

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 10/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

English

Subject(s):

English

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA

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.
The practice of retaining core components in all three years of the Degree programme ensures a wide literary-historical coverage and is very much to be commended. The detail and quality of the feedback on assessments is exceptional, by national standards, and is a testament to a level of commitment and dedication to your students.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

No particular enhancements noted.

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

This year, the moderation procedures were significantly inconsistent and problematic, and the improvements I had noted last year seem to have vanished. In the first place, there was some confusion in the guidelines about marks of 69: in one place, the guidelines stipulate that all marks in the band 69-100 should be moderated, but this guidance is contradicted elsewhere. Not all the 69s that I saw were moderated: the position on this should be clarified before the next session. The more serious problem is that despite the guidelines, moderation was widely used in many of the modules I looked at as a form of selective second marking. Moderators seem to be tweaking marks, where the difference from the first marker is negligible. This kind of practice must advantage or disadvantage candidates whose work was not moderated: this selective double-marking is bad practice; it is unjustifiable and not in keeping with practice nationally.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment N/A

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 N/A

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 an 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.

The academic quality and standards of the English programme are very high. The programme elicits and develops a wide range of student skills: in close reading, conceptual analysis and historical contextualization. The variety of assessment methods addresses a range of student strengths. The courses are carefully designed, and the learning outcomes appropriate for the level of study in each year.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
-----	---	---

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)

The options, especially at Levels 2 and 3, achieve a literary-historical coverage comparable to other such programmes nationally, but with distinctive themes and emphases that relate directly to the research strengths of the teaching staff. In this way, programme uniquely reflects the research strengths of the school.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
-----	--	---

Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
-----	--	---

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
-----	--	---

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?	N
-----	---	---

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.

The assessment methods are directly geared to the ILOs, and the variety and range of assessment modes appropriately match the variety of options on offer. The top quality work is exceptional and original by any standards; a genuine pleasure to read. The quality of teaching and feedback is reflected in the solid competence and standard of writing shown even in work that merits lower marks, in the low 2.1 and 2.2. range.

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>As in previous years, I found this to be a strong cohort, with a high over-all standard of academic performance compared to students nationally. As a body, students demonstrated skills in close reading, conceptual analysis, and historical contextualization. The close attention to textual detail, encouraged across the options offered to students, is especially commendable. The quality of the first-class work, especially at the higher end of the first-class spectrum, was comparable to or exceeded top performances nationally. Only a very few students produced work in the lower-end of the class spectrum, and fails were few and far between.</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>As I mentioned elsewhere, the detail of the feedback is exemplary and serves an extremely useful formative purpose. However, I should like to reiterate the urgency of addressing inconsistency and unfairness in moderation procedures.</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
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 / N
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y / N
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y / N
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 / N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>Although I always received the necessary documentation, this year, I frequently had to request documentation (assessment material, marksheets, moderation comments) that was missing in the material sent to me. I understand that this was partly due to a staff shortage leading to undue pressure on exam administrators, and I'm sure it will be resolved by next year.</p>		

Other comments

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

-

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)*Title and Name of Examiner:*

Subject(s):

English

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA (Hons) English Literature

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

AHC

Address for communication:

School of English
10 Cavendish Road, Leeds.
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 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 very pleasing to hear that the practice of retaining core components in all three years of the programme, ensuring a wide literary-historical coverage, is commendable. The School is currently giving serious attention to the structure of its undergraduate degree programmes embedding its commitment to literary-historical coverage, and so this feedback is timely and helpful. It is also good to hear, in the context of good practice, that the quality of feedback (and detail) on assessments is exceptional by national standards, and evidence of our commitment and dedication to our students.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

No enhancements are recorded.

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:

The School of English does not condone or practice selective double-marking. _____ has very helpfully drawn attention to confusion in the printed guidelines for staff and examiners, and the correction of inconsistent information in our guidelines is a priority for the School's Director of Student Education (DSE) and is in hand, overseen by the Head of School, Deputy Head of School and Student Education Service School Manager. This will ensure that, before the next session, the position for all markers and moderators will be clarified. All apparent departures on the part of moderators from the expected (indeed, the required) practice, referred to in feedback to the School, has been investigated.

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 narrative responses recorded in relation to questions 1 – 7.

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:

Questions 8 – 12 receive a positive evaluation according to the template, and require no response. Regarding the programme structure, design, aims, and intended learning outcomes it is very pleasing to have as a matter of record that the academic quality and standards of the English programme are very high and, further, that a wide range of student skills are developed. It is helpful to have reference, in the report, to skills of close reading, conceptual analysis and historical contextualization. As Head of School I am delighted to receive a positive evaluation of a variety of assessment methods that properly address a range of student strengths committed, as we are, to an ethos of ‘less assessment, done better’ (aligned to the principles of the Leeds Curriculum). We are grateful to receive praise of our programmes as ‘carefully designed’, with appropriate intended learning outcomes for the level of study in each year. Regarding research-led curricula, it is pleasing to have confirmed the uniqueness and distinctiveness of our option provision, constructed on the basis of our many and varied research strengths.

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:

It is good to receive feedback that the School’s assessment methods are aligned to the achievement of the ILOs, and that the variety and range of assessment modes is good. It is helpful to have it confirmed that “the top quality work is exceptional and original by any standards”. It is also helpful to receive confirmation that the quality of teaching and feedback is reflected in the achievement and merits of work even in the lower bands.

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:

It is the case that, this year, significant staff changes were experienced by the Student Education Service in the School. The SES did a superb job given the loss of colleagues, largely due to ill-health, and in the broader context of the ongoing re-structuring of the Service. If one of the casualties of this was some disruption to an otherwise highly efficient operation, there is no reason to suppose that, in the absence of the levels of disruption experienced in 2017-18, this will be repeated.

Other comments

Response to items included in the ‘Other Comments’ section of the report

No ‘Other Comments’ were included.