

## The University of Leeds

### EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016– 2017

#### Part A: General Information

##### Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

##### Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Title and Name of Examiner:

Institution:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

##### 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?

Yes.

##### 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

n/a

## 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 aims of both the Programme as a whole and ILOs for individual modules for which I have been asked to comment meet standards commensurate to the standard expected of a taught postgraduate programme both in terms of the quality and substantive content of teaching, and of the objectives and instruments of intended learning outcomes.

### 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 Programme as a whole and the individual modules for which I have been asked to comment meet standards expected of similar programmes in the UK both in terms of the quality and substantive content and teaching and teaching methods. In particular, Leeds' programme successfully combines training in language, culture, and history with 'area studies' and elements of the region's modern and contemporary politics. There are relatively few such programmes in the UK, a niche of which Leeds' programme is a central component.

### 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.*

Modules within my remit across the Programme use a laudably broad range of assessment types and strategies, from presentations to small weekly reports, to essays, exams, and dissertations. This range of assessments is adequate to effectively deliver the content and skills contained in Programme and module ILOs, as well as reinforcing students' transferable skills. In addition, staff across the programme are clearly engaged and dedicated, often providing students with extensive feedback.

### 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.*

See point 3 above.

Students were given a range of assessment types, allowing them to both absorb substantive content and develop transferable skills. In addition, teaching staff's marking was accurate and in particular rewarded bright, dedicated students.

### 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.*

As an incoming External Examiner, I can't comment on improvements from the previous year, as my predecessor's report identified no specific areas requiring attention. I can, however, confirm his impression that the programme is staffed by dedicated instructors who clearly bring their research focus to bear on module design and teaching: such research-informed teaching is central to programme quality.

### 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.*

See also point 6 above.

Research-led teaching is crucial to programme quality, particularly for an interdisciplinary programme such as this, and this Masters broadly achieves this objective. If anything, I found some module outlines understated the innovative nature of their design and implementation.

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.*

An incoming External Examiner unfamiliar with an institution will always have more questions than someone familiar with the programme, but both academic and administrative staff should be commended for having been highly responsive in satisfying any questions I had.

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.*

Materials supplied were adequate to the tasks required of me. The policy coherence matches role specification for External Examiners.

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?

All necessary material was made available to me in advance of the Board, either in paper form or in electronic form via the University's VLE. In addition, I was consulted on proposed examination papers for several modules, which I found adequate to module aims and objectives. Staff were quick to answer any questions about the form or substance of proposed assessments.

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.  
Yes.

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

The topics agreed with students fit squarely within the Programme's remit, and in the near-totality of cases I agreed with Internal Examiners' assessments, save minor discrepancies in grading which are entirely to be expected.

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?

Both academic and administrative staff have been very efficient in answering any questions I had on process. Board proceedings were entirely proper.

**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**