

**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 Languages, Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	<i>GERMAN</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All UG programmes with German
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.*

Students reading German at Leeds are provided with an excellent, balanced range of modules, covering plenty of challenging cultural texts as well as historical and contemporary material. The programme is kept under close review by the staff involved and module content is updated regularly to reflect contemporary developments and staff research interests. There are no low-recruiting modules.

Staff are deeply committed to getting the best from the students and this is reflected in the detailed feedback they offer as well as in the variety of assessment styles 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.*

Introduction of the 40-credit final year dissertation. Introduction of the video component into the Berlin Republic module. Increased use of electronic marking. Please see comments below on these matters.

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

Programmes in German offer the students a wide range of stimulating modules, which challenge them across the range of abilities. Students emerge with broad overview of modern and contemporary German-speaking culture and society, as well as with a very strong set of active and passive language skills, including language use for professional purposes and translation.

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)*

Most content-based modules are informed by the current work of research-active staff and students are encouraged to develop and apply academic research skills wherever possible.

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:*

N/A

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:*

N/A

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:*

N/A

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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*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.*

There is a good variety of assessment styles and tasks. The students are required to analyse sources and write book or film reviews from an early stage, thus honing their critical faculties. They also have the opportunity to use a variety of media in their assessments, including video and podcasts. Over the programme as a whole, these prepare students for work they may undertake after graduation as well as enabling them to be competent researchers and writers.

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

*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:*

Generally, I was impressed by the standard of spoken German and noted a strong progression in written German as students progressed towards graduation. I noted that, at the top of the range, there were not so many outstanding performances as last year, but cohorts do vary from year to year. More importantly, all students are achieving a sound level of linguistic competence, even in the lower classifications. In content terms, the students demonstrate real engagement and enthusiasm for the topics offered. They are able to demonstrate strong analytical skills and argue their points thoroughly.

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*

Marking is rigorous and prompt. The feedback comments from staff are thoughtful and targeted towards enabling students to take specific steps to improve their performance and to understand their strengths. The feedback has continued to be very thorough as staff have moved, in many cases, from a paper system to electronic feedback. The impact upon staff working conditions needs to be monitored (danger of RSI and eye strain for example).

External Examiners were asked to look in particular at the 40-credit final year projects. Some good work has been produced here. We suggest that further consideration is given as to how best these School-wide projects can be moderated, especially as these make up a significant proportion of final-year credits. We welcome the idea that these 40-credit projects can be shared across departments for dual honours students, to avoid a situation where the student has only core language modules and an individual project for one subject area.

## The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiners 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
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

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:*

Colleagues are always very helpful and prompt in providing information. The assessments are presented in good time for us to examine. With regard to the samples of student work, we request that sound / video files (of oral exams and presentations) are labelled in such a way that we can follow individual candidates across the various types of assessments.

### 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 Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

	LCS Assessment Lead and Director of German
	Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies
	University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT

\*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**LCS collective response:

Programmes within the School are regarded very positively overall and are seen by our external examiners as being of high quality, with excellent teaching and student performance.

It is extremely pleasing to receive positive feedback in the area of innovation, not least because of the ongoing investment that colleagues make in this respect. The clear presence of research-led teaching is balanced with the ongoing diversity of modules we are able to offer our students. The development of the Final Year Project, commended as an enhancement, is reflected in the research methodology training offered across our subject areas. In addition, we have been commended for the rigorous approach to assessment, with clear communication to students and excellent administrative organisation. The use of different approaches to assessment to respond to the range of skills we want our students to develop is also noted with thanks.

We are grateful to our external examiners for identifying instances of innovative assessment, accompanied by clear feedback, and in particular it is pleasing to see where this has been noted as a focus of improvement for subject areas. Further good practice has been identified in our enhanced use of digital resources and of the VLE, including the introduction of online marking in some areas, ongoing discussions about Health and Safety notwithstanding.

Other areas of good practice identified included the presentation of awards to recognise outstanding academic achievements, as well as the development of key skills that link directly to employability. Praise is consistently seen in relation to high standards of teaching throughout the School, in the existence of co-taught L2 and L3 cohorts in some subject areas – a practice under discussion for wider School implementation in order to extend module choice – and in the rigour of processes overall.

