

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-2018 QAT Received 03/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Faculty of Arts, School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
Subject(s):	<i>Religious Studies and combinations</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Theology and Religious Studies THEO2251 – Sociology of Religion (20 credits) THEO3190 – Religions and Global Development (20 credits) THEO3390 – Philosophy and the Spiritual Life (20 credits) THEO1920 – Religion, Politics & Society in the Modern World (10 credits) THEO1930 – Introduction to the Study of Religions (10 credits) THEO1960 – Religion in Modern Britain (10 credits) THEO101501 – Introduction to the Study of Islam (10 credits) THEO190001 – Introduction to South Asian Religions (10 credits) THEO191001 – Religion in Modern Africa (10 credits) THEO192009 – Religion, Politics and Society in the Modern World (10 credits) (16/17 resit) THEO2201 – Hindu Traditions to 1600 CE (20 credits) THEO3306 – Hindu Traditions to 1600 CE (20 credits) THEO3021 – Muslims in Britain: Transnational Communities and Multicultural Politics (20 credits) THE02000 – TRS Students into Schools (20 Credits) THE02720 - Religion, Gender and Society (20 Credits) PRHS3000 – Integrated Research Project THE02300 - Studying Religion in Context (20 credits) THE02450 - A Key Thinker in Philosophy of Religion: In Dialogue
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Title and Name of Examiner:

Institution:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Completed report

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

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 are no matters for urgent attention

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

NA

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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

NA

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

This programme, its combinations and the modules I examined are effectively designed to meet the learning outcomes appropriate for levels 4, 5 and 6 of the Framework for Higher Education qualifications

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Yes, the programme learning outcomes effectively meet the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies (Oct 2014).

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *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 used in each of the modules are appropriate both to the content and level of the module.

The assessment design within each module and overall assessment strategy are appropriate to undergraduate studies in this subject area.

As noted in previous years, there is greater use of examinations than in other similar courses, and it would be worth the team considering introducing alternative forms of assessment.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *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.*

Student achievement in assignments was commensurate with their abilities and it was pleasing to note a number of very good pieces of work.

Overall students are achieving at levels that are commensurate with other courses with which I am familiar.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

NA

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

One aspect of the oversight of assessment within the programme that is was positive to see enhanced is the increased clarity regarding monitoring reports, with amended wording for the *Code of Practice*.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

Staff teaching the course are all engaged in research and it is clear that modules are underpinned both by research rigour and currency across the discipline.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

NA

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

NA

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

The guidance to EEs is sound. The External Examiner's Handbook is concise and very clear.

There were some problems accessing all the student assignments because access to the VLE was limited. However, sufficient hard copy samples were provided for me to undertake my role. I hope that, in future, full access to all student submissions and the linked marking and commentary in Grademark is available for all EEs.

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

Yes.

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes, questions are sent in good time and my comments and suggestions for enhancement are taken into account.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes. I was provided with samples by hard copy in advance of the meeting, and was able to examine further scripts and examinations in the day prior to the meeting.

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Yes.

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

I attended the meeting and was happy to confirm all decisions and grades. The process was clear, and the University regulations underpinning decisions were clearly explained.

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

Decisions were made and a pre-board meeting that involved one of the examining team, which is an appropriate process.

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):

Theology and Religious Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Theology and Religious Studies (plus associated Joint Honours programmes)

THEO2251 Sociology of Religion (20 credits)
 THEO3190 Religions and Global Development (20 credits)
 THEO3390 Philosophy and the Spiritual Life (20 credits)
 THEO1920 Religion, Politics & Society in the Modern World (10 credits)
 THEO1930 Introduction to the Study of Religions (10 credits)
 THEO1960 Religion in Modern Britain (10 credits)
 THEO101501 Introduction to the Study of Islam (10 credits)
 THEO190001 Introduction to South Asian Religions (10 credits)
 THEO191001 Religion in Modern Africa (10 credits)
 THEO192009 Religion, Politics and Society in the Modern World (10 credits) (16/17 resit)
 THEO2201 Hindu Traditions (20 credits)
 THEO3306 Hindu Traditions (20 credits)
 THEO3021 Muslims in Britain: Transnational Communities and Multicultural Politics (20 credits)
 THEO2000 TRS Students into Schools (20 Credits)
 THEO2720 Religion, Gender and Society (20 Credits)
 PRHS3000 Independent Research Project
 THEO2300 Studying Religion in Context (20 credits)
 THEO2450 A Key Thinker in Philosophy of Religion: In Dialogue

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Assessment Officer

Faculty / School of:

School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science

Address for communication:

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.

