Please comment on 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:</i>		
<p>The standards on the module were very satisfactory, ranging up to first-class work. As noted, one of the strengths of the students whose work I saw through to the dissertation was the fact that they clearly used their feedback formatively to make improvements to analysis and writing style. Weaknesses included some examples of poor or unclear academic writing, and failures to engage as thoroughly with the implications of research findings as could be hoped. However, this was as would be expected across a full cohort, and many improved over the year. The standards were in line with what I would expect on the MA in the History of Medicine at my own institution.</p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

## The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	n/a
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	n/a
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>            I was not provided with draft questions but in many cases this was undoubtedly because students were coming up with their own questions.</p> <p>Because I could not attend the Board meeting I did not see the School Special Circumstances process in action.</p>		

## Other comments

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