

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

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

QAT Received 16/02/2018

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

*Subject(s):*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

Philosophy, Religion and History of Science

**Philosophy of Science**

MA in History and Philosophy of Science  
MA in Philosophy of Science

Modules in:

HPSC5140M (History and Philosophy of Science: Dissertation)  
HPSC5171M (Topics in the Philosophy of Physics)  
HPSC 5510M (Advanced Topics in Realism and Representation in Science)  
HPSC5610M (Advanced Topics in Metaphysics of Science)  
HPSC5640M (Special Option: Philosophy of Science)

*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.*  
Students are being offered a programme of cutting edge research in contemporary philosophy of science. There were some very strong dissertations, as well as module essays. The practice of double marking with markers providing feedback and marks independently before coming to a considered joint decision on final mark is to be commended, and the notes on how decisions were reached showed admirable transparency.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

**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*

Please consider the marking criteria on HPSC5640M and ensure that this module is being marked using the same procedures and standards as for other MA-level modules on the programme.

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment (N/A)**

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 an External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N
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**For Examiners completing their term of appointment (N/A)**

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 philosophy of science programme offers a range of modules offering an opportunity to consider contemporary issues in the philosophy of science in depth.

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)*

The MA-level taught modules for this programme were clearly informed by current research in philosophy of science. Students showed independent research in their assessed work, particularly the dissertations, some of which were exemplary.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
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*Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:*

**This programme would provide a very solid ground for someone wishing to continue into a PhD in a HPS related topic.**

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
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*Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:*

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
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*Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:*

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><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> <p>Assessments were by extended essay, which is entirely appropriate for MA level work.</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>Students performed very well, with a lot of work at the merit/distinction level, as you would expect given the intake at MA level (as compared with UG students where there is more of a range). There was some particularly impressive independent research shown in the dissertations.</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>The feedback provided seemed very helpful, and the continued use of double marking with conferring to agree a final mark is commendable.</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?	Y / N (N/A)
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 / N (N/A)
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?	Y / N
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 / N
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>* I had such details available to me from my previous year's work on the MA, and fortunately had it to hand, but it would perhaps have been helpful to send a package with updated handbooks etc.</p> <p>** Yes via the VLE.</p> <p>***Administrative arrangements were rather less smooth this year than last year, where I received a hard copy of all documentation I needed for examining the MA modules. This year I was directed to modules on the VLE, and was sent feedback sheets and marksheets by email. I appreciate that doing things electronically is more environmentally friendly, but having at least the MA handbook, marksheets, and feedback forms in hard copy made the job a lot easier last year as it was a lot clearer what I needed to look at. (I appreciate that printing all the student essays might be a bit much, but having hard copies of the feedback forms to hand would have been helpful in getting an overview of modules before going through the essays themselves.) There was also a bit of a hiccup with one extended dissertation, where it transpired late in the day that the markers hadn't agreed a mark and needed me to adjudicate. This could have been flagged up sooner had there been procedures in place for markers to alert the admin staff / programme leader that no agreement had been reached.</p>		

**Other comments**

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

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Examiner:	
Title and Name of Responder:	
Position*:	Head of School
Faculty / School of:	AHC/PRHS
Address for communication:	School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT
Email:	
Telephone:	

\*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

**Completing the School response**

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at [qat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:qat@leeds.ac.uk). External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

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

We are very pleased to receive \_\_\_\_\_'s praise for the programme design, standard of work, quality of feedback and transparency of our procedures for reaching a final mark.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

N/A

**Response to Matters for Urgent Attention**

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

asks us to ensure that HPSC5640M is marked using the same procedures and standards as for other MA-level modules on the programme. This is the 'Special Options' module that permits students to follow the teaching for certain Level 3 modules. They are, however, set assessments appropriate at MA level; and are marked by MA criteria, as set out in the School's Taught Postgraduate Handbook.

**Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

N/A

**Standards****Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

No response required.

**Assessment and Feedback****Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

We are pleased to note \_\_\_\_\_'s comment on the independence exhibited in some of the dissertations.

## The Progression and Awards Process

### **Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

We note \_\_\_\_\_'s concern that simply being directed to the VLE may leave it unclear what particular information is relevant. For 2017-18 we can provide hard copies of handbook and feedback sheets.

Regarding unresolved internal disagreements over a mark, we will ask first makers to flag these up to the Director of TPG Studies, who has overall responsibility for the MA exams process, so that they can if necessary be referred at an early stage to the external.

## Other comments

### **Response to items included in the 'Other Comments' section of the report**

It may be helpful to note here that, in view of relatively small numbers registering for the programmes, and the overlap between the MAs in HPS and Philosophy of Science and other programmes, it has been decided to discontinue these programmes wef 2018/19. The modules constituting those programmes will continue to be offered through the MA in History of Science, Technology & Medicine (in the case of history of science modules) and the MA in Philosophy (in the case of philosophy of science modules).