

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18    QAT Received 25/06/2018

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

School Languages, Cultures and Societies

*Subject(s):*

Italian

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

All Italian related modules

*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 in my two previous years, I was impressed by the range and variety of modules on offers, both in language and non-language based modules, the levels of student attainment within those modules, especially at the upper end, and the rigour, consistency, seriousness and helpfulness with which colleagues in the unit dealt with both the examining, feedback, moderating and marking processes. Practice remains consistently high with regard to rigour of marking and moderating and I note, as in previous years, the value of moderation forms at module level.

**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 Final Year Project, delivered as a School level unit, and in line with the ethos of encouraging more independent research work across the entire UG cohort is a particularly notable development. Though it delivers a distinctive University-wide structure, at School level I was impressed by the way this had been implemented in a differentiated way (a range of projects possible), how the supervising, support and examining of projects had been overseen at School level.

**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*

In spite of my strong support for the FYP, both in terms of its ethos and its delivery, I believe one aspect of moderation process (which on the advice of another external was conducted at School level) requires some attention or at least further thought ahead of next year. The moderation process, as I note above, is very carefully structured and well handled; however, in one respect, I had a concern relating to the current process by which it was possible for both the unit-level markers to be in agreement about the mark for a FYP but the moderation process (at School level) to result in a shift in the module mark across a class boundary. I believe it would be helpful to understand the basis on which this operates, and to set out the rationale clearly. In my view it may be worth considering the relevance of school-level moderation of marks (though I note again and stress the need to maintain the excellent oversight, support and coordination processes carried out at School level by and ) given the robustness of the processes for marking at unit level and how these are in any case overseen by external examiners. I had a series of helpful email exchanges with colleagues concerned about this matter during and after my visit to Leeds.

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment NOT APPLICABLE**

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 NOT APPLICABLE**

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.*

See opening comments: I should note further that I received strong support from the subject lead who was available at all times, via email and during my visit, to respond to any queries I might have.

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)*

See my comments on the final year project where one found very good evidence of how staff research interests informed projects. The curriculum remains strongly and thoughtfully focused on current research in the subject and relevant interests of staff

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 /
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.		
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 /
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:		
The quality and rigour of the assessment work remains very high indeed: I again observed this in my sampling of both language and non-language work and was particularly impressed by the quality of feedback given to students with regard to the Final Year Project.		
Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:		

### 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?	Yes but see my

		comment above
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
<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 Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

LCS Assessment Lead

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies

University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT

\*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](mailto: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****LCS collective response:**

We are grateful to all those External Examiners who identified evidence of innovation and/or good practice in their reports. It is clear that the School's programmes are regarded very positively and are identified as being of high quality with both excellent teaching and student performance.

It is most gratifying to receive positive feedback given the energy invested by staff in this respect. The reports suggest that there is ample evidence of good practice in a number of areas: high quality research-led teaching; dynamic programmes offering a diverse curriculum underpinned by research; impressive levels of student attainment particularly at the upper end of the spectrum; an excellent range of resources and support materials. The variety of assessment styles was noted and the fact that students were stretched and challenged. The variety of skills developed was praised both in terms of transferability of skills and in directly enhancing employability. The research training, often from Level 1 but certainly from Level 2, was seen as yielding rewards for the Final Year Project.

In language modules, the student work provided strong evidence of students' independent learning and the development of intercultural awareness. Several Examiners commented on excellent student performance in speaking and writing. The high level of attainment in some translation modules was also noted.

Staff were commended for their expertise, their excellent teaching and the quality of their detailed feedback. Marking was described as 'clear', 'rigorous', 'robust' and 'thorough' and the moderation process was also identified as 'rigorous'.

In terms of innovation, Examiners highlighted new modules which were perceived as 'vibrant' and 'fresh', cross-disciplinary comparative literature modules which were described as 'pioneering' and an impressive range of modules which were seen as 'engaging' and reflecting current research.

The Examiners also commented on the excellent level of support they had received in carrying out their role. Effective use of Minerva had enabled them to scrutinise coursework in advance of the Board of Examiners' meeting, making efficient use of their time in terms of sampling both student performance and tutor feedback.

