

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 03/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Politics and International Studies

Subject(s):

International Relations

Programme(s) / Module(s):

PIED2463, 2501, 2711, 3302, 3402, 3403, 3502, 3503, 3505, 3565, 3750

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.

As I also noted last year - and outline in further detail below - POLIS offers a broad range of exciting and often very challenging International Relations modules and provides excellent feedback on assessments

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

The main issues I raised last year – regarding the mitigating circumstances process, occasional mismatch between marks and feedback, and insufficient stretching at the top end of marking scale – have also been addressed (please see further details below)

Last year was the first year Minerva was used for the external moderation process and there were some teething problems. The process has been much smoother this year.

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

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 / N
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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.

Once again I was impressed with the broad range of exciting and often challenging International Relations modules offered by POLIS. The programme and individual modules are very well-designed with clearly identified ILOs.

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)

The third year modules I moderated are very clearly informed by extensive research. The expertise of the convenors/tutors, and the resulting high quality of the teaching, was very noticeable in the work produced by the students and also clearly reflected in the very detailed feedback provided.

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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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?	Y
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<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>The methods of assessment are fairly traditional – mostly essays and exams – but this is not unusual for Politics/IR Departments and the methods are appropriate to the ILOs.</p> <p>The process for marking and moderation seems robust, but it would be good to have a slightly more transparent process, in particular when the moderator has made some critical comments.</p> <p>I was again impressed with the feedback provided. Some it is extraordinarily detailed and constructive. This year the feedback varied a little more than last year, both in terms of its length and its usefulness for students. And different markers use different forms and formats, even within the same module. I am not calling for complete standardisation, but some agreement on feedback format and minimum length would maybe help manage student expectations and avoid confusion.</p> <p>The quality of teaching, as evidenced by student performance, is clearly very high (see also below)</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 academic standard remained very high this year and I again read some really excellent essays and dissertations. Student standards compare favourably with similar institutions.</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>A few additional comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last year, I commented on the occasional mismatch between marks and the language used in the feedback. This appears to have been largely corrected and I only noticed a few such examples. - Compared to last year, there was a definite increase in marks between 74 and 78. However, the top end of the scale could still be used a bit more. More feedback to students who get low firsts would perhaps help achieve this (some, but not all, markers already provide this) 		

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
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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>Last year I requested more information about the mitigating circumstances process. This was provided this year and was fully satisfactory.</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):

As stated above

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

ESSL/POLIS

Address for communication:

Leeds University

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 these comments.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We are pleased that the main issues raised last year – regarding the mitigating circumstances process, occasional mismatch between marks and feedback, and insufficient stretching at the top end of marking scale – have been addressed.

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:

Welcome the comment that on “the broad range of exciting and often challenging International Relations modules offered by POLIS” and their research-led character.

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 will consider whether the School can and should consider “some agreement on feedback format and minimum length would maybe help manage student expectations and avoid confusion.”

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 please that the level of information provided was fully satisfactory.

Other comments

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

None.