Subject area individual response:

We were very pleased about the very positive feedback on the range of modules, the intellectual challenges they provide for our students as well as the praise for the variety of assessments across the course and the provision of detailed feedback.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**LCS collective response:

Pleasingly, in response to the question about enhancements made since last year there was very reassuring evidence of subject areas having responded to examiners' previous comments. Moreover, there were many instances where there were no necessary enhancements because nothing had been deemed necessary to mention in the previous year.

Subject area individual response:

We were very glad that these innovations have been acknowledged. Just a small point of clarification, in 2016/17 students could only do a 20-credit final-year project. In 2017/18, students will have the choice between a 20-credit and 40-credit FYP before a 40-credit dissertation will become compulsory for students starting their degree in 2017.

### **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:*

#### LCS collective response:

Only five of the School's 30 external examiners for UG programmes raised matters for urgent attention. Two of these concerns the implementation of the University policy that all students starting their degree in 2017-18 must undertake a 40-credit Final Year Project (a Final Year Project became compulsory for all students starting their degree in 2014-15). One external examiner was concerned that this would impact upon the provision of a wide range of Level 3 optional modules, restrict the development of employability skills, and that some students would not be suited to such a mode of working. Other external examiners also voiced similar concerns in relation to module choice, though not as a matter for urgent attention.

In 2016-17, LCS developed a suite of School-wide 40-credit and 20-credit FYP modules, intended to replace the separate subject-level dissertation modules in most subject areas. They include traditional dissertation and extended essay variants, both 20- and 40-credit translation projects and a 40-credit digital documentary project. These modules were piloted in German, Russian and Slavonic Studies, Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, and East Asian Studies. In 2017-18 they have been rolled out across all subject areas in the School. Students doing a degree in the relevant language may choose to write their FYP in French, German, Russian, Spanish or Portuguese.

Enrolment figures indicate that approximately 2/3 of students have opted for a 40-credit FYP, suggesting that students welcome the opportunity to undertake a weighty independent project. The variety of FYP formats is intended to address the fact that not all students are suited to a traditional dissertation format. For students taking the traditional dissertation variants, the peer group meetings, organised by the students themselves, and the presentation of their research at the FYP Conference, develop employability skills; the option to write in the target language in some subject areas enables students to showcase their language ability. The School is also exploring the possibility of co-teaching Level 2 and Level 3 variants of the same module, a system already practised successfully in some subject areas, in order to extend module choice more efficiently. Whilst we are grateful that external examiners have suggested grounds for caution, for the above reasons we believe that we are responding to University policy in a way that will benefit our students and will not restrict their options. We will continue to monitor the place of the FYP and module choice in our curriculum as part of the School-wide curriculum review and programme reform currently underway and due to be implemented in 2019-20. The School continues to discuss and work with the subject area to consider remaining concerns where there seems to be a discrepancy with wider School and institutional experience.

Another external examiner raised a concern relating to moderation of School FYP marks when marking is done within subject areas and the role of subject external examiners in recommending changes to FYP marks in isolation from the School-wide set of marks. We greatly appreciate the identification of such concerns during the FYP's pilot year and we are seeking advice from the Faculty Assessment and Standards Group. We will provide specific guidance to external examiners on the moderation of School FYP marks in May 2018.

The other matters for urgent attention were concerns about exam questions, assessment and August resit administration, relating to specific subject areas. Each of these issues is being addressed in the subject areas concerned.

#### Subject area individual response:

n/a

### **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:*

#### LCS collective response:

We are extremely grateful to those external examiners who have reached the end of their term of appointment. We thank you for your support, feedback and collegiality during your tenure. We are also very grateful to those of you who acted as mentors for external examiners new to the role. More than one external examiner suggested that it would be useful to arrange meetings between externals and students. This is a valuable suggestion, and we will consider how to implement this during the externals' visits in June.

#### Subject area individual response:

## 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:*

#### LCS collective response

We are delighted that our external examiners have high praise for the breadth and scope of our programmes, for the degree to which they are informed by staff research, and for the comparability of standards with national benchmarks and other institutions. Programme aims and ILOs were found to be clear, appropriate and transparent. Many external examiners also commented positively on the use of blended learning and digital resources in relation to student engagement.