**Subject area individual response:****Response to Enhancements made from the previous year****LCS collective response:**

Regarding enhancements from the previous year, it was encouraging to see evidence of subject areas responding to previous comments.

Two key areas were identified: the Final Year Project (FYP) and the use of Minerva. The FYPs were described as 'outstanding' and 'original' in terms of the students' work. The range of projects and approaches was seen as commendable, including the opportunity for students to undertake translation-based projects. The moderation process was identified as producing detailed, insightful comments and the quality of the feedback was commented on very favourably. There was also very pleasing feedback on the support and supervision for students and for the oversight and coordination at School level. Interestingly while some commented favourably on the cross-School moderation of FYPs, two commented less favourably so this will be reviewed and further discussed in 2018-19.

The use of Minerva received very positive feedback. Being able to see samples of student work and/or being able to select samples was seen as hugely beneficial to Examiners in advance of their visit to Leeds. This enabled them to have a comprehensive view of the student performance ahead of the Board of Examiners' meeting and to focus on scrutinising the FYPs during their visit.

**Subject area individual response:**

**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:*

**LCS collective response:**

Four matters for urgent attention were raised:

1. One External Examiner raised concerns regarding the University's inclusive marking policy which means that the marker focusses on the content and not the use of language in awarding marks and providing feedback. The concern was that "the University risks lowering its standards compared to other Russell Group Universities". The University is committed to inclusive marking practices for students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Flagging this to the marker is considered a reasonable adjustment under the 2010 Equality Act. To clarify, the policy states that "Where accuracy in written expression is a competence standard, and therefore forms an explicit element of the marking criteria, students should expect to receive marks which reflect this element and clear advice on how to develop any areas of weakness." It is not felt that this approach means lowering standards; rather it is intended to meet the requirements of the Equality Act and to support students in a reasonable and appropriate way. Please see the institutional response.

2. Two External Examiners commented on the need for a clear rationale regarding moderation at School level of FYPs given the robust marking which is in place at subject level. We will review the outcomes of School moderation in 2017-18 and continue to discuss the need for - and impact of - moderation at this level, including discussion of the practice in other Schools. We will clarify when changes may be made following School-level moderation. Please see the institutional response.

3. One External Examiner commented on the extent of feedback on coursework. While the quality of feedback was identified as very good practice, it is acknowledged that a balance needs to be sought and there needs to be consistency across modules and programmes. The suggestion of a minimum and maximum number of words is very useful and will be discussed in the relevant forum.

4. The fourth matter concerned clarifying what constitutes a fail in speaking and clarification of the term 'unacceptable performance'. This will be addressed in the subject area concerned.

**Subject area individual response:**

**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:*

**LCS collective response:**

We are extremely grateful to those External Examiners who have reached the end of their term of appointment. We thank you for your support, feedback and collegiality during your tenure. We are also very grateful to those of you who acted as mentors for External Examiners who are new to the role.

## Subject area individual response:

### 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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It is very pleasing to have confirmation of the strong presence of Research-led teaching throughout all levels of our programmes and for our approaches to Learning and Teaching to be recognised as inspiring students to engage in their own research. Our programmes are seen as well-structured and well designed, informed by current research, with the ILOs covering an appropriate range of knowledge and understanding, developing appropriate skills and supporting clear progression. There was praise for the blend of research specialisms across a range of disciplines and this too was felt to have inspired our students, leading to some very strong performances and impressive instances of student research. One Examiner commented positively on the absence of any grade inflation as a result of moving to the 0-100 marking scale.

#### **Subject area individual response:**

### 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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It is encouraging to note that our assessment and feedback processes together with the quality of marking are deemed robust. The variety of assessment methods was praised with some described as innovative and challenging. Others were perceived as standardised but allowing for innovation within individual subject areas. Module moderation and evaluation procedures were seen as robust, clear, well documented and thorough. The high quality of the feedback to students received several mentions. Similarly marking was felt to be fair and transparent.

