

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	<i>International Relations</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED2463, PIED2711, PIED3402, PIED3403, PIED3502, PIED3503, PIED3505, PIED3565, PIED3603, PIED3750, PIED3760
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.

As I note in more detail below, POLIS offers a broad range of exciting and often very challenging International Relations modules and provides excellent feedback on assessments.

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 as external examiner, so I am unaware of this

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
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 / 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
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>POLIS offers a broad range of exciting and often very challenging International Relations modules. The students clearly have a lot of choice and the programme compares very favourably with similar programmes at other institutions</p> <p>All the modules I looked at were very well-designed, with clearly identified ILOs. These ILOs were fully commensurate with the level of the award.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>The influence of research is evident in the curriculum of the third year modules I examined. These are often highly specialised modules and the expertise of the convenors/tutors is reflected in the very detailed feedback provided.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

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>Assessment is primarily through essays and exams. This is perhaps fairly traditional, but is not uncommon for Politics/IR departments and these assessment methods are appropriate to the ILOs for the modules. The process for marking and moderation seems very robust, even if the dialogue between the marker and the moderator is not always apparent to the external examiner. The feedback provided is truly excellent, which is particularly impressive when considering the volume of marking involved (I believe this is higher than at other similar institutions). The feedback is extremely detailed and very constructive: both weaker students and very strong students – as well as the ones in between – are provided with useful, and often very concrete, advice on how to improve their work. The quality of teaching, as evidenced by student performance, is clearly very good [see more below]</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses; the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort:</i></p> <p>The academic standard is high and I read some really excellent pieces of work; not just dissertations but also some essays. The Department demands quite a lot from its students but they seem able to meet these demands which points to some very strong teaching. Student standards compare favourably with similar institutions</p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>A couple of additional comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On a few occasions the language used in the feedback did not match the marking indicators/criteria, even though the mark was appropriate. E.g. an essay that was awarded a 81 was described as 'very good'. I saw less of this in the second and third term, so this may have been corrected. - A good range of marks is used, but the marks at the top of the scale could possibly be stretched a bit further. First class marks rarely go above 74. - Feedback comes in many different forms, and formats. This is not a problem as such, but could affect student evaluations, especially if it is hard for the students to locate. 		

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:

The Leeds method for classifying awards seems quite generous compared to other institutions. However, the process was transparent – and clearly explained to the external examiners - and consistently applied. I would perhaps have liked a bit more information about the type of mitigating circumstances that can affect a degree classification. It would be helpful if this could be communicated to the external examiners – in a way that could be reconciled with legitimate concerns over student confidentiality.

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*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School

Education, Social Science and Law

Woodhouse Lane
Leeds, West Yorkshire
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 gat@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

We welcome the assessment that POLIS offers a broad range of exciting and challenging modules, as well as excellent feedback.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

None.

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.

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:

None.

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:

We welcome these comments and the assessment that our programme and modules are well designed and the learning outcomes are clear and appropriate.

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:

Welcome the assessment that the feedback provided is 'truly excellent'. We will examine how to better convey the dialogue between markers and remind those markers that their qualitative feedback should match the mark given.

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 are pleased with the assessment that the process was transparent and consistently applied. The Leeds comment on the classification method will be noted by the pro-Dean for Student Education and the School will re-examine the manner in which information about mitigating circumstances is communicated to external examiners.

Other comments

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

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:	POLIS
Subject(s):	<i>International Relations, International Security</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA International Relations PIED2558 PIED3750 PIED3760
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 amount and quality of feedback given to the students is exemplary.

Enhancements made from the previous year

This was my first year as an external examiner.

Matters for Urgent Attention

None.

