

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 26/06/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Engineering / School of Mechanical Engineering

Subject(s):

Aeronautical & Aerospace Engineering

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering, MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) *Year 3 Placement* MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) *Year 4 Placement* MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (International) MSc Aerospace Engineering

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

MEng, BEng, MSc

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.

- External Examiners were sent details of recycled questions (where applicable) with examination paper drafts. This was a new initiative, as far as I am aware, and was very welcome.
- Candidates taking the Aeronautical Engineering option continue to benefit from access to the National Flying Laboratory Centre facilities.
- The students we met valued access to video recordings of lectures and also appreciated initiatives by some lecturers to make their presentations more interactive with the use of 'remote response' units.
- The students we met appreciated the opportunities they were given for industrial placements. They recognised that this was a feature of the provision which was particularly dependant on administrative and academic resources, but considered them very valuable.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

- External Examiners were supplied with a 'summary spreadsheet' which contained key information for all the modules presented during the year, including written comments from the module leader. This was the first year this information has been collated into a single document and was a very useful summary.

Matters for Urgent Attention

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

none

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y
3.	Were you provided with an 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?	Y
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y

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

Throughout my appointment there has been progressive development of the provision. The impression given is that changes are implemented in response to both effective leadership of the teaching team and a healthy culture within the academic staff to enhance the programme.

There has been a steady and progressive improvement in the marking schemes provided to External Examiners in support of the draft examination papers. A number of modules show significant improvement in the clarity of the marking.

I have noticed a steady change in University procedures which has removed, now almost entirely, the opportunity to use discretion on the part of the Examiners Board when making award recommendations. This is in common with other institutions that I am familiar with and, I believe, unfortunate.

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 structure, aligned with accreditation body requirements, is fairly conventional. Optional modules are offered in Year 4 for specific programme specialisations, the choice is limited but that is consistent with comparable provision elsewhere. The range of Research Project topics offered to candidates is impressive.

The programme aims and ILO's meet expected standards and compare favourably with those claimed by similar, high quality, institutions.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
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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)

It is clear, from student dissertation topics, that staff research activities are reflected in the curriculum. In addition, students we met were able to confirm that some lecturers included evidence and examples of the current and past research activity in their lecture content. This was particularly welcomed by the students, particularly those who were considering options for further study at PhD level.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / N
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

There are aspects of the M-Level provision for which this would be appropriate.

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)?	Y
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		
<p>The programme is accredited and candidates, in general, appear to be aware of the value of an accredited degree. Some were familiar with the relatively new requirements for on-going training, record keeping etc. post-graduation, this is encouraging and it is hoped that this awareness comes from some aspects of the teaching provision.</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<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>The programme ILOs compare favourably with similar provision offered at other high quality institutions. The structure and design of the assessment methods are appropriate for the ILO's.</p> <p>Arrangements for marking are appropriate and thorough. There are no longer discretionary boundaries (other than for cases of mitigating circumstances) for the final award. I would highlight the realistic distribution of awards at BEng, the proportion of 1sts and Upper 2nds appears appropriate, based on the assessments and marks I have seen.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y / N
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y / N
<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><i>The majority of module mark distributions appear to be normal, but there are some modules with a large proportion of both failures and marks >70, which is unusual. It is evident that such distributions are highlighted by the Module Leaders concerned and, where no obvious explanations are available, appropriate attention given to the provision in subsequent years.</i></p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		
<p>Feedback appears particularly informative for the majority of modules. The students we met suggested that they received feedback for majority of modules within the projected timeframes, but there is a small minority for which feedback was late and/or poor. Programme leaders appear to be aware.</p> <p>There is some evidence of MEng modules where it is possible to receive marks of greater than 95% for individual elements. This distorts the marks awarded for these modules, depending on the weighting of the elements, and I believe it is difficult to justify such a marking scheme at M-Level.</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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>The specific arrangement made to support External Examiners during the visit prior to the Exam Board are noteworthy. Considerable effort is put into providing examples of assessments and key module programme information in a format that minimises the need to be familiar with the VLE. This is particularly welcome and means that it is possible for External Examiners to make considered judgements based on a comprehensive picture of the related data for their individual areas.</p>		

Other comments

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

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Aeronautical & Aerospace Engineering

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering, MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial), BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) *Year 3 Placement*, MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (Industrial) *Year 4 Placement*, MEng, BEng Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering (International), MSc Aerospace Engineering

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

MEng, BEng, MSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

Mechanical Engineering

Address for communication:

School of Mechanical Engineering, University of Leeds, Leeds ,LS2 9JT

Email:

Telephone:

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

Completing the School response

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at 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

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Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We are pleased that the summary sheet has proven to be helpful.

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:

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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:

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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:

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:

Small number of cases in which feedback was poor and/or late. The School will continue to focus on the quality of the feedback to students and will continue to implement a 3 week deadline for feedback on all coursework. We will continue to ensure that our regular dialogue with students (e.g. at the Staff-Student Fora) identifies any problems and that we act quickly to mitigate the effect of any poor practice.

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:

MEng modules with marks > 95%. We agree that marks of 95% are not entirely appropriate but we have checked and this is very unusual and appears to be due to a small number of very able students who have an excellent exam technique enabling them to get very high marks in numerical questions. The Programme leader will address this issue with the appropriate module leaders at the forthcoming Programme Executive Committee meetings when programme-specific issues are addressed.

Other comments

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