#### Subject area individual response

We are very grateful for the very positive feedback. In particular, we were extremely pleased that our innovative and integrated language assessments were commended by the external examiner and that the links between research and teaching are clearly visible.

## 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:*

#### LCS collective response

We are pleased that external examiners regard assessment in general highly in LCS, and that they deem it to reflect both a wide variety of methods and a robust internal marking procedure. There was explicit praise for our transparent marking and moderation processes. In light of the University's aims to 'assess less, better', some subject areas are integrating different skills within a single assessment. One external examiner has exhorted the School to weigh the benefits of multiple assessments for modules against the cost to staff time, and to review regularly the necessity of each assessment with a view to streamlining. There were specific discussions about the nature of assessment at the different levels, and the desirability of standardised approaches to assessment methods. Discussions of these issues, informed by the Leeds Expectations for Assessment and Feedback, will continue in the future alongside the programme reform currently being undertaken by the School.

A number of external examiners recommend that attention is given to the full use of the marking scale, especially at the upper end. We are grateful to external examiners for noting where practice could be improved in this respect and agree that to do so will maximise parity and facilitate a smooth move to the 0-100 marking scale in 2017-18. There was one expression of concern that the new marking scale could have an inflationary effect on overall averages, that the introduction of criteria for subdivision within 70-100 would be helpful, and that care should be taken to map student performance on to the new scale correctly. For 2017-18 staff and students have been provided with information sheets about the new scale, which includes a conversion chart and advice on the upper and lower extremes of the scale. The use of the 0-100 scale will be closely monitored throughout this transition year. One external examiner recommended the introduction of a categorical marking scheme. The current University recommendation is for Schools to identify where the use of such a marking scheme may be appropriate; LCS is therefore currently reviewing this in individual subject areas. Work on School-wide assessment criteria and grade descriptors is ongoing in the context of the programme reform.

In terms of feedback to students, we are gratified that the quality of our feedback is consistently commended. We continue to strive to find the right amount of feedback to be meaningful to students without creating a disproportionate workload for colleagues. In addition, one valuable piece of advice has been to vary the language used in feedback and avoid over-use of language that does not offer specific guidance.

#### Subject area individual response

We are very pleased with the praise for assessment practices and feedback. The variety of different assessment styles was highlighted as was the embedding of critical-analytical in the curriculum, while also developing other skills and enhancing student employability. It is very reassuring to hear that we strike a good balance between linguistic, research/analytical and other relevant skills.

The external examiner's impression that there was a lower number of final-year students achieving outstanding marks in 2016/17 had also been noticed by colleagues. As mentioned, this does not seem to be out of line with usual variations across different cohorts.

We are grateful for the commendation of our marking and feedback practices. Health concerns relating to electronic marking need to be addressed, please also see the LCS collective response under 'other comments'.

We would like to reiterate our appreciation, already in the LCS response under 'Matters for urgent attention', for raising the moderation and external examining of the cross-School final-year research projects as a matter that needs attention. We would like to reassure our examiners that the issue is currently being discussed at School level, involving the Exams Lead, the Director of Student Education and the LCS Final Year Project Coordinator, with a view to designing appropriate, effective and transparent procedures and ensure equal marking standards across subject areas.

Regarding the FYP, we are also aware that the introduction of a 40-credit FYP might have consequences for the options students have at Level 3. We agree that a model that allows 40-credit FYPs to be split between two subjects for JH students is desirable to avoid a situation where students only take the Core language module plus FYP in one JH subject.

## 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:*

#### LCS collective response:

We are very pleased that generally our exam boards and the administration associated with progression and awards are found to be transparent, fair and efficient. We are grateful to our external examiners for the vital role they play in subject exam boards, in terms of ratifying module marks and where necessary moderating them, and discussing matters of comparability of student performance at module level with national benchmarks and other UK institutions. As is known, our Classification Board is held separately from our subject exam boards that confirm module marks and is supported by two different external examiners each year. We endeavour to invite each external examiner to attend the Classification Board once during their tenure and we are always pleased to hear from examiners who would like to put themselves forward for this additional duty.

#### Subject area individual response:

It is great to hear that the examiner are pleased with the processes being effective and fair. The point raised about the labelling of electronic files more appropriately and intuitively to facilitate the examiners' work is very useful and we will endeavour to implement this for 2017/18. Please also see the LCS collective response in the next section.

