

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 06/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Politics and International Studies

Subject(s):

Politics and International Relations

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Introduction to Comparative Public Policy; Advanced Statistical Analysis; UG Dissertation; Video Games: Politics, Society and Culture; United States Politics; International Politics

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

Acting as the external examiner has been very straight-forward. The administrative team have been very helpful and the process has been clear throughout.

Teaching staff at the School of Politics and International Studies are operating at a very high standard; this manifests in the assessment guidelines provided to students, the range of assessments used, the feedback provided on corrected assignments, the internal moderation process, and the overall consistency across modules in terms of marking criteria.

At no point was I confused by any assessments, nor did I ever feel as though there was a very significant variation in feedback and/or grading.

Enhancements made from the previous year

This is my first year as external examiner

Matters for Urgent Attention

There is nothing I consider "urgent" though please see the final "Other Comments" section for some suggestions.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses 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 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 programme is very well structured and designed; there is a logical progression throughout and modules are pitched at the appropriate level.
The learning outcomes are clear and realistic throughout and it is obvious that staff have taken considerable effort to ensure their students receive sufficient guidance and support when completing their assignments.

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)

Students are provided with excellent research-led teaching and this manifests in the reading lists, lecture topics and feedback.

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:

N/A

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:

N/A

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:

N/A

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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>There is a wide variety of assessments employed thus ensuring that students are challenged on a number of levels. The assessments are often innovative and challenging, though there is ample guidance provided. There is a clear coherence between the learning outcomes as stated on the module outlines and the assessments; feedback also relates well to the original learning outcomes. Student performance was on the whole excellent with certain modules achieving a very high (though deserved) average.</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>As noted above the standard of student work was very high and this was reflected in the average marks awarded for each module. Students evidently engage well with the readings and benefit from the extensive guidance provided on completing assignments. I don't feel capable of commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort given I have only reviewed a sample of the assessed work, but as noted, they would appear to have been receptive to the evidently excellent teaching provided by staff.</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 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?	N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	N/A
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	N/A
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>I apologise for my inability to make it to the classification board itself; this was due to a family emergency</p>		

Other comments

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

There are a few minor points I wish to highlight; these are not criticisms as such, rather, I raise these as the School may wish to consider adopting a more standardised approach in these areas.

- Some modules leaders provide hand-written feedback (PIED3704) which was difficult to read at times.
- On some modules (e.g PIED 2702) there were no in-text notes/comments; this was out of step with the other modules
- The marks on some modules (especially PIED 3810) were very high marks, and certainly higher than those of others; does the School have a policy on 80+ marks?
- The means by which feedback was given to students varied on some modules; PIED 3810 in particular appears to have adopted an unusual approach (though the feedback was good) while others, such as PIED2463 provided neither audio comments nor a summary feedback; feedback was provided only through the in-text comments. These approaches were not in themselves problematic but the School may wish to think about whether a more standardised approach would be useful.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

International Relations

Programme(s) / Module(s):

As stated above

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

As stated above

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

ESSL POLIS

Address for communication:

University of Leeds

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. 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 acknowledge and welcome the identification of good practice.

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:

No specific points were raised.

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 comment that Students are provided with excellent research-led teaching and this manifests in the reading lists, lecture topics and feedback.

We welcome the comment that
The programme is very well structured and designed; there is a logical progression throughout and modules are pitched at the appropriate level.
The learning outcomes are clear and realistic throughout and it is obvious that staff have taken considerable effort to ensure their students receive sufficient guidance and support when completing their assignments.

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 the comment that There is a clear coherence between the learning outcomes as stated on the module outlines and the assessments. We continue to share best practice and review inconsistent of practice so that it is justified.

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:

None.

Other comments

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

We continue to share best practice with respect to feedback and review inconsistent of practice so that it is justified. We understand the inability to make classification boards and look forward to seeing next academic year.

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QA Team received 20/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

POLIS

Subject(s):

International Relations, International Security

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA International Relations
PIED1551
PIED2558
PIED3603
PIED3750

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

The amount and quality of feedback given to the students is exemplary. In the vast majority of cases, feedback is very constructive and clearly indicates to students how they can perform better in future.

Enhancements made from the previous year

There have been some improvements to the ways in which information is communicated to the external examiners.

Matters for Urgent Attention

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
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

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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
<p><i>The BA programme in International Relations is very well-designed and offers students a wide range of topical modules. In the area for which I am responsible (international security, broadly defined), students have the possibility to take several courses on the most topical subjects, which are research-led and intellectually stimulating.</i></p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p><i>Academic members of staff teach modules in their area of expertise. The reading lists are fully up-to-date and feature cutting-edge pieces of research.</i></p> <p><i>The overall high quality of the undergraduate dissertations testifies to the ability of the academic staff to clearly explain to students how to design and conduct a research project. Some students manage to write a dissertation of very high quality.</i></p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><i>Student performance testifies to the dedication of the academic staff. Staff members generally give excellent, detailed and constructive feedback, which is truly remarkable given the high number of students on some of these courses. Marking is fair, sound and transparent. The various types of assessment adequately test the achievement of the various intended learning outcomes.</i></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>I have been very impressed by the standards achieved by the students, some of whom produced outstanding pieces of work. Overall, students' performance is as strong as, if not better than, that of students on comparable courses.</i>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

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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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?	N
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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

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):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School

FOSS POLIS

POLIS University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane

*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

Completing the School response

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Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

These were noted.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

These were noted.

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:

N/A

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:

N/A

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 note that *The BA programme in International Relations is very well-designed and offers students a wide range of topical modules. We recognise that students have the possibility to take several courses on the most topical subjects, which are research-led and intellectually stimulating. This is good to hear.*

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 acknowledge the dedication of the academic staff. Staff members do generally give excellent, detailed and constructive feedback, and it is truly remarkable given the high number of students on some of these courses. We're happy you think the marking is fair, sound and transparent and that the various types of assessment adequately test the achievement of the various intended learning outcomes.

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:

N/A

Other comments

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