

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 02/04/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

PRHS

Subject(s):

Philosophy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MA in History and Philosophy of Science, Modules:

PHIL5001M	Analytic Philosophy A
PHIL5002M	Analytic Philosophy B
HPSC5171M	Topics in the Philosophy of Physics
HPSC5610M	Advanced Topics in Metaphysics of Science
HPSC5640M	Special Option (Philosophy of Science)
HPSC5140M	HPSC Dissertation – <i>Dependent on actual topic</i>
HPSC5910M	HPSC Extended Dissertation – <i>Dependent on actual topic</i>

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

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.

The feedback provided to students was detailed and helpful, with clear outlining of the merits and challenges present in the written work. As an examiner it was helpful to see the first and second markers' separate feedback/marks, together with combined feedback and mark and comments where necessary on how a mark was agreed. This is an exemplary process in terms of transparency in recording how a final grade was reached, and helped me as examiner to be confident in the grades. The essays I sampled confirmed my sense that the marking was careful and accurate.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

I was pleased to see that, even in those modules that share teaching with UG modules, it was now clear that MA standards were clearly being applied in terms of assessment expectations. In one case where markers disagreed, the result of the discussion between markers was clarification of the standards expected of MA mark, and the original higher marker realising that they had been applying expectations more closely aligned with UG work. (I recall that this was an issue I'd raised last year with one module where it wasn't clear that MA standards were being applied, so I'm glad to see that markers are aware of the differences in expectations between MA and UG level work.)

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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.

This is a very carefully designed programme providing students with access to specialist modules in the history and philosophy of science.

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)

Modules are highly informed by current and cutting edge research in the philosophy of science. Dissertations involve independent research of a high quality.

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
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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>		
Assessment is by extended essay, which is highly appropriate for this kind of programme, allowing students to develop in depth responses to the material covered.		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<i>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>		
I saw some excellent work, as one might expect in a strong research focussed University.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
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 (by Skype)
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

Overall in this programme students are clearly performing at a high level and writing on complex and cutting edge research topics. I understand that this is the final year of a distinct HPS programme, and that philosophy of science students in particular will be catered for in the general Philosophy MA. This strikes me as a bit of a shame though I understand the pressures against running small MA programmes. I hope that the School will continue to attract strong students working in philosophy of science to the Philosophy MA, as it is clearly an area of excellence at Leeds.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):	<i>History and Philosophy of Science</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in History and Philosophy of Science
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Director of Student Education

AHC/PRHS

PRHS

**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

We are pleased to note commendation of the quality of feedback provided in the markers' reports, and also the record of how agreement was reached (in cases where the initial internal marks were significantly different). Following a critical comment by one external in 2016 on the consistency of feedback provided, it has been made clear that both first and second markers' reports should contain a significant level of feedback which justifies the mark.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We thank for pointing out last year the importance of applying taught postgraduate grading criteria for those MA modules which piggy-back on Level 3 undergraduate modules. This is now appreciated by all markers.

Response to Matters for Urgent Attention

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

N/A

Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

N/A

Standards

Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We are pleased to note positive comments on the design of the programme, and the extent to which it reflects contemporary research.

Assessment and Feedback

Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We are pleased to note the commendation of the quality of student work.

The Progression and Awards Process

Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We are grateful to for attending (via Skype) the October 2018 Exam Board. We recognise the importance of external representation at Boards, and will endeavour to ensure this in the future (though we also appreciate that, given the time of year, when teaching has started, it may not be possible for external examiners to attend in person).

Other comments

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

Following a review of our MA programme portfolio, it was decided, on the basis of very low recruitment, to withdraw both the MA in History and Philosophy of Science and the MA in Philosophy of Science wef 2018-19. This was a matter of some regret, especially in the case of HPS, as the programme offered the opportunity to explore links between the history and the philosophy of science. We reasoned, however, that those students wishing to pursue history of science at PG level would naturally gravitate towards the MA in History of Science, Technology & Medicine rather than an integrated programme in HPS. The integration of philosophy of science into the MA in Philosophy offers a route for those primarily interested in philosophy of science. And both the dissertation modules in the MA in HTSM keep open – and the mention of HPS in the modules' names explicitly flags - the possibility of catering for any HSTM students who wish to include some philosophy of science in their studies.