Regarding the amount of assessment, while one Examiner commented on the overall comparability between the amount of assessment and the rigour of the marking across different modules, another commented less favourably on the large amount of assessment and another mentioned that on occasion there seemed an inconsistency with one module assessed only by an essay task. This will be addressed by individual subject areas but it suggests that the School could identify a minimum and a maximum number of summative tasks with a view to achieving greater parity and moving to a reduction in the amount of assessment.

We welcome the Examiners' suggestions which included greater use of podcasts to increase the variety of assessment methods and the opportunity for students to express their creative freedom; reducing the number of exams and increasing the range of assessment types; making more use of Turnitin to provide feedback online saving staff time, enhancing the feedback experience for students and avoiding the need to transfer marks. We will discuss these suggestions to see how they could benefit both staff and students.

There seemed to be some concern for the amount of time colleagues spend on providing detailed feedback which, while highly commendable, could be reduced by adopting a 'feed forward' section which identifies two key points for the student to focus on and encourages more reflection. This could be trialled in 2018-19.

One Examiner mentioned that accessing Minerva had been problematic and time-consuming so we will compare practice across the different subject areas with a view to finding out what works best.

#### **Subject area individual response:**



### **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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It was very pleasing to have feedback on our exam boards confirming “scrupulous application of the classification process, good and robust discussion of how and where rules should and should not be applied”.

Again the use of Minerva was identified as having facilitated the role with Examiners able to look at materials and student work ahead of their visit. One suggestion was that making more use of online marking would be a useful enhancement allowing the External to see the feedback and marks on Turnitin submissions.

A concern raised by one Examiner was the School-level moderation of FYPs following an already robust and thorough process of double-marking. The suggestion was to clarify the process regarding cases where changes may be made following School-level moderation. As mentioned earlier, this will be reviewed and discussed in the relevant forum.

Another concern centred on clarification regarding when a Board might be able to make “extraordinary decisions” in awarding candidates a higher degree grading where severe mitigating circumstances have been declared.

One External would appreciate the opportunity to attend the Progression and Awards Board and this will be followed up. We aim to invite each External Examiner to attend the Classification Board once during their tenure and we are always pleased to hear from individuals who would like to put themselves forward for this additional duty.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our External Examiners for the vital role they play in subject exam boards in terms of ratifying module marks and where necessary moderating them, and discussing matters of comparability of student performance at module level with national benchmarks and other UK institutions.

#### **Subject area individual response:**

## Other comments

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

#### **LCS collective response:**

We regret the difficulty which some of our Examiners experienced in accessing Minerva. We are now aware of the need for each individual to complete the University’s online security training – on an annual basis - within a very short time in order to be able to access the system. We will endeavour to remind our Examiners of this short deadline to avoid having to request new login details.

A couple of Examiners mentioned that it would be useful to access samples of student work via Minerva ahead of their visit to Leeds so this will be followed up by the relevant subject areas. One particular comment concerned being able to access FYPs ahead on the exam board to allow more time to view them.

One Examiner questioned the role of the External at the Board of Examiners’ meeting, suggesting that it might be more useful to attend the Progression Board. As explained, this is not the School’s policy but we will readily issue an invitation to the Classification Board for 2018-19.

One Examiner who is completing their term of office recommended greater harmonisation and rationalisation of assessment and a review of the volume of assessment. While this will be addressed by the relevant subject area, it will also be considered by the School.



**Subject area individual response:**

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18      QAT Received 28/06/2018

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

Languages, Cultures and Societies

*Subject(s):*

*Italian*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

BA Italian; Joint Honours Italian; modules across all undergraduate levels

*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 Italian programme at Leeds continues to deliver excellent teaching in line with best practice in the discipline of Italian studies and modern languages more widely. It is to be commended for the range of engaging modules, often reflecting current research agendas, across language, literature and culture.

**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 range of topics and approaches undertaken in final year projects is commendable, including providing the students with the opportunity to undertake translation-based projects.

**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*

**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*

## 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 designed and structured, with excellent coverage of key linguistic skills and an impressive range of components in literature, history, film, etc. The aims and ILOs of individual modules cover an appropriate range of competencies, knowledge and understanding, and are well aligned with the programme aims/ILOs, with clear progression from one level of study to the next. The programme and standards achieved by students compare very favourably with those of other similar institutions.