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 / 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
<p><i>The BA programme in International Relations is very well-designed and offers students a wide range of topical modules that are very enticing. In the area for which I am responsible (international security, broadly defined), students have the possibility to take several courses on the most topical subjects, which are taught by academics at the frontline of the research on those.</i></p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p><i>Academic members of staff teach modules in their area of expertise. The reading lists are fully up-to-date and feature cutting-edge pieces of research.</i></p> <p><i>The overall high quality of the undergraduate dissertations testifies to the ability of the academic staff to clearly explain to students how to design and conduct a research project.</i></p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><i>Student performance testifies to the dedication of the academic staff. Staff members generally give excellent, detailed and constructive feedback, which is truly remarkable given the high number of students on some of these courses. Marking is fair, sound and transparent. I was somewhat surprised to see that the only types of assessment used on the modules I reviewed (with the exception of the dissertation) were essays and examinations. However, I understand that students are exposed to other types of assessment on other modules.</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>I have been very impressed by the standards achieved by the students, some of whom produced outstanding pieces of work. Overall, students' performance is as strong as, if not better than, that of students on comparable courses.</i></p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>I was very positively impressed by the amount of comments on examination scripts. Do most students actually get to see them, given that marking is presumably completed after students have left campus? I hope that yes. It would be a great pity, otherwise.</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?	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 & 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 understand that this academic year has been a transition year and that new administrative arrangements are currently being put in place in the School. Communication from the School as to what exactly had to be done by the external examiner and how to go about it was not always clear, which made the process rather time-consuming. I would have liked to receive clearer instructions, especially as it was my first year as an external examiner at Leeds.

What was also disconcerting is that it seems there are various practices within POLIS as far as giving feedback and marks to the students are concerned. I was not always sure where I had to look to find the marks and the feedback

as an external examiner and was wondering whether students might also be wondering (and possibly miss on some of the feedback left for them)! For some modules, I was told that students' essays could be viewed on-line via Turnitin, but then it was not possible to see any feedback or annotations (only the original essay as submitted by the student), making commenting on the marking somewhat challenging.

Other comments

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

Thank you for inviting me to act as an external examiner at POLIS. It has been very interesting and rewarding to find out more about your very interesting programmes and the excellent work produced by some of your students.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**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

*Education, Social Sciences and Law*Woodhouse Lane
Leeds, West Yorkshire
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 gat@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

We welcome the comments on the programme design and the cutting edge character of the modules.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

None

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

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:

No specific comments were made in this section. However, clearly we need to improve the information given to new external examiners, as reflected in the general comments at the end. This will be discussed by the examinations and School support team.

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:

We welcome the comments on the programme design and the cutting edge character of the modules.

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:

We welcome the comments on the level of feedback. Students off-campus can access feedback online where the assessment is online. Students can also request feedback be sent to them where it is hardcopy.

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:

Clearly we need to improve the information given to new external examiners, as reflected in the general comments at the end. This will be discussed by the examinations and School support team.

Other comments

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

We also look forward to working with you.

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:	Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	International Relations
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PIED1511 International Politics PIED2501 Theories of International Relations PIED3750 UG Dissertation PIED3760 Dissertation-Joint Honours
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.

- Variety of options available to students is excellent
- Extent and depth of feedback is sector-leading
- Use of different methods for providing feedback is interesting, e.g. audio. I'd be interested to see what a survey of student opinion said about preferences for feedback in different forms, i.e. hard copy, VLE notes, audio-only.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Use of VLE as the main platform for assessment and feedback has continued to spread, and I hope it will in due course be universal.

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. The programme is in good shape.

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
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y

7.	Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor?	Y
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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

The programme at Leeds is of excellent standard. The quality of the students is generally high, and the best are as good as any in the sector. They are given the opportunity to display their knowledge and development across a wide range of varied modules. The extent of feedback and level of engagement by staff within it is generally very good and in many cases exceptional. Over the course of my appointment the integration of technological advance into the programme has been notable. The transition of course presents challenges, but I think the possibilities for things like online annotation/comments from markers, and audio feedback, are a welcome addition. Throughout my period examining at the School I have always been struck by the rigour and diligence with which exam boards are conducted, and in this regard I think POLIS at Leeds this represents the gold standard for the sector.

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.

On the basis of what part of it I have seen, the programme is fit for purpose. It provides a range of options that facilitate delivery of the learning objectives and outcomes via well-designed and well-delivered modules.

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, links between convenors' expertise and teaching are clear, and reflected both in what is taught and how it is assessed and feedback framed.

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:

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:

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:

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>The assessment I have seen has generally taken the form of traditional essay, exam or dissertation, with some minor variation between modules. On the UG modules I reviewed, assessment, marking and distribution of grades was in line with good academic practice. Feedback was appropriate and extensive. I will comment on PGT in my report on that to follow.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses; the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort:</i></p> <p>The students overall display a very good standard, and are facilitated in doing so by modules that are well-designed to allow them to develop and demonstrate knowledge across a wide range of material. The strongest students are as good as any elsewhere in the sector.</p> <p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>I have been consistently struck over the course of my four years by the quality and depth of the feedback offered by staff on student work, sometimes by more than one staff member on a single piece of work. Leeds clearly meets, and in some cases exceeds, sectoral benchmarks in this area.</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?	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:

In 2016-17 the School was in a transitional phase between methods of conveying material to externals for review. This meant that sometimes material was scanned and emailed, sometimes it was on VLE, and there was also an attempt (thwarted by technology in the end) to convey material via password-protected online folders. Having all this in operation simultaneously, combined with rolling messages to externals about different modules at different times, meant that it was sometimes hard to keep track of what modules had been sent, and what had been replied to. Occasionally material was missing and needed to be requested. My sense is that this reflected a highly competent administrative staff simply wrestling with the challenges inherent in communicating about so many modules with multiples externals during a period when methods were in transition, and hopefully things will become simpler next year.

As general principles, I would advise that material be transmitted to externals in as few instalments as possible, in as few different forms as possible, and labelled in uniform manner, and with uniform deadlines where possible. This minimises any chances of material being missed at either side.

Other comments

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

POLIS at Leeds is an excellent institution in which staff of the highest calibre, academic and administrative, deliver programmes at a standard that matches the best in the sector. It has been a pleasure to have insight over four years into how it does its business, and to be associated with the programme and the School.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**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

Education, Social Sciences and Law

Woodhouse Lane,
Leeds, West Yorkshire
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 gat@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

We welcome the positive comments on the depth of our feedback and the innovative practices, conscious of the need to survey student preferences.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

All staff are encouraged to use the VLE through dissemination of good practice.

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.

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 are pleased with the 'gold standard' assessment.

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:

We are pleased the programme is deemed fit for purpose and reflects our expertise.

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:

We are pleased to meet sectoral benchmarks and note the instances where these have been exceeded.

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:

The transitional period has prompted similar comments from other external examiners and we note the helpful suggestion of transmitting materials in as few instalments as possible. We share your faith in the competence and professionalism of the administrative staff and are working with them to address the problem.

Other comments

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

We of course welcome the assessment that POLIS is an excellent institution. We thank _____ for four year service as external examiner.

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 Politics and International Studies
Subject(s):	<i>International Relations/Politics/EU</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	POLIS Industrial Placement, Dissertation, Land, Fuel and Agriculture, Comparative Politics, Spin Doctors and Electioneering, Politics and Policy in the EU, Approaches to Analysis, British Foreign Policy, Europe in the World, Israel Politics and Society, Britain and the EU, Extreme Right Parties in Contemporary Europe
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

On the process side I have been impressed with the use of VLE and information technology to provide feedback and support to students and in the examination process. Within the programme as a whole, the focus on student engagement and development of professional skills (especially through placements) is notable.

Enhancements made from the previous year

This is my first year as external examiner so I have no basis of comparison.