## Other comments

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

#### LCS collective response:

In addition to their reports on our programmes, our examiners have provided valuable feedback about their own experience, particularly in relation to access to samples and materials. Following the University-wide move to online only submission of assessed coursework, many external examiners have welcomed the availability of materials on the VLE and the ability to review these remotely in advance of the visit to Leeds. Some have commented on our hybrid system of marking work submitted electronically, with some modules being marked in hard copy and others being marked using the Turnitin Feedback Studio online. The hybrid system is to avoid a prescriptive approach that would fail to take account of health and safety concerns associated with extended work on screens and keyboards; thus, whilst we cannot standardise at the level of the School or subject area, we do as far as possible ensure a single way of marking coursework for each module. We acknowledge that the first year of this system has highlighted improvements we can make in terms of access to materials, as well as the provision of links to MP4 files to make access easier and the appropriate labelling of all online files. We continue to welcome feedback from our external examiners on these processes throughout the new academic year.

We regret the difficulties concerning access to a key for the base rooms this summer and the issue was raised with Estates, who have assured us that more keys will be available for 2017-18.

#### Subject area individual response:

n/a



**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:	Faculty of Arts, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	<i>German</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All undergraduate degree programmes involving German
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	Bachelor of Arts (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.*

It has been good to see the continued evolution of cross-school dissertation module for advanced undergraduates, which shows evidence of critical attention to assessment procedures, to the roles of supervisors in marking, and also allows the most able students to excel in research-driven commentaries on their chosen subjects.

From my point of view, working remotely, it has been good to see continued use of the VLE for both online assessment and for allowing externals access to assessed work online throughout the year. Critical discussion of how the VLE is used, for Leeds staff and externals, does and should continue, however, and I recommend caution in implementing any policy the impels staff to mark online for a whole host of reasons – not least health and safety.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

It was useful at the end 2015-16 to clarify the role of external examiners in asking for groups of marks to be re-considered. This has allowed myself and my co-external to ask staff to revisit bodies of marks later on in this academic cycle. This helps to ensure parity of assessment practice between UG modules.

**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*

The cross-school dissertation module appears currently to be marked in discrete blocks specific to language areas, while being subject to an over-arching, School-wide rubric and mark scheme. This is not necessarily problematic in itself. However, at the end of the cycle 2016-17 both externals queried a small number of (lower) grades in German dissertations. Leeds colleagues, in turn, remained uneasy about modifying any marks in German on the basis that those changes would not be made in relation to the school-wide assessed grades. In the ensuing discussion, though, it emerged that the German marks had not been generated in connection with bodies of marks from other language sections, and that a further level of cross-language moderation might be required.

Given the nature of linguistic content of the work in question, I recognize not all staff may be able to read and engage critically with all dissertations. For QA purposes, however, and for reasons of good practice generally, I would recommend the School continue develop mechanisms for integrated marking and moderation. If the module is to be

school-wide and externals are to be granted any kind of traction in dealing with dissertation assessment, then this would seem necessary, and would also allow all Leeds staff a greater critical overview over marking culture on what remains an excellent UG module option.

I would also raise the point that, during September of last year, I was receiving resit papers and scripts, together with confirmation/sign-off sheets, on a daily basis with little or no turn-around time. The quantities of papers involved were small, though they were diverse modules and it became difficult to put time aside every day to meet Leeds deadlines. Resits are always subject to tight schedules, so I would ask the School to consider whether every re-sit needs to be looked at by an external, and also to consolidate correspondence into larger chunks to aid our (the external's) time management.

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

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiners Handbook?	n/a
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?	n/a
3.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Mentor?	n/a

**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/a

*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**

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 programmes I have examined have exhibited highly coherent set of aims and learning outcomes. There is a marked planning for progression, especially evident in the (pleasingly diverse) corpus of language learning modules. The impressive diet of content modules also exhibits clearly defined aims and outcomes, with evidence of year-on-year progression in the level and sophistication of work expected. These aims and outcomes are clearly defined and accessible to all staff and students. I am again struck particularly by the meaningful connections between the foci and assessment of language work across the UG programme on the one hand, and the target language assessment of certain content modules, or parts of modules, on the other.

