

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 02/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Languages, Cultures and Societies

Subject(s):

Spanish and Latin American Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

SPPO2650/2651; SPPO2680/2681; SPPO2690/2691; SPPO3050; SPPO3071; SPPO3240; SPPO3361; SPPO3590

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

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 curriculum is rich and diverse and is clearly underpinned by the research expertise of colleagues in the School.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

N/A

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

N/A

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?	N
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	N

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	

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.

I saw work from a range of modules looking at various aspects of history, culture and society in Spain and Latin America. The assessments allowed the students to demonstrate their achievement of a range of appropriate learning outcomes. The modules I examined enable the programme to meet the multidisciplinary nature of the Area Studies QAA Benchmark which is comparable with other programmes at institutions with which I am familiar.

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)

As stated earlier, the influence of research on the curriculum is one of the strengths of the programme. The modules I examined clearly reflected the research expertise of staff and, in this regard, many of the modules were at the cutting edge of the discipline.

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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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.

<p>Assessment methods are appropriate and allow students to demonstrate their achievement of knowledge and understanding learning outcomes as well as their acquisition of skills. Moderation and second-marking processes occur and are generally clearly documented. There is some innovation in terms of assessment methods such as the use of discussion boards and presentations but many modules rely on a combination of exams and essays so I would encourage staff to think of using a wider variety of assessment instruments.</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 diverse and rich curriculum produces some excellent work especially at the top end with some pieces of work standing out by virtue of their level of critical analysis and by being underpinned by a range of sources in both English and Spanish. The performance of students on these modules is comparable with students at other institutions with which I'm familiar.</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>Feedback is generally good but handwritten feedback on essays was sometimes difficult to read. The Department seems to use a range of various marksheets and moderation sheets – these are all very helpful but it would be good to achieve some consistency in the various forms used. The Feedback Action Plan seemed useful but it wasn't clear if any students actually used it or were encouraged to use it?</p> <p>While feedback was generally good I would encourage staff to think about how to use feed forward more clearly perhaps by having a separate Feed Forward section in which a couple of key points are highlighted for students to work on for their next assignment. There was also very little use of reflection and it might be useful to think about how to get students to engage with reflection especially in relation to how students use their feedback.</p> <p>Some colleagues provided brief written feedback on examination scripts which was useful to me as an indication of why a particular grade was given. It would be useful to explore how to provide examination feedback to students.</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:

I must thank the administrative staff for helping with organisation both in terms of getting access to Minerva and in terms of attending the examination board. Thanks must also go to those colleagues who stopped by the room where I was looking at work in order to talk me through their particular modules.

I attended the Board where module results were confirmed. It is not clear to me how useful it is for an external examiner to attend such Boards rather than a Progression and Award Board. An external examiner cannot influence decisions at a Board where module results are confirmed as the external cannot change marks unless all of the work on a module is looked at as opposed to a sample. I think the University could usefully think through the role of external examiners at such module results Boards in order to clarify what an external might usefully offer on such an occasion.

While administrative arrangements were very smooth, I found that I didn't have enough time to look at all the work in as thorough a manner as I would have liked. I was given an afternoon and the following morning to look at work from 8 modules plus dissertations. I don't think this is sufficient and would welcome the chance to look at the work available on Minerva in advance of any meeting. In addition, I think at least a full day plus the following morning is necessary to do the work justice particularly when there are final year dissertations to examine.

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:	Caroline Campbell
Position*:	LCS Assessment Lead
Faculty / School of:	Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies
Address for communication:	University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT
Email:	c.campbell@leeds.ac.uk
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*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

Completing the School response

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at qat@leeds.ac.uk. External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice**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 11/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

Subject(s):

Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All Portuguese Modules in SPLAS, All Portuguese Modules in Translation Studies.

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

BA/MA

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 last year, I was very impressed with the overall quality of the programme on offer, which is innovative and broad in scope, covering the whole of the Portuguese-speaking world from linguistic, cultural and historical perspectives. Modules are clearly focused on developing deep knowledge and understanding of the Portuguese-speaking world and transferable skills. A number of assessments illustrate this best practice: for example the variety of testing means in language module 2090/1, which includes the production of a radio programme; job interview, as well as more traditionally academic assessment formats such as translation and composition. The variety of assessment formats in content modules is also commendable: courses are clearly designed to support student progression and development, by setting e.g. a contextual review (module 3700) or close reading exercise (module 2020), in combination with presentation and final essays. Overall, the breadth of topics and disciplinary areas covered by modules offered is noteworthy and ensures Leeds stands out as top institution for Portuguese/Lusophone studies.

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 offer of Final Year Project demonstrated students' engagement with an impressive variety of topics and the overall standard of the work was noteworthy, with some very original research topics being explored. Topics ranged from favela pacification programmes, policy of assimilation of indigenous people in Brazil, Macau, for example and spanned different disciplinary fields, including film and literary studies. The project enables students to develop their writing and research skills and independent learning abilities. It was pleasing to see that many students wrote in the target language, and the level of command of Portuguese was high.

A final year content module in Portuguese (3700) was offered and was clearly popular with students. The module's coverage of urban realities and representations in the Portuguese-speaking world is ambitious, while ensuring depth through carefully selected case studies.