Matters for Urgent Attention

none

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

For Examiners completing their term of appointment *NOT APPLICABLE*

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)?	
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y
<i>The BA programme offers a rich and diverse menu of module choice and is structured in such a way as to challenge the very best students and support the learning development of weaker students. I am impressed with the commitment of colleagues to support student learning and professional development and the consistency and rigour of marking.</i>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<i>Research-led teaching is evident in module diversity and content</i>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD</i>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<i>Assessment methods are clearly linked to existing learning outcomes and represent excellent practice. The School is now looking at developing these further so as to encompass more in the way of transferable professional skills.</i>		
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>Academic standards are robust and are an example of international best practice. The student cohort is especially impressive with some exceptional performance at the top of the range and solid performance across the range, with the strength of the student body reflected in overall high performance in degree classification.</i>		
<i>Feedback provided to students is exceptional in depth and scope – and frequently goes to some length to identify institutional supports to students where these are deemed necessary. The School may wish to reflect further to determine whether this focus - especially in final year work – delivers substantive added value to students. It may be suggested that this time and effort might generate greater return to students were it redirected to formative assessment earlier in the programme/year and staff might also benefit in redirecting a proportion of this time to research.</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?	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*

**From discussion at the Board it was clear that the School had recently adopted a new process by which special/mitigating circumstances were being decided on a rolling basis over the course of the year by a small high-level adjudicating body. This has the very significant advantage of speeding decision making and response times as well as avoiding sensitive personal information being disseminated to a large group of people. These decisions were then notified to the Examinations Board. The difficulty with this system is that External Examiners can offer no support, make no meaningful contribution nor offer oversight to the process. The School may wish to consider a) designating one or two examiners to engage with the decision making process itself or perhaps, more reasonably, b) offering some further detail to Examiners on process, norms and procedures by which the decision making body adjudicates claims for special circumstances/mitigation.*

Other comments

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

Three further comments arise:

- 1) The School dutifully applies a series of university rubrics on degree classification. These rubrics are (properly) aimed to ensure that students' performance is fully reflected in their degree award. In that process and added together cumulatively, however, these rubrics at times stretch degree classification beyond that which would be normally expected at other institutions. There are always fine lines when students find themselves on the cusp of borderlines and the institution should make a good-faith effort to ensure that such cases are properly and fairly adjudicated. I would suggest, however, that the University of Leeds might review these to ensure that best practice is followed.
- 2)

2) I understand that the School's assessment policy is being reviewed with a view to the further incorporation of more diverse and innovative assessment mechanisms which may contribute further to the development of transferable professional skills. Over the course of my term as external examiner I look forward to working with the school on that endeavour.

3) The issue of academic ethics is one which poses multiple challenges and which develops as technology evolves and offers ever more positive (and less positive) means by which information can be shared. I look forward again to working with the School to review existing norms and practice and to develop effective strategies which both inform and support students while ensuring that the absolute integrity of the assessment system is protected.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

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	
<i>Education, Social Sciences and Law</i>	
Woodhouse Lane Leeds, West Yorkshire LS2 9JT, UK.	

*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 gat@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

We welcome these comments, in particular recognition of our focus on student engagement and the development of professional skills.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

None.

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.

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:

An external examiner mentor was not offered but is available if required.

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:

We again welcome these comments and their emphasis on our commitment to professional development.

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:

We are pleased the assessment methods and learning outcomes are clear and that they represent 'excellent practice'. Likewise, we welcome the comments on feedback. The 'exceptional depth and scope' of the feedback reflects our commitment to the student learning experience, yet we are conscious of the need to find the correct balance between summative and formative feedback, especially in the final year. This will suggestion will be discussed in our Taught Student Education Committee.

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 welcome the comment on the new process for dealing with special/mitigating circumstances, and note especially the comment that 'External Examiners can offer no support, make no meaningful contribution nor oversight to the process'. As this process is implemented in and beyond the School the comment, and the helpful suggestions, will be reflected on within POLIS Taught Student Education Committee and raised at Faculty level.

Other comments

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

We note the comment that the cumulative effect of our processes "at times stretch degree classification beyond that which would be normally expected at other institutions". This again, as is acknowledged, is a matter of University processes, which the School is said to dutifully apply. As such, we will raise this matter at Faculty level.