

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 Earth and Environment		
Subject(s):	<i>Environment and Business</i>		
Programme(s) / Module(s):	SOEE2032	10	PD for Careers in the Env
	SOEE2035	20	Community Engagement Project
	SOEE2310	20	Tools & Techniques for Business
	SOEE2570	30	Research in Environ Social Science
	SOEE2610	10	Economics and Sustainability
	SOEE3030	40	Environmental Research Project
	SOEE3202	10	Sustainable Consumption
	SOEE3270	10	Business & Sustainable Dev.
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

The programme has a very good variety of modules across topic areas. Besides, there is a good mix in the modules that I scrutinized between those that focus on the content of environment and business, those that focus on research skills and finally those that help prepare students for their future career. Students are challenged in all kinds of different manners which also comes back in the nice spread of assessment methods.

Enhancements made from the previous year

This is my first year as external examiner so I cannot really compare to previous years.

Matters for Urgent Attention

Matter for urgent action would be a more consistent way of providing feedback to students. Using Turn-it-in for feedback would be easiest, also for moderation purposes, and some modules do a great job in this respect (e.g. 3202). However there are also modules that are rather old-school in providing handwritten comments that are difficult to read.

Related to this, there tends to be an issue of a lack of consistency in giving feedback in large modules such as 2570. While some students have received extensive feedback for their field trip report, others just received a grade. This seems rather unfair.

Another issue I would like to flag is the lack of consistency in the number of credits and the amount of assessment. Module 2610 has an essay and an exam for only 10 credits. Similarly, module 2570, while being awarded 30 credits, has many different forms of assessment, maybe too many.

In terms of the spread in marking, there is also a lack of consistency. While some modules give marks above 80, e.g. 3202, some others such as 2032 only have two marks above 70. It seems that quite a few see 75 as the absolute top mark while others mark until 85/90.

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 an External Examiner Mentor?	Y

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y / N
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y / N
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y / N
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

Standards

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y

I am really impressed by the programme, as it is truly multidisciplinary. As noted, what I also like about the programme is the fairly equal share between providing knowledge on the topic of environment and business, research skills, and personal and career development of the students. Looking at the different forms of coursework and the exams, the programme does a good job in challenging students to produce work of a high quality. Overall, I believe that given the level of the work that I have seen that some of the marking could be slightly more generous. Only some modules such as 3202 seem to give higher marks, which in my view the students deserve for the quality of their work.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
-----	---	---

The research module 2570 is very extensive and really prepares the students well for doing independent research. Also in modules such as 3270 I see how more recent insights from ongoing research have been integrated to give students up-to-date knowledge on the topic area.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
-----	--	---

Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
-----	--	---

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
-----	--	---

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>The different assessment methods seem appropriate and well aligned with the ILOs. As noted, there is a good spread in terms of different assessments methods.</i></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>From the coursework I have seen, I am of the opinion that the students for this course perform generally well. Some of the assessment could have been more generous. One issue that I mentioned is the lack of consistency in providing feedback. As a result students might not always be in the position to learn from their previous mistakes. One best practice in this regard is module 2035 which gives small blog assignments throughout the term which allows students to improve their critical reflection skills during the module.</i></p>		
<p><i>My main issue with the feedback provided is the lack of consistency between modules and sometimes even within modules. I would really urge the programme director to motivate lecturers to use the online tools for this purpose. Having handwritten feedback is really not helpful. It would also be good to think of a way to give more substantive feedback for exams.</i></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?	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?	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?	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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

Other comments

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

Module 2570 is a big module in which students learn about quantitative as well as qualitative research methods, and they do a fieldtrip to do research on location. I would consider splitting this module up in separate parts. Now all parts are put together to give one mark, which creates some imbalance as some students might do much better on one part but not on another. Separating the parts would also make the module more manageable, as there were clearly some issue with the lack of consistency in marking and providing feedback.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Responder:	
Position*:	Head of School
Faculty / School of:	<i>School of Earth and Environment</i>
Address for communication:	School of Earth and Environment Maths/Earth and Environment Building The University of Leeds Leeds. LS2 9JT United Kingdom
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. 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

Thank you for the positive comments on the programme. The programme delivery team is keen to continue to the variety of modules and the balance between environment and business, research, and careers skills.

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:

Based on the external examiner's feedback the implementation of consistent use of online marking will be raised at the next programme delivery team meeting. Module leaders will be encouraged to use online submission and feedback to ensure consistency in the delivery of feedback.

In order to identify consistency of assessment with number of credits assessed an assessment audit will be conducted.

The Director of Student Education has encouraged markers to use the full range of marks and this will be reiterated in programme delivery team meetings.

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:

--

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:

Thank you for these comments. As noted above a key action item arising from the report is the encouragement of markers to use the full spread of marks and to ensure the best students are awarded marks commensurate with their achievements.

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:

As noted above two action items will be taken forward to address these concerns:

1. Online marking and feedback distribution
2. Encouragement of markers to use the full spread of marks

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:

Other comments

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

Thank you for this suggestion to split SOEE2570 into three component parts. The suggestion of splitting SOEE2570 into quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and the field trip will be raised at the next programme delivery team meeting for discussion and consideration of the team.