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)*

There is a strong presence of research-led teaching in Italian. The curriculum from first year onwards includes topics relating to staff research areas and these are given increasing prominence in various more specialized modules in the higher levels of study. The approaches to learning and teaching facilitate and encourage students, where appropriate, to engage in their own research on course topics. The range of final year projects in particular allows students to explore personal research ideas.

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
<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>Assessment methods are very well designed and appropriate to ILOs, and are suitably varied and calibrated according to the content of modules. For language modules, there is a good mix of assessment tasks covering key skills and understanding. For 'content' modules, there is also an appropriate mix of assessment methods between traditional essays/exams and other forms of report or commentary where appropriate.</p> <p>The marking of modules was completed with full regard for both fairness and for rigorous standards. There is a clear and well documented moderation process which appears to be working very effectively.</p> <p>I am unable to comment on classification of final awards as I was not involved in final degree classification board.</p> <p>The general level of student performance reflects a very high quality of teaching and demonstrates that learning has taken place in depth and with real engagement on the part of students.</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>Academic standards on the programme are very high. The range of work I have seen reflects standards that compare favourably with those of other Italian studies programmes in comparable institutions. There were many areas of strength across the modules, with impressive performances at the upper end of the range in courses on literature, film, linguistics, etc. The overall profile of results included some weaker performances, which is to be expected, but there were no consistent or worrying areas of weakness in the cohort as a whole. The language work I have seen shows students achieving impressive results across the key linguistic skills.</p> <p>I looked carefully at marks in the top range this year in view of the new 0-100 marking scale. I did not see any evidence of grade inflation, as the very top end of the scale (90+) seemed to be used extremely sparingly, if at all.</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 in previous years, I was very impressed by the quality of feedback given to students on their assessed work. Markers' comments are detailed and in some cases very extensive. Feedback was well focused on helping students develop their learning and skills.</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?	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:*

The general processes listed above all worked very well. I had appropriate access to all documentation, guidance, etc.

I was provided with copies of draft exam papers, and assessment questions etc in good time. Papers were generally very well prepared, and where I did have comments or suggestions there was some very constructive dialogue and my views were given due consideration.

I had access to the full range of assessed work, some on the VLE and some in hard copy on my visit to Leeds. Both paper scripts and electronic submissions were very clearly and fully marked and annotated.

The final year projects that I read covered varied and original subject matter and showed students engaging in processes of independent thought and research covering a wide range of topics and methodologies. The availability of translation projects as an alternative to more traditional dissertation-type work is commendable. The projects were rigorously assessed by first and second markers, with extensive and helpful feedback provided.

Regarding FYPs, I did share concerns raised at the Italian subject board by my fellow External in Italian regarding the additional layer of moderation of these projects at School level following initial full double marking. In view of the very thorough and robust 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marking carried out at subject level, we both felt that, where there is no significant discrepancy between the marks of the two subject specialists, it was hard to see the justification for intervention at School level. Some of our concerns regarding the process were subsequently addressed by helpful clarifications provided by the School Assessment Lead, but it would be good if these procedures could be revisited and/or the process clarified regarding cases where changes may be recommended following School-level moderation.

#### 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 Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

LCS Assessment Lead

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies

University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT

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

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**Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice****LCS collective response:**

We are grateful to all those External Examiners who identified evidence of innovation and/or good practice in their reports. It is clear that the School's programmes are regarded very positively and are identified as being of high quality with both excellent teaching and student performance.

It is most gratifying to receive positive feedback given the energy invested by staff in this respect. The reports suggest that there is ample evidence of good practice in a number of areas: high quality research-led teaching; dynamic programmes offering a diverse curriculum underpinned by research; impressive levels of student attainment particularly at the upper end of the spectrum; an excellent range of resources and support materials. The variety of assessment styles was noted and the fact that students were stretched and challenged. The variety of skills developed was praised both in terms of transferability of skills and in directly enhancing employability. The research training, often from Level 1 but certainly from Level 2, was seen as yielding rewards for the Final Year Project.

