

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:

Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law, School of Politics and International Studies

Subject(s):

Political Theory

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Politics
BA Politics and Parliamentary Studies
MA Politics (Political Theory)

(Modules – indicative list only)

PIED1601	Freedom, Power and Resistance
PIED2601	Revolution and Reaction: Political Problems in the 20th Century
PIED2602	Justice, Community and Conflict
PIED3604	Culture and Community: Theoretical Perspectives
PIED3609	Radical Political Ideas: Marx, Nietzsche, Schmitt, Foucault, Kristeva
PIED3610	Feminist Challenges to Political Theory
PIED3750	UG Dissertation
PIED3760	Dissertation-Joint Honours
PIED5601M	Political Theory in Action
PIED5626M	Global Justice
PIED5777M	POLIS MA Dissertation

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BA/MA

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.

I thought that the use of formative assessments in the modules I examined was very good practice and feedback on these clearly contributed to the high standard of student work in the summative assessments for these modules. The detail and clarity of almost all of the feedback provided by staff and the focus on providing clear advice on how to approach future assignments was exemplary – students could not hope for better feedback and the staff deserve high praise for their efforts in this respect (that said, I have a nagging suspicion that students do not always appreciate the tremendous efforts that staff have put in to producing such high quality feedback).

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

n/a

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

n/a

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

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

I was very impressed with the range and overall coherence of the modules provided in the area of political theory. These provided an excellent balance of normative and critical approaches and clearly stimulated the students to produce work which was overall of a very high quality and at the top end, really outstanding. The students at Leeds are very fortunate in receiving such an interesting and engaging education in contemporary political theory.

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, it was clear that the content of modules was closely linked to the research interests of the staff teaching them and that this contributed to the high quality of the modules.

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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<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
<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>It was clear that considerable thought had gone into the design of assessments - I have already noted the mix of formative and summative assessment - and the mix of critical reviews and long essays also enabled students to develop their ideas and hone their argumentative skills. The assessment methods adopted clearly contributed to the students' impressive performance and this reflects very well on the staff and the degree of reflection that has gone into their design of assessments for their modules.</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 quality of students' work was very high overall and I was struck by how few students there were in the lower mark bands – a testament to the excellent teaching provided by the political theory staff. The very best work was really excellent and I would encourage staff to continue to stretch towards awarding even higher marks for the best work in order to more clearly differentiate first class work from really outstanding first class work.</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>		

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 Progression and Awards Board was run with exemplary efficiency and clarity. Tim Heppell did an excellent job of explaining procedures and decisions in individual cases, which was a great help to myself and the other new examiners. I was very impressed overall by the transparency and rigour of the School's handling of the examination process.

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:	Education, Social Sciences and Law
Address for communication:	Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS2 9JT
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 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 use of formative feedback and the quality of the summative feedback. We remain committed to communicating its value to students.

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 the comments in the high quality of our political theory provision and the clarity of the module content.

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 these comments too and will reiterate the point about markers stretching the marks at the top end to reward and recognise outstanding first class work.

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 that our procedures are seen as transparent and rigour. We are committed to maintaining these standards.

Other comments

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