

**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):	Early-modern history
Programme(s) / Module(s):	HIST2065; 3515; 2073; 3497; 3686; 3382; 2220; 3392; 3493; 3500.
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

**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 applaud the following elements which I have observed this year:

- The amount, level and constructiveness of assessment (both cw and exam) feedback;
- The 'stubby' special subject (3xxx) module;
- The range (geographical and thematic) of the modules offered.

**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 (first year)

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

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	N/a
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	n/a
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	n/a
7.	Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor?	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.</p> <p>The programme appears to be carefully constructed, with a good balance of courses and clear student choice. The LOs are clearly articulated within each course guide, and within departmental literature.</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>This is best illustrated by the dissertation module (3500), although the topics chosen seem to be determined by other modules taken by the student on their degree. Nevertheless, in the very best of these, there is a clear synergy between staff research interests and the ability of UGs to undertake their own research.</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> <p>n/a</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> <p>n/a</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	?
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p> <p>n/a</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.</p> <p>All coursework and examinations are rigorously assessed, and the feedback is equitable, appropriate and fair. From the perspective of an outsider, the number and layout of the several feedback and assessment forms is confusing.</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>The work which I saw, both in terms of coursework and examination scripts was of a generally high standard, with some of it of an exceptional standard. I would encourage the markers to extend their use of the marking scale, particularly at the upper end of the register, to reflect a clear distinction between pieces of work within the A range.</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>I would encourage the School of History to look again (I understand this may have been mentioned by other, previous external examiners) at the process of second marking work, rather than moderating. There are a large number of scripts, and while the assessment process is very thorough, work was quite late in being sent for external oversight, meaning that it was less possible to comment on individual student work and most of the comment that could be made was necessarily confined to processes. I wonder whether this is because the process of second marking all scripts took too great a proportion of the overall examination time-period.</p>		

### The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiners role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	N
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
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?	Y
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?	Y
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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>I have answered Yes to all but one of the above questions, because I am, in general, satisfied at the guidance provided and the examination board procedures. However, I am not completely sure what I had or had not received, and I do have comments about this procedure which I have reserved for an overall discursive statement below.</p>		

## Other comments

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

I am pleased to have been appointed as an External Examiner for early-modern history in the School of History at Leeds University. Overall, I have been impressed by the dedication of the teaching and administrative staff, the smooth running of the School in all aspects which I have been able to observe, and I have no reservations in being able to state that this is an excellent degree programme, taught and assessed well, and producing student results which are comparable with the sector as a whole.

I have the following comments to make regarding this year's experience as an External Examiner, given that this was my first year of doing so at Leeds.

Firstly, I would say, that I should appreciate having been given (and could still benefit from being given), more of an overview of the programme as a whole. I was sent an Undergraduate Handbook with (pp.31-37) outlines of the module-requirements of each degree scheme over each level. However, nowhere was there a list of what those modules were, nor what was the difference between or rationale for Core, Option, or Discovery Modules and the reasons why these have different credit-bearings at different levels. At Level 3, there appears a 'Special Subject' taught over 2 semesters, and a History Module (1 semester) both of which seem to be worth 60 credits. Am I to understand that the 'Long Essay' option is not open to Single Honours History and that CM students write a shorter dissertation (what does '20-40 credits' mean?)? The deadlines for assessed work (pp.36-37 of the UG Handbook) is very useful, but for an outsider, very dense and difficult to follow – could some thought be given to its presentation.

The second aspect of greater clarity and transparency which would have eased my ability to understand the ways in which the School operated and its modules and assessments was in through contact with module convenors. I was sent the hard-copy of the handbooks with batches of scripts, but it would have been easier to know what to expect from scripts if these had been sent earlier. I should also have appreciated some brief report from the course convenors of each module, commenting overall on the module overall, any of the questions which were particularly well answered, poorly answered, not answered *etc.*, and giving me some impression of the tutor, the module and the students taking it. It would also have aided my understanding to have had some personal contact with tutors so that they could tell me a little of the rationale behind their choice of assessment, teaching style, module content *etc* and the type of module it was.

If the lectures and seminar material, assessments *etc.* were submitted via VLE, perhaps the School could consider giving External Examiners read-access permission (by allocating them a Leeds University email address and temporary password, perhaps, and having them automatically allocated access to the module's VLE at the start of the module?

Lastly, in terms of process, I believe that scripts were sent with three different (possible) types of assessment and feedback sheet. Some of these were confusing to the outsider in themselves, such as that which had 'Exam feedback' at the top of the sheet but which immediately below that had feedback from the coursework assessments followed by feedback from the exam itself. Several of the sheets gave a space for External Examiner comment but on none of the samples that I was sent was a specific comment ever invited.

Therefore, it would be beneficial to have a more considered initial statement of what the School expects of its External Examiners. I had to intuit that the internal assessors were double-marking, but that the External Examiners were sampling. There were different proportional sized samples sent so I wasn't sure if I was being sent a square root of the total, a specific number from each class of result, a random selection, or another metric. I should appreciate greater consistency of practice – is it School practice to write and comment on exam scripts?: that would certainly aid the marking process. There did not seem to be consistency in the number of gobbets' answers required, but I could not tell if these were different types of module. There were 20-credit modules in years 2 and 3, and a number of different types. I could not get an idea of how they all fitted together as a package, which returns me to the first point.

There was one area in which I wondered if you might provide less information: at the mitigating circumstances pre-board, I am used to systems in which the summaries of student issues are not revealed to external examiners. I am happy to trust in the rigorousness of the internal processes in this regard and have no wish to know even in general terms, the reasons that students may or may now have come to the pre-board.

None of the above diminishes from what, impressionistically so far, I deduce to be an excellent degree programme. As such, however, since the modules are clearly very well taught, and the students gifted (some very much so), I would urge you to be clearer in laying out how good the degree programme is and rewarding your very good students with outstanding marks. You could do more to shout about the things that the degree does well, and make its strengths and benefits more immediately apparent to the outsider.