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)*

Yes – staff research expertise in holocaust and Jewish studies, in utopian and dystopian science fiction, in history/ historiography, world cinema, translation studies, and DAF (German as a foreign language) is in evidence in the section and also provided through cross-sectional collaborations. This broad pallet of research is also clearly in evidence in the range and modules on offer and they benefit from the mutli-disciplinary foci provided by the School's research environment.

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:*

n/a

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:*

n/a

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:*

n/a

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
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*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.*

18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y / N
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19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y / N
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*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:*

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*

During my tenure as external I have urged Leeds colleagues to weigh carefully the virtues of multiple assessments for modules, which does often boost student satisfaction, against the need to secure personal time for research, professional development and other administrative duties. I note some streamlining has taken place, though I would again urge colleagues to continue reviewing whether or not every piece of assessment on every module is required – this happens on a yearly basis at my institution and whilst it might seem repetitious, numerous holy (though cumbersome) cows have been usefully slaughtered this way.

### The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiners 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
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

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:*

With regard to question 31 above (dissertation): I would state that assessment methods and standards were appropriate internal to the German section, and would thus would answer as a 'no here'. I would, though, again draw colleagues' attention to my comments on the need to find some form of cross-school moderation process, both in-house and for externals, to ensure parity of practice and allow for any adjustments to be made. (See also 'Matters for Urgent Attention' above).

#### Other comments

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

Again I must remark on the breadth of quality, research led teaching offered as part of the German curriculum at Leeds. The accompanying culture of assessment is full, thorough and adds genuine value to cohorts of students year on year.

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

LCS Assessment Lead, with Director of German

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies

University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT

\*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**LCS collective response:

Programmes within the School are regarded very positively overall and are seen by our external examiners as being of high quality, with excellent teaching and student performance.

It is extremely pleasing to receive positive feedback in the area of innovation, not least because of the ongoing investment that colleagues make in this respect. The clear presence of research-led teaching is balanced with the ongoing diversity of modules we are able to offer our students. The development of the Final Year Project, commended as an enhancement, is reflected in the research methodology training offered across our subject areas. In addition, we have been commended for the rigorous approach to assessment, with clear communication to students and excellent administrative organisation. The use of different approaches to assessment to respond to the range of skills we want our students to develop is also noted with thanks.

We are grateful to our external examiners for identifying instances of innovative assessment, accompanied by clear feedback, and in particular it is pleasing to see where this has been noted as a focus of improvement for subject areas. Further good practice has been identified in our enhanced use of digital resources and of the VLE, including the introduction of online marking in some areas, ongoing discussions about Health and Safety notwithstanding.

Other areas of good practice identified included the presentation of awards to recognise outstanding academic achievements, as well as the development of key skills that link directly to employability. Praise is consistently seen in relation to high standards of teaching throughout the School, in the existence of co-taught L2 and L3 cohorts in some subject areas – a practice under discussion for wider School implementation in order to extend module choice – and in the rigour of processes overall.

Subject area individual response:

We were very pleased to see the introduction of the cross-School final year research projects acknowledged so positively, in particular the opportunity they offer to students to demonstrate their advanced skills and intellectual achievements.

The concern raised with regards to the increased use of electronic marking has been reassuring and helpful. Please see the detailed School response under 'Other comments'.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**LCS collective response:

Pleasingly, in response to the question about enhancements made since last year there was very reassuring evidence of subject areas having responded to examiners' previous comments. Moreover, there were many instances where there were no necessary enhancements because nothing had been deemed necessary to mention in the previous year.

Subject area individual response:

We were pleased that the clarification and reassurances given regarding the role of our external examiners in the previous year have been welcomed and judged as effective.

**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:*

LCS collective response:

Only five of the School's 30 external examiners for UG programmes raised matters for urgent attention. Two of these concerns the implementation of the University policy that all students starting their degree in 2017-18 must undertake a 40-credit Final Year Project (a Final Year Project became compulsory for all students starting their degree in 2014-15). One external examiner was concerned that this would impact upon the provision of a wide range of Level 3 optional modules, restrict the development of employability skills, and that some students would not be suited to such a mode of working. Other external examiners also voiced similar concerns in relation to module choice, though not as a matter for urgent attention.