In language modules, the student work provided strong evidence of students' independent learning and the development of intercultural awareness. Several Examiners commented on excellent student performance in speaking and writing. The high level of attainment in some translation modules was also noted.

Staff were commended for their expertise, their excellent teaching and the quality of their detailed feedback. Marking was described as 'clear', 'rigorous', 'robust' and 'thorough' and the moderation process was also identified as 'rigorous'.

In terms of innovation, Examiners highlighted new modules which were perceived as 'vibrant' and 'fresh', cross-disciplinary comparative literature modules which were described as 'pioneering' and an impressive range of modules which were seen as 'engaging' and reflecting current research.

The Examiners also commented on the excellent level of support they had received in carrying out their role. Effective use of Minerva had enabled them to scrutinise coursework in advance of the Board of Examiners' meeting, making efficient use of their time in terms of sampling both student performance and tutor feedback.

**Subject area individual response:****Response to Enhancements made from the previous year****LCS collective response:**

Regarding enhancements from the previous year, it was encouraging to see evidence of subject areas responding to previous comments.

Two key areas were identified: the Final Year Project (FYP) and the use of Minerva. The FYPs were described as 'outstanding' and 'original' in terms of the students' work. The range of projects and approaches was seen as commendable, including the opportunity for students to undertake translation-based projects. The moderation process was identified as producing detailed, insightful comments and the quality of the feedback was commented on very favourably. There was also very pleasing feedback on the support and supervision for students and for the oversight and coordination at School level. Interestingly while some commented favourably on the cross-School moderation of FYPs, two commented less favourably so this will be reviewed and further discussed in 2018-19.

The use of Minerva received very positive feedback. Being able to see samples of student work and/or being able to select samples was seen as hugely beneficial to Examiners in advance of their visit to Leeds. This enabled them to have a comprehensive view of the student performance ahead of the Board of Examiners' meeting and to focus on scrutinising the FYPs during their visit.

**Subject area individual response:**

**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:*

**LCS collective response:**

Four matters for urgent attention were raised:

1. One External Examiner raised concerns regarding the University's inclusive marking policy which means that the marker focusses on the content and not the use of language in awarding marks and providing feedback. The concern was that "the University risks lowering its standards compared to other Russell Group Universities". The University is committed to inclusive marking practices for students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Flagging this to the marker is considered a reasonable adjustment under the 2010 Equality Act. To clarify, the policy states that "Where accuracy in written expression is a competence standard, and therefore forms an explicit element of the marking criteria, students should expect to receive marks which reflect this element and clear advice on how to develop any areas of weakness." It is not felt that this approach means lowering standards; rather it is intended to meet the requirements of the Equality Act and to support students in a reasonable and appropriate way. Please see the institutional response.
2. Two External Examiners commented on the need for a clear rationale regarding moderation at School level of FYPs given the robust marking which is in place at subject level. We will review the outcomes of School moderation in 2017-18 and continue to discuss the need for - and impact of - moderation at this level, including discussion of the practice in other Schools. We will clarify when changes may be made following School-level moderation. Please see the institutional response.
3. One External Examiner commented on the extent of feedback on coursework. While the quality of feedback was identified as very good practice, it is acknowledged that a balance needs to be sought and there needs to be consistency across modules and programmes. The suggestion of a minimum and maximum number of words is very useful and will be discussed in the relevant forum.
4. The fourth matter concerned clarifying what constitutes a fail in speaking and clarification of the term 'unacceptable performance'. This will be addressed in the subject area concerned.

**Subject area individual response:**

**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:*

**LCS collective response:**

We are extremely grateful to those External Examiners who have reached the end of their term of appointment. We thank you for your support, feedback and collegiality during your tenure. We are also very grateful to those of you who acted as mentors for External Examiners who are new to the role.



## Subject area individual response:

### 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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It is very pleasing to have confirmation of the strong presence of Research-led teaching throughout all levels of our programmes and for our approaches to Learning and Teaching to be recognised as inspiring students to engage in their own research. Our programmes are seen as well-structured and well designed, informed by current research, with the ILOs covering an appropriate range of knowledge and understanding, developing appropriate skills and supporting clear progression. There was praise for the blend of research specialisms across a range of disciplines and this too was felt to have inspired our students, leading to some very strong performances and impressive instances of student research. One Examiner commented positively on the absence of any grade inflation as a result of moving to the 0-100 marking scale.

