

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

QA Team received
12/10/2017

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>Sustainability and Business</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Modules listed below
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc Sustainability and Consultancy MSc Sustainability and Business

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Points of innovation and/or good practice

System of using two markers who give points independently of each other and furthermore introducing a third marker if the points awarded by first two have high discrepancy is excellent.

Enhancements made from the previous year

I have not evaluated the programme previously, but I can see that a concern raised by the previous external examiner regarding two partially overlapping modules has been duly addressed.

Matters for Urgent Attention

No matters of urgent attention.

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?	Y

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y
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>I find the two programmes generally well structured. There is more emphasis on environmental (ecological) sustainability than social sustainability as some obligatory courses (5192) and all optional modules (in Sustainability and Consultancy) or most (Sustainability and Business) have environmental sustainability emphases. So the expected learning are likely to be deeper and more extensive on ecological sustainability compared to social sustainability. This however an understandable choice given the School of Earth and Environment hosts the two programmes.</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>The curriculum appears informed by research on the respective topics. Some modules however appeared to have readings that are published early 2000s. This is fine if the reading is a classic or there is no better recent research, but this is an issue the programmes directors might want to discuss with teachers of modules.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p>The courses do not strike me as PhD courses.</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y
<p>Consultancy project (5175) and Delivering Sustainability through Projects (5223) are good ways of integrated practice components into the programmes.</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N/A
<p>N/A – As a non-British academic I'm not familiar with PSRB</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>		

Learning outcomes are aligned with assessment. The assessment frameworks for modules are comprehensive.		
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
<i>Some students show excellent academic standards while a few have challenges in integrating academic thinking into their writing assignments.</i>		
<i>I find the assessment frameworks comprehensive as well as the anonymous 1. and 2. marker system admirable. The introduction of third marker for unclear cases is a good practice.</i>		

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?	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? Eventually yes, but it would have been good to get specific expectations / questions to external examiner earlier than some days to one day before. I understand this was due to staff change, but it did give less time for the task and directed my focus slightly off. The External Examiner Handbook alone is not sufficient for the purposes of understanding the task.	Y / 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?	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? I'm grateful for the possibility for distance examining & skype meeting. However it would have been good to get specific expectations / questions to external examiner earlier than some days to one day before. I understand this was due to staff change, but it did give less time for the task and directed my focus slightly off. The External Examiner Handbook alone is not sufficient.	Y / N
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>No additional comments</i>		

Other comments

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

My overall impression is that the Sustainability and Business MSc programme comprises of relevant and interesting courses. There are some minor points that I would like to share however.

1. It was not entirely clear to me what kind of “sustainability in business” skills and job profiles were intended for the students. This was because the contents of the module **5051M Business, Environment and Sustainability** seems to be critical throughout – is the intended impression that business/corporations are not able to function according to the sustainable development imperatives? I was trying to find whether the other modules offer knowledge about topics such as: how business can develop strategies toward sustainability; What innovations and transformation routes for sustainability are available for businesses; how organizational change toward sustainability can occur. Based on the materials I could not establish whether this is the case. It would be good to look into this.
2. My second suggestion is to **SOEE5341 Issues and Cases in Corporate Social Responsibility**. The course covered a relatively narrow range of CSR issues (dairy, Yorkshire Water), and I felt a selection framework was missing. Therefore I suggest applying a framework for selecting the relevant issues (e.g. the Planetary Boundaries or SDGs) and consider broadening the range of CSR issues in the future. Secondly, the course seemed to focus on SMEs. It might be a good idea to include large companies’ CSR as part of teaching as the module name so implies and because the topic is very relevant in the context of corporations.
3. Only about 1/3 of the students had given feedback about the modules, which is could be improved. I warmly support The Examination Board’s plan for allowing the students to give feedback during teaching time, which is a good way to improve the response rate.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School

*Faculty of Environment / School of Earth and Environment*School of Earth and Environment
Maths/Earth and Environment Building
The University of Leeds
Leeds. LS2 9JT
United Kingdom

*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

It is good to see that our process of third marking is recognised as good practice

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**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:

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:

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:

It is good to see that the *Consultancy project (5175)* and *Delivering Sustainability through Projects (5223)* are recognised as good, especially as the latter is a new module.

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:

N/A

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 will endeavour to ensure that specific questions that we would like to pose to the external examiner are raised more in advance of the Assessment Board meeting in future.

Other comments

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

I was pleased to see that you did not have any matters for urgent attention.

5051

You have suggested that the contents of 5051 is “critical” throughout – and that the implication is that we do not cover issues such as how businesses can develop strategies towards sustainability, what innovations and transformation routes for sustainability are available for businesses and how organisational change towards sustainability can occur – and this might affect what kind of “sustainability in business” skills and job profiles are intended for the students. Whilst I think that we have a good balance between the development of knowledge and capabilities that are supportive in the role of businesses in tackling the challenges faced by sustainability across the programme, we are also being mindful of the critical approaches to sustainability and corporate social responsibility. I appreciate your attention to this issue and it is something that we will review across both programmes in our next Programme Delivery Team meetings.

5431

You have suggested that 5431 – issues and cases in CSR - is relatively narrow in terms of the range of CSR issues addressed and that some sort of framework was missing for the selection of relevant issues. You suggest the Planetary Boundaries or SDG frameworks. I think this is a good suggestion and would – as you say – broaden the range of CSR issues in the future. We are in the process of recruiting a new member of staff to replace the present incumbent, who is leaving after this semester – and we will be asking this new member of staff to look at this suggestions and build this idea into the module in the future. We will also ask the new staff member to address the issue of the focus on SMEs in the module.

Your comments about feedback is entirely pertinent, as is your endorsement of the examination boards plan for allowing students to give feedback during teaching time.

Finally, I would also like to mention that the Sustainability and Consultancy programme is accredited by a Professional Body, i.e. IEMA with students gaining access to graduate IEMA status on graduation.