10 October 2018

Dear

Thank you very much for submitting your External Examiner's Report for the Academic Year 2017–18. As ever, we greatly appreciate the careful attention that you have given to our Theology and Religious Studies programme and to a large number of modules associated with it.

We are pleased to see that there are no matters requiring urgent attention and that, for the most part, our assessment processes and standards are satisfactory.

We take note of your observation (under Question 3) that examinations feature prominently among the methods of assessment used across our range of modules taken as a whole. While the variety of methods of assessment utilized within the School has increased over recent years, we continue to regard examinations as one effective method among others. We shall, however, keep the use of examinations under review – along with all our methods of assessment – within the overall process of reviewing our modules and programmes.

The hope expressed (under Question 10) that External Examiners will, in future, be given full access to the VLE for all the modules for which they are responsible is one that we share. My understanding of the situation is that a new online Information Security test has been introduced that must be passed by anyone who is going to receive access to the VLE. I shall consult relevant administrative colleagues about this matter to see whether there is any means of bypassing this requirement. If there is not, then I fear that External Examiners will be asked to complete the test prior to being granted access. I apologise for this inconvenience.

May I also add that, through its School Taught Student Education Committee (STSEC), the School of PRHS is currently undertaking a review both of the way in which materials are made available to External Examiners and of the instructions that External Examiners are given in connection with the sampling of assessed work. The purpose of this review is to ensure that External Examiners' time and effort can be used in a maximally efficient way. It is, in part, your own suggestions concerning the virtues of introducing a more 'risk-based approach' to External Examining that has prompted this review. We hope that the review will not take long and that any beneficial modifications in our procedures can be implemented during the current academic year (2018–19).

With gratitude once again,

Yours sincerely,

(Assessment Officer, on behalf of the Head of School)

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-2018

QAT Received 18/10/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
Subject(s):	Theology/Religion
Programme(s) / Module(s):	THEO2295/3295 Humanity in Christian Thought THEO 2780/3780 Pentecostalism as a Public Religion in Africa PRHS 3000 Independent Research Project PRHS 2000 Religion and Human Rights PHIL 2532 Philosophy of Religion THEO 3040 Ideologies of Hebrew Bible Texts THEO3220 Sin THEO 3280 Religion, Politics and the Future THEO3880 The Religious Mapping of Leeds
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Title and Name of Examiner:

Institution:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Completed report

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Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

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

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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

This year marked my final year as external examiner for the School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science at Leeds University. I have generally found that suggestions made in previous years have been taken into consideration by the School. In particular I have noted a wide variety of assessment methods which have given students the opportunity to satisfy examiners through the medium of examinations, essays, research projects and oral presentations. In only one case this year was the entire module assessed only by examination (one 3-hour exam) and it was perhaps significant that the overall performance of students seemed less satisfactory here as opposed to other modules (there were two fails and about 10 Students in Class III). It might be appropriate for this module to contain a wider variety of assessment methods. Indeed, the School might consider the appropriateness of the traditional exam in some of the other modules taught. The School might also consider implementing a policy whereby if there is a significant difference between the mark awarded by the first and second examiner or between the module leader and the moderator the resulting discussion should always be committed to writing; this is done in some cases but not always. The teaching in the School seems of consistently high quality and my impression was that more students managed to gain a degree in the First/II.i classification than in previous years. I have nothing but the highest praise for the examination officers and those responsible for the smooth running of the Exam Board; it has always been conducted with efficiency, but never in a hurried manner, so that due attention is given to students who have particular extenuating circumstances. I wish the School – the staff, students and administrators – all the best in the coming years.

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The Intended Learning Outcomes were entirely appropriate for the programmes which I examined. The modules were well structured, and the content was entirely satisfactory. The standard was commensurate with that at other institutions of HE where I have examined.

