

# The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18    QAT Received 21/11/2018

### Part A: General Information

#### Subject area and awards being examined

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

Institute of Transport Studies Leeds

*Subject(s):*

*Transport*

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

MSc Transport Engineering  
 MSc Sustainability in Transport  
 MSc Transport Planning  
 MSc (Eng) Transport Planning and Engineering  
 MSc Transport Planning and Environment  
 MSc Mathematical Modelling for Transport

*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

There is evidence of electronic submission and comprehensive and use of feedback on coursework and various assessments.

#### Enhancements made from the previous year

This has been my first year as EE

#### Matters for Urgent Attention

There is a large number of modules, which is expected and understandable given the number of programmes. Some rationalisation based on numbers of students in each module might be useful to consider, especially in the case of similar modules.

There were some issues for the integrated project module relating to work load and nature of the module, in particular for the part time students. This needs further attention.

Marks of the dissertation module were a bit biased towards higher marks, there were high proportions of distinctions relative to lower grades. This might be expected of course as students tend to work on a topic of their choice and preferences in their dissertation. Perhaps some sort of moderation is needed during/ after marking.

#### 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?	Y

#### For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	NA
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	NA

6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	NA
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	NA

*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

*Overall, I feel that these are strong MSc programmes in Transport engineering and planning and as expected the overall programmes' structure are coherent and appropriate to the level of study. The academic staff are doing a great job in delivering and maintaining very high standards of the programme; Well done!*

*This has been my first year of appointment and I am satisfied with the arrangements so far. I look forward to see further progression and excellence in delivering the programmes.*

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)*

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)?	Y
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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.*

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:*

*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?	N
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:*

**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):

Various modules across the following Masters programmes;

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Transport Economics  
 MSc Sustainability in Transport  
 MSc Transport Planning  
 MSc (Eng) Transport Planning and Engineering  
 MSc Transport Planning and Environment  
 MSc Mathematical Modelling for Transport

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

MSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Deputy Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

Environment / ITS

Address for communication:

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 [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:gat@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 note your comment on the high use of electronic coursework submission in ITS. Whilst most assessment and feedback is still undertaken offline, the use of electronic means is now increasing and we anticipate further increases as the university continues to invest in appropriate systems and staff become more confident in their use.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

*n/a – first year of appointment*

**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:

We note that, along with our other external examiner, you consider that there may be a disproportionate number of top-grade marks for our Masters students' dissertations. Whilst we do believe that a significant proportion of our Masters students produce excellent work for their dissertations, we accept that is beneficial to reflect on our marking processes for this module and we have already embarked on this in the current academic year. To get this work under way, we have obtained and discussed a range of marking schemes and guidance notes used by other institutions, particularly where these schemes set out in a formal way what might constitute work at a level commensurate to a particular award classification. We have short-listed a selection of these that we feel are the most informative and helpful for our purposes, and will use these to develop and improve our own existing marking

forms to provide clearer guidance to staff when assessing dissertation reports. We anticipate that such enhanced guidance will be available to staff in time for marking dissertation reports for the current cohort.

We also note the issue you raise about the need to reflect on the arrangements for part-time students to undertake the groupwork for the Transport Integrated Project module. In fact the part-time group did well in this module in the academic session in question, despite some delay and uncertainty essentially resulting from unanticipated personal circumstances of some of the students concerned. For the present session, we will again provide a longer timescale for the part-time group to undertake the module, we will monitor the situation carefully during the session, and ensure that as before, a highly experienced member of academic staff is allocated to mentor this group.

We note your observation that we provide a large number of modules across our Masters programmes and that we might reflect on the case for some rationalisation. As we are currently in only the third cohort of students since we refreshed our suite of programmes, we feel it is a little early to form a clear view of likely numbers on each module going forward, but we will review this in due course. In the short term, in fact the number of modules will increase slightly, as we launch a new programme focused on the rail sector.

**Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)**

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

*No issues were raised in this section*

## 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 grateful for your positive and encouraging comments in this section*

## 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:*

*No issues were raised in this section*

## 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:*

*No issues were raised in this section*

## Other comments

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

*No issues were raised in this section*