In 2016-17, LCS developed a suite of School-wide 40-credit and 20-credit FYP modules, intended to replace the separate subject-level dissertation modules in most subject areas. They include traditional dissertation and extended essay variants, both 20- and 40-credit translation projects and a 40-credit digital documentary project. These modules were piloted in German, Russian and Slavonic Studies, Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, and East Asian Studies. In 2017-18 they have been rolled out across all subject areas in the School. Students doing a degree in the relevant language may choose to write their FYP in French, German, Russian, Spanish or Portuguese.

Enrolment figures indicate that approximately 2/3 of students have opted for a 40-credit FYP, suggesting that students welcome the opportunity to undertake a weighty independent project. The variety of FYP formats is intended to address the fact that not all students are suited to a traditional dissertation format. For students taking the traditional dissertation variants, the peer group meetings, organised by the students themselves, and the presentation of their research at the FYP Conference, develop employability skills; the option to write in the target language in some subject areas enables students to showcase their language ability. The School is also exploring the possibility of co-teaching Level 2 and Level 3 variants of the same module, a system already practised successfully in some subject areas, in order to extend module choice more efficiently. Whilst we are grateful that external examiners have suggested grounds for caution, for the above reasons we believe that we are responding to University policy in a way that will benefit our students and will not restrict their options. We will continue to monitor the place of the FYP and module choice in our curriculum as part of the School-wide curriculum review and programme reform currently underway and due to be implemented in 2019-20. The School continues to discuss and work with the subject area to consider remaining concerns where there seems to be a discrepancy with wider School and institutional experience.

Another external examiner raised a concern relating to moderation of School FYP marks when marking is done within subject areas and the role of subject external examiners in recommending changes to FYP marks in isolation from the School-wide set of marks. We greatly appreciate the identification of such concerns during the FYP's pilot year and we are seeking advice from the Faculty Assessment and Standards Group. We will provide specific guidance to external examiners on the moderation of School FYP marks in May 2018.

The other matters for urgent attention were concerns about exam questions, assessment and August resit administration, relating to specific subject areas. Each of these issues is being addressed in the subject areas concerned.

Subject area individual response:

We would like to reiterate our appreciation for raising the moderation and external examining of the cross-School final-year research projects as a matter that needs attention. We would like to reassure our examiners that the issue is currently being discussed at School level, involving the Exams Lead, the Director of Student Education and the LCS Final Year Project Coordinator, with a view to designing appropriate, effective and transparent procedures.

We appreciate the very useful feedback on the administration of resit assessments and external examiners' involvement. We are aware that the priorities and time pressures of examiners during the summer period require a more effective handling. We would like to apologise that this was not the case in the reported year and will instruct our programme support team accordingly. It would be useful to discuss preferences with the external examiners during their next visit.

**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:*

LCS collective response:

We are extremely grateful to those external examiners who have reached the end of their term of appointment. We thank you for your support, feedback and collegiality during your tenure. We are also very grateful to those of you who acted as mentors for external examiners new to the role. More than one external examiner suggested that it would be useful to arrange meetings between externals and students. This is a valuable suggestion, and we will consider how to implement this during the externals' visits in June.

Subject area individual response:

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:*

LCS collective response

We are delighted that our external examiners have high praise for the breadth and scope of our programmes, for the degree to which they are informed by staff research, and for the comparability of standards with national benchmarks and other institutions. Programme aims and ILOs were found to be clear, appropriate and transparent. Many external examiners also commented positively on the use of blended learning and digital resources in relation to student engagement.

Subject area individual response

We are very grateful for the very positive feedback. In particular, we were extremely pleased that our innovative and integrated language assessments were commended by the external examiner and that the links between research and teaching are clearly visible.

## 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:*

LCS collective response

We are pleased that external examiners regard assessment in general highly in LCS, and that they deem it to reflect both a wide variety of methods and a robust internal marking procedure. There was explicit praise for our transparent marking and moderation processes. In light of the University's aims to 'assess less, better', some subject areas are integrating different skills within a single assessment. One external examiner has exhorted the School to weigh the benefits of multiple assessments for modules against the cost to staff time, and to review regularly the necessity of each assessment with a view to streamlining. There were specific discussions about the nature of assessment at the different levels, and the desirability of standardised approaches to assessment methods. Discussions of these issues, informed by the Leeds Expectations for Assessment and Feedback, will continue in the future alongside the programme reform currently being undertaken by the School.