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Yes, the aims and ILOs did meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark and there was a greater variety of modules within the programme than I have encountered at other institutions.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *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 were entirely satisfactory, with a sample of modules given to a second internal examiner and moderator. The arrangements for the marking of the modules were efficient, though some difficulty was experienced with regard to the VLE submissions. The overall student performance suggested that they had received teaching of a high standard.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *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.*

Yes, students were given ample opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs of the individual modules, since a variety of assessment methods were deployed for most of the modules which I examined. The stronger students were able to marshal their arguments effectively and showed considerable independence of thought; the weaker students tended to introduce more tangential issues and were less ready to engage critically with the views of scholars.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N/A

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

One area of enhancement was the readiness of internal examiners to use the full range of marks available in the 70+ bracket; in previous years there had been a tendency to award outstanding essays and assessments with a mark in the low 70s. The system of having a second marker and moderator works very effectively though it would be helpful to ensure that the discussion between them in cases where there is a significant difference of view is always committed to writing for the benefit of the external examiner; this was done effectively in some modules but not all.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

The research interests of the individual module leaders had clearly been fed into the modules which they taught, and the assessment methods used gave ample opportunity for students to conduct their own research.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

N/A

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

I was provided with the Handbook for the modules which I was asked to examine, and this included all the information which I needed in order to make a proper assessment of the modules concerned.

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

Yes, all the appropriate documentation was sent to me in good time, and these included the programme specifications and marking criteria. Any queries which I had were responded to without delay.

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes, I was provided with draft examination papers and given the opportunity to make suggestions for improvement. I found the nature of questions entirely appropriate for the level being examined.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes I was provided with sufficient work to enable me to have an impression of the overall standard and the scripts were satisfactorily marked.

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

I examined two dissertations (independent research projects) and the choice of subject in each was appropriate and clearly reflected the interests of the individual students, and the standard of assessment in both was satisfactory.

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

The administrative arrangements were excellent. I did attend the Board of Examiners and this was chaired with the utmost efficiency and the recommendations of the Board seemed entirely appropriate in all cases.

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

Yes; there was an appropriate pause to consider each case where there were mitigating circumstances or medical evidence and it was clear that the individual circumstances of students had been taken into account and proper allowance made wherever appropriate.

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 Examiner:

Subject(s):

Theology and Religious Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Theology and Religious Studies (plus associated Joint Honours programmes)

THEO2295/3295 Humanity in Christian Thought
THEO 2780/3780 Pentecostalism as a Public Religion in Africa
PRHS 3000 Independent Research Project
PRHS 2000 Religion and Human Rights
PHIL 2532 Philosophy of Religion
THEO 3040 Ideologies of Hebrew Bible Texts
THEO3220 Sin
THEO 3280 Religion, Politics and the Future
THEO3880 The Religious Mapping of Leeds

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position:*

Assessment Officer

Faculty / School of:

School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science

Address for communication:

School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
Botany House
University of Leeds
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.

28 November 2018

Dear

Thank you very much indeed for submitting your External Examiner's Report for the academic year 2017–2018. As ever, your careful attention to our Theology and Religious Studies programme and several of the modules that it includes is greatly appreciated. Moreover, we are enormously appreciative of the work you have done as external examiner over the last four years, and we wish you well in your retirement.

The comments and suggestions in your report are helpful and encouraging. We are pleased that you have found our assessment methods and procedures to be, on the whole, suitable and effective for determining students' respective abilities, and that your experience of our Exam Board has been a positive one; we do

indeed try to keep it running smoothly while also giving due attention to the cases of students with mitigating circumstances.

The point you raise about cases in which there is a disagreement between the first and second marker, or between the marker and the monitor, of a given assessment is a pertinent one. We do have a consistently maintained procedure for recording how disagreements were resolved in the case of final year projects, for the version of the feedback form that is prepared specifically for external examiners contains a section for explaining how the two markers arrived at an agreed mark (if there had been any initial disagreement between them). But there may well be some inconsistencies in the case of other modules. The Monitor's Report would certainly be an appropriate place to record how any disagreements were resolved, and as Assessment Officer I shall encourage markers and monitors to be consistent in this regard.

Your observation about the marks achieved in a module whose sole method of assessment is a three-hour exam (the questions of which are seen beforehand by the students) is helpful. From the current academic year onwards, we shall be providing external examiners with even more ready access to statistical information relating to students' marks, and we shall be scrutinizing this information ourselves with a view to comparing marks across modules (and in some cases across successive years). This should aid us in detecting inconsistencies between methods of assessment and between the marks achieved on different modules. We continue to regard written exams as one valuable method of assessment among the full range of assessment methods – or, rather, two methods, if we distinguish between exams for which students have seen the questions in advance and those for which the questions are unseen. But during our module review process, we shall bear in mind your suggestion about introducing a further method of assessment in any modules that are currently assessed exclusively by means of exam.

With gratitude once again for your diligent assistance over the last four years,

Yours sincerely,

(Assessment Officer, on behalf of the Head of School)