

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:	History
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Social and Cultural History
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 was particularly impressed by the work I saw on HIST5850M. The skills practised in the assessment for this module, and the way the assessments fitted together were excellent examples of how to train up PGT historians. The standard of work produced was high, and students had plainly benefited not only from good module design but from high quality teaching and supervision. Having run similar modules at QMUL, I thought that the assessment structure was much better than our own – and having now looked at dissertations, I think it is possible to see the results of that initial input in the final part of the degree.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

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

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

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
<p>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes. This is a well-structured programme that gives students a stimulating grounding in methods and approaches and helps them to develop a range of key historical skills.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p>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)</p> <p>Though I have been asked to examine only the core module and dissertations, the latter, as in previous iterations of the degree, show a high level of original research by engaged students who have clearly been supervised by research active academics with expertise in their respective fields.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p>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. See my comments on HIST5850M above.</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
<p><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>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>As has been my experience on other MA modules, the quantity of feedback offered by second markers in particular varies widely – first markers give good and detailed feedback, but some second markers offer what is effectively a full second opinion, others just a confirmation of the first marker's grade. The quantity varied from a sentence to more than a page. I think that expectations in this regard need to be made clear to staff – if both are shared with students, then they need to demonstrate a full engagement with the submission (rather than just the comments of the first marker). If they are just a double check, then colleagues who write too substantial comments are wasting their time.</p> <p>Though I agreed with the broad classification of marks on the dissertations I received, it was not clear to me how equitably mark reductions based on expression and presentation were being applied – in some cases they seemed to have been the rationale for markers to 'split the difference' two marks below the first mark. In another they were excused as not warranting a reduction below a distinction. I would never want these to be reduced to a numeric scale, but I do think a School-wide conversation about expectations and mark consequences would be useful to ensure consistency.</p>		

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?	NA
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	NA
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?	NA
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?	Y
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

Other comments

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

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