

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:	Business
Subject(s):	<i>Economics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Masters in Economics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	

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.

There are several good practice features within the programme:

1. It uses different types assignments to assess students. Some of the assignments are quite technical and some are more descriptive, thus preparing students in an all rounded manner.
2. There is a general focus on real world problems which is refreshing.
3. Detailed feedback was provided for many of the units.

In particular I would like to point out that LUBS 5102 (Microeconomics), LUBS 5134 (Econometrics), LUBS 5142 (Distributional Analysis), for their well thought out assignments and detailed 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.

One of the issue that was highlighted in my report was that of word penalty for course work being applied randomly. This year, the penalty issue has been corrected and the marking was much more consistent.

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

There is no matter for urgent attention. On the whole, this is a well run programme, with no major issues.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y / N
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses 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 an External Examiner Mentor?	N/A

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

I have seen significant improvement in the programme over the last four years:

1. There has been significant improvement in the level of feedback provided to students.
2. The assignments, courseworks and exams are now more evenly spread out.
3. The marking distribution, on the whole, is now more even compared to previous years.

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 whole this is an excellent programme with a balanced set of modules offering both mainstream and heterodox modules. It provides students with both technical and more descriptive knowledge of the subject appropriate for a Master's in Economics.

The core courses are mainly focussed on the standard modules of micro, macro and econometrics. The optional courses cover a broad range of topics such as international economics, transport and comparative economics. My feeling is that the programme would be strengthened if there are optional modules on other topics too such as behavioural economics.

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)

As in previous years it is clear research plays an important role in the curriculum is very evident from the units, particularly the design of optional units. In the core units, there is very little one can do, but in the optional courses, some of the discussions around current world events such as Brexit was relevant and engaging. Students were made to think in innovative ways, where they were able to apply the tools they were learning into real world problems.

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
<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
<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>As in previous years wide variety of assessment methods are used in this programme, dissertations, final exams, midterms, course works – which included projects and essays. Taken together provides a very well rounded set of assessments. Detailed feedback was provided for most units. The marking was, on the whole, fair and consistent.</p> <p>There are some courses where it is still based on 100% exam. I strongly believe that some coursework prepares the students better and recommend that all courses move away from 100% final exam based assessment.</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
<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>As in previous years, students were given ample opportunity through a wide variety of assessments to demonstrate their learning. They covered both theoretical knowledge and real world applications.</p> <p>The overall achievements were in line with similar programmes with majority around the 2:1-2:2 class. In general, students demonstrated good knowledge of both technical and descriptive parts.</p> <p>In my opinion the dissertation (LUBS 5136M) was one of the weakest of the units. There was wide variability in the level. In particular the level of econometrics was quite poor and does not reflect the teaching they have received through the core econometrics units which is much more thorough.</p> <p>I also noted that there was quite a high number of fails in the resits, but I feel this is a cohort issue.</p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		
<p>1. Some of the units (such as LUBS 5108) have mainly given generic feedback . While generic feedback is good I believe more specific feedback would be helpful to students.</p>		

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
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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:

Reflecting on Q29 further, I found that while for most units or modules, exam scripts were marked and annotated, there are some units (such as LUBS 5116) where there are hardly any comments on the scripts making it difficult to judge why that particular mark was awarded.

Other comments

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