

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	
<i>Education, Social Sciences and Law</i>	
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.