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 were concerns raised during the board meeting regarding the moderation at School level of the marks for SPLAS Final Year Projects. Email communication was subsequently exchanged over the issue. My advice (along with other external's advice) at the Board meeting was for the blanket lowering of the marks for work falling within a particular mark range to be revoked. This also seemed fair in relation to students who had written their paper in the target language and which I had read. I understand this was not possible. In future, I would hope that process of moderation be looked at in the light of this year's concerns. Perhaps relying on externals' moderation could be an option (also considering the target language issue). I remember this kind of moderation would have fallen within the external's responsibilities at other UK institutions where I have worked/acted as external.

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.

As last year, I have again noted how the courses on offer and the overall structure of the programme ensure that the learning outcomes are met, through carefully devised and organized modules that aim at broad as well as deep coverage of knowledge and understanding of the Portuguese-speaking world and the development of key learning skills. The programme is comparable with others at top institutions in the UK. The diversity in modules, breadth of content and the variety of assessment methods is impressive and must continue to be ensured and supported.

The modules are fresh, inspiring and deal in many cases with topics not generally covered in undergraduate degrees (eg. the urgent issue of the Evangelical rise in Brazilian politics/culture; indigenous rights). This comment refers to both language and content modules. Students are obviously well taught by a team of dedicated scholars.

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)

Courses clearly are underpinned by the expertise and research interests of staff of international recognition. The modules are inspiring, well designed and cover traditional areas (such as canonical literary figures) as well as emerging fields of research.

Beyond reflecting and being driven by staff research interests, modules ensure opportunities to develop student research interests and skill. The final year project is a clear case in point, with a number of projects, moreover, being of an impressive interdisciplinary nature. It was pleasing to see students opting to write in Portuguese, thereby combining content learning with development of language abilities.

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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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.

As last year, assessment methods and marking procedures were entirely appropriate to ensure the ILOs. A variety of assessment methods were used. These included close reading exercises; literature review compositions; open essay questions; translation; written comprehension; mock job interviews in language modules, among others. The module design and assessment methods ensure that both broad and deep knowledge is tested, as well as a variety of critical and analytical skills (covering different media, for example). Overall, I was impressed by the standard of the work (both oral and written), both in SPLAS and MATLIS, and the range of marks demonstrate the impressive levels achieved by students.

I had full access to exam materials, module information and student work. Students have evidently been well taught and supported in their study. Feedback demonstrates attention to student performance and continuous academic development. The inclusion of a literature review element in the assessment (module 2410/11), for example, illustrates careful planning aimed at developing students' research skills and potential later in the module and in preparation for final year work. The higher marks I noted in the final essay for 2410/11 reflect student learning progression and indicate the value of the current assessment methods. Confirming my positive impression last year, I must again emphasize the impressive range of topics on offer. The component on Popular Religion and Evangelical Christianity in Brazil (in module 2140/1), or module 3700, for example, address urgent and yet generally neglected subjects in the teaching of contemporary Lusophone studies.

I had access to the feedback forms and forward planning advice provided to students. The latter element is very useful and an example of best practice. Overall, I was very impressed by the level of detail and advice offered to students. The workload onus on staff who provide this level of feedback needs to be duly recognized.

I was satisfied 2nd marking was clearly carried out, with communication between markers transparent and detailed. Marks were fair, if anything I think marking tends to be conservative, and assessors should be encouraged to use the full range when recognizing work of distinction.

I had access to some materials in advance and also has the opportunity to consult scripts and audio materials once I arrived in Leeds.

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:

Marks covered the full a broad range of classifications across different modules, comparable with what we find at other institutions. At the top end of the classification spectrum, I was very impressed by the level of work carried out by students. I read some impressive work, and especially some of the research undertaken in the final year project was outstanding. A number of students wrote in Portuguese, and their work was well written and well structured, covering innovative, original topics (e.g. Funk Feminista). Some of the bibliographies were remarkable for students of BA level.

The design and structure of the assessment methods were appropriate to the level of the award in question. Progression from level 1 (eg multiple choice) to level 3 in SPLAS was reflected in a wide range of types of assessments.

In relation to weaker students, similarly to last year I observed recurring issues amongst learners of Portuguese, such as some interference from Spanish. This is not specific of Leeds and the overall performance (oral and written) of students at Leeds was impressive compared with my experience of student performance at other institutions.

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:

The assessment integral to each module is well thought-out and contributes to a coherent programme that progressively allows students to demonstrate more sophisticated knowledge and critical/analytical skills.

I have access to all assessment/feedback. There were some technical problems with accessing MATLIS audio materials, but ultimately I was very satisfied of the overview I had of feedback and final grades awarded.

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
<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

I would suggest considering making full use of externals' expertise when it comes to moderating work (as happened at other institutions in the past that I am familiar with), both in cases of single module marking and overall classification. The case of the final year projects (see above comment) is one example of where externals' expertise could have been deployed to resolve potential questions in marking/classifications.

I appreciate that the presence of all externals at the final board meeting is no longer standard practice, but I still find it disappointing not to know students' final classification and hope the practice will be reinstated. This is related to the point I make above about external examiners' actual role, which I feel has been eroded. This comment does not relate specifically to SPLAS, but to externals' position in general.

That said, I was very pleased with how the SPLAS board meeting was organized and chaired. I commend _____, in particular, for _____ clarity, efficiency, calm and collegiality.

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. 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: