

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	School of Earth and Environment
<i>Subject(s):</i>	<i>As below</i>
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	MSc Environment and Development MSc Climate Change and Environmental Policy programmes SOEE5010M Research Methods SOEE5020M Research Project SOEE5281M Introduction to Sustainability SOEE5472M Environmental Policy and Governance SOEE5438M Critical Perspectives in Environment and Development SOEE5495M Environment-Development Overseas Field Course SOEE5540M Climate Change: Physical Science Basis SOEE5550M Climate Change: Impacts and Adaptation SOEE5561M Climate Change Mitigation
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	MSc

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.
The conduct and organisation of the fieldtrip to Tanzania (SOEE5495M) was impressive, with generally excellent feedback from students, who greatly appreciated the support and experience.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

This is my first year of External Examining here and I'm not sure what enhancements have been made in the past 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

None

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses 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?	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)?	N/A
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 two programmes have an excellent interdisciplinary focus and structure and by having modules of 15 credits are able to offer students a diversity of subjects in the core modules and a good range of choice for the optional modules. The fieldtrip is a good initiative. The aims and intended outcomes are appropriate for the level and subject of the qualification.

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

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 two programmes are clearly situated within a very appropriate School, with a wide range of relevant research being undertaken. Several of the module handbooks refer to the module including seminars and material from research being undertaken within the School. There is also considerable opportunity for students to undertake research, not only through the research project, but also through the Research Methods module and through some of the assignments, such as a policy brief on biofuels.

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>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>There is a good range of assessment methods across the modules which enable assessment against the ILOs of the programmes. There is a robust system in place for marking assessments and, from the student performance and feedback, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods appears to be high.</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>There is a broad range of performance by students on the programme, as would be expected on most Masters' programmes, but overall they have performed well and there are no obvious concerns.</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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On one module evaluation, Critical Perspectives on Environment and Development, students expressed concern that the first assignment was due only a few weeks into the module. Is it possible to reconsider the timing of that assignment? 2. I note from the previous External Examiner's report that had expressed some concern about the overall assessment load on students, given the number of modules taken and that most modules have 2-3 assignments. I would be interested to hear the School's thoughts on the overall assessment load on students and what kind of feedback has been received from students on this over the last few years. 3. I would have found the review process easier if feedback sheets had been uploaded to Canvas and marks included in Canvas for the Research Projects rather than having to check spreadsheets and find feedback sheets in documents made available to me. It may not be possible to do this, but thought I'd mention it. 		

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?	N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	N
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?	Not seen
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> The Exam Board meeting was very well conducted, with appropriate reference to programme rules and University regulations. Staff were knowledgeable and fair.</p>		

Other comments

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

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>Faculty of Environment / 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

The fieldtrip to Tanzania (SOEE5496M) always receives very good feedback. Particularly, last year a substantial support was given to the students as 2 academic staff were on the fieldcourse as opposed to 1 academic staff and 1 post-graduate support staff in previous years.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Not applicable

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:

None required

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:

We will ensure copies of previous examiner's reports and our responses are given and mentor is provided for the examiner in the first year of their appointment in future years.

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:

The reviewer's responses are very positive highlighting interdisciplinary and research-led teaching and appropriate aims and outcomes for the programmes. We plan to maintain these in the future.

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:

1. We are discussing with the module leader of Critical Perspectives on Environment and Development possible options, a decision will be made by the next Programme Delivery Team meeting.

Neither PGT Programme survey nor module survey has specific question about the overall assessment load. However, via the Student-Staff Forum, feedback of the module assessment workload are received by the Programme Leaders from the student programme representatives and the information are then disseminated to and discussed with the teaching staff via PDT meetings so that appropriate actions are taken accordingly. As we had responded to the previous external examiner and student feedback, several changes had been made from the 2016/17 academic year; e.g. the volume of assessment for SOEE5010M (Research Methods) has been reduced in length (reflective note from 1000 to 500 words and essay from 3500 to 3000 words); SOEE5561M (Climate Change Mitigation), the volume of assessment has been reduced from three to two items and the length of the essay has been reduced from 5000 to 4000 words to more closely align with the School's Assessment Guidelines; SOEE5550M (Climate Change: Impacts and Adaptation), the weighting group work/presentation was reduced; SOEE5095M (Environmental Economics and Policy) assignment was reduced from 6000 words for 85% of a 15 credit module to 3500 words. We will discuss possible changes in other modules that have been mentioned in feedback at the next programme delivery team meeting. We'd like to note that School's L&T documents are available at VLE/Minerva for all the teaching staff, and module and programme leaders to use and follow, including Code of Practice on Assessment (COPA) and SOEE Assessment Norms/Guidelines. These guidelines and the programme assessment maps provide a basis for evaluating student's module assessment workload (and the appropriateness of the assessments in relation to learning outcomes) and the findings are discussed in the programme delivery team meeting so that actions can be made accordingly. This is done in the light that broader school and university strategy is to reduce summative assessment, and proportionately increase other forms of assessment (e.g. formative, group assessment). The aim is to reduce workload for staff and student whilst increasing learning.

2. The Feedback to students is not currently uploaded to Minerva which is why they were made available separately for scrutiny via Dropbox. We will investigate how this can be made easier for the External Examiner for next year.

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 appreciate the positive feedback in this section in terms of Exam Board meeting.

There were no examination papers for the External to review.

We do not normally seek External Examiner comments in advance of setting coursework questions however we always encourage the Externals to comment on the suitability of any assignments set during their review.

Other comments

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

Response to Part B: **Enhancements made from the previous year:**

We should make sure that reviewers receive previous year review and responses as well as all other relevant documentation.