#### **Subject area individual response:**

### 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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It is encouraging to note that our assessment and feedback processes together with the quality of marking are deemed robust. The variety of assessment methods was praised with some described as innovative and challenging. Others were perceived as standardised but allowing for innovation within individual subject areas. Module moderation and evaluation procedures were seen as robust, clear, well documented and thorough. The high quality of the feedback to students received several mentions. Similarly marking was felt to be fair and transparent.

Regarding the amount of assessment, while one Examiner commented on the overall comparability between the amount of assessment and the rigour of the marking across different modules, another commented less favourably on the large amount of assessment and another mentioned that on occasion there seemed an inconsistency with one module assessed only by an essay task. This will be addressed by individual subject areas but it suggests that the School could identify a minimum and a maximum number of summative tasks with a view to achieving greater parity and moving to a reduction in the amount of assessment.

We welcome the Examiners' suggestions which included greater use of podcasts to increase the variety of assessment methods and the opportunity for students to express their creative freedom; reducing the number of exams and increasing the range of assessment types; making more use of Turnitin to provide feedback online saving staff time, enhancing the feedback experience for students and avoiding the need to transfer marks. We will discuss these suggestions to see how they could benefit both staff and students.

There seemed to be some concern for the amount of time colleagues spend on providing detailed feedback which, while highly commendable, could be reduced by adopting a 'feed forward' section which identifies two key points for the student to focus on and encourages more reflection. This could be trialled in 2018-19.

One Examiner mentioned that accessing Minerva had been problematic and time-consuming so we will compare practice across the different subject areas with a view to finding out what works best.

#### **Subject area individual response:**

**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:*

**LCS collective response:**

It was very pleasing to have feedback on our exam boards confirming “scrupulous application of the classification process, good and robust discussion of how and where rules should and should not be applied”.

Again the use of Minerva was identified as having facilitated the role with Examiners able to look at materials and student work ahead of their visit. One suggestion was that making more use of online marking would be a useful enhancement allowing the External to see the feedback and marks on Turnitin submissions.

A concern raised by one Examiner was the School-level moderation of FYPs following an already robust and thorough process of double-marking. The suggestion was to clarify the process regarding cases where changes may be made following School-level moderation. As mentioned earlier, this will be reviewed and discussed in the relevant forum.

Another concern centred on clarification regarding when a Board might be able to make “extraordinary decisions” in awarding candidates a higher degree grading where severe mitigating circumstances have been declared.

One External would appreciate the opportunity to attend the Progression and Awards Board and this will be followed up. We aim to invite each External Examiner to attend the Classification Board once during their tenure and we are always pleased to hear from individuals who would like to put themselves forward for this additional duty.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our External Examiners for the vital role they play in subject exam boards in terms of ratifying module marks and where necessary moderating them, and discussing matters of comparability of student performance at module level with national benchmarks and other UK institutions.

**Subject area individual response:**

**Other comments**

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

**LCS collective response:**

We regret the difficulty which some of our Examiners experienced in accessing Minerva. We are now aware of the need for each individual to complete the University’s online security training – on an annual basis - within a very short time in order to be able to access the system. We will endeavour to remind our Examiners of this short deadline to avoid having to request new login details.

A couple of Examiners mentioned that it would be useful to access samples of student work via Minerva ahead of their visit to Leeds so this will be followed up by the relevant subject areas. One particular comment concerned being able to access FYPs ahead on the exam board to allow more time to view them.

One Examiner questioned the role of the External at the Board of Examiners’ meeting, suggesting that it might be more useful to attend the Progression Board. As explained, this is not the School’s policy but we will readily issue an invitation to the Classification Board for 2018-19.

One Examiner who is completing their term of office recommended greater harmonisation and rationalisation of assessment and a review of the volume of assessment. While this will be addressed by the relevant subject area, it will also be considered by the School.

**Subject area individual response:**