A number of external examiners recommend that attention is given to the full use of the marking scale, especially at the upper end. We are grateful to external examiners for noting where practice could be improved in this respect and agree that to do so will maximise parity and facilitate a smooth move to the 0-100 marking scale in 2017-18. There was one expression of concern that the new marking scale could have an inflationary effect on overall averages, that the introduction of criteria for subdivision within 70-100 would be helpful, and that care should be taken to map student performance on to the new scale correctly. For 2017-18 staff and students have been provided with information sheets about the new scale, which includes a conversion chart and advice on the upper and lower extremes of the scale. The use of the 0-100 scale will be closely monitored throughout this transition year. One external examiner recommended the introduction of a categorical marking scheme. The current University recommendation is for Schools to identify where the use of such a marking scheme may be appropriate; LCS is therefore currently reviewing this in individual subject areas. Work on School-wide assessment criteria and grade descriptors is ongoing in the context of the programme reform.

In terms of feedback to students, we are gratified that the quality of our feedback is consistently commended. We continue to strive to find the right amount of feedback to be meaningful to students without creating a disproportionate workload for colleagues. In addition, one valuable piece of advice has been to vary the language used in feedback and avoid over-use of language that does not offer specific guidance.

Subject area individual response

We are very grateful for the reiterated encouragement to reconsider the number of assessments and value the acknowledgement that some progress has been made in reducing assessments. On several modules, assessments have indeed been reduced. On some modules, colleagues have begun to use peer feedback on formative assessments for pedagogical reasons, with the side effect of a reduced staff marking load.

The reduction of assessments is not only a concern with regards to staff time but also pressures on student workloads. These concerns have indeed informed our discussions on reforming the German curriculum. Our new Level 1 module, starting in 2018/19, consists of only one main assessment. We are currently tackling our suite of Level 2 modules and the effective use of imaginative assessments is one of our guiding principles. A discussion has also started in the university around the potential benefits of moving towards synoptic assessments which would also result in a more effective approach to the volume of assessment.

Trying to achieve programme/level learning outcomes and designing a variety of innovative and creative forms of assessment is challenging and we will need to be cautious that the reduction of assessments does not lead to killing off our more imaginative assessment types.

## 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:*

#### LCS collective response:

We are very pleased that generally our exam boards and the administration associated with progression and awards are found to be transparent, fair and efficient. We are grateful to our external examiners for the vital role they play in subject exam boards, in terms of ratifying module marks and where necessary moderating them, and discussing matters of comparability of student performance at module level with national benchmarks and other UK institutions. As is known, our Classification Board is held separately from our subject exam boards that confirm module marks and is supported by two different external examiners each year. We endeavour to invite each external examiner to attend the Classification Board once during their tenure and we are always pleased to hear from examiners who would like to put themselves forward for this additional duty.

#### Subject area individual response:

The concern over moderation and external examiner of the final year projects has been addressed in detail above.

## Other comments

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

#### LCS collective response:

In addition to their reports on our programmes, our examiners have provided valuable feedback about their own experience, particularly in relation to access to samples and materials. Following the University-wide move to online only submission of assessed coursework, many external examiners have welcomed the availability of materials on the VLE and the ability to review these remotely in advance of the visit to Leeds. Some have commented on our hybrid system of marking work submitted electronically, with some modules being marked in hard copy and others being marked using the Turnitin Feedback Studio online. The hybrid system is to avoid a prescriptive approach that would fail to take account of health and safety concerns associated with extended work on screens and keyboards; thus, whilst we cannot standardise at the level of the School or subject area, we do as far as possible ensure a single way of marking coursework for each module. We acknowledge that the first year of this system has highlighted improvements we can make in terms of access to materials, as well as the provision of links to MP4 files to make access easier and the appropriate labelling of all online files. We continue to welcome feedback from our external examiners on these processes throughout the new academic year.

We regret the difficulties concerning access to a key for the base rooms this summer and the issue was raised with Estates, who have assured us that more keys will be available for 2017-18.

#### Subject area individual response:

We are delighted and grateful that our curriculum, in particular its research-led focus and the varied and innovative assessments, has been praised by our external examiners.