

# The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 08/11/2018

### Part A: General Information

#### Subject area and awards being examined

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Law
<i>Subject(s):</i>	<i>Environmental Law</i>
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	PGT
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	LLM

### 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.*

#### Enhancements made from the previous year

*Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.*  
Shift to electronic marking makes the scripts more accessible, when the VLE actually works.

#### 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*

Requiring externals to do Leed's online GDPR training module before allowing access to scripts is unreasonable as it essentially imposes potentially unnecessary unpaid work on us – for UK academics it would suffice to ask if we have completed the necessary (compulsory) training in our own institutions.  
It was not clear initial access to the site commits the individual to completed the said training immediately - in my case, a quick visit to provide initial verification that I could access the site meant that I had to apply for a new password when I had time to undertake substantive examining.

#### 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*

*Greater use of the VLE is helpful – and can be further capitalised upon to improve student learning.*

## Standards

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y / N
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y / N
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y / N
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y / N
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y / N

*Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.*

Programme design, structure and learning outcomes are all level and sector appropriate.

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)*

Module content in clearly informed by good working knowledge of the subject area.

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:*

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y / 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 / 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 / N
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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.*

The modules that I deal with are assessed by coursework, mixing essay and problem questions, which would be expected in this discipline.		
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
<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 modules I examined were predominantly taken by overseas students. Most performed creditably and adjusted well to the expectations of UK assessment methods. There were a few candidates whose language skills were evidently weak.</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>Semester 1 assessed essay in particular require fuller and clearer feedback to enable students to improve – in addition to a brief comments on the work and a short narrative element, the students need a clear ‘take away’ on how to improve – my own institution uses the ‘stop; start; continue’ model to good effect in this context.</p> <p>Excessive footnoting by a minority of candidates remains a cause for concern.</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 / N
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y / N
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y / N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y / N
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y / N
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y / N
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y / N
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	N/A
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	N/A
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y / N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N

35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>The Board was a model of efficiency and clarity. However, University Boards need to be more prompt in reaching conclusions that affect progression – I was greatly surprised to see quite a number of students where the necessary university level input was still lacking at the exam board meaning that determinations could not be made.</p>		

**Other comments**

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

## Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

## Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Law

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

ESSL, School of Law

Address for communication:

School of Law  
The Liberty Building  
University of 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](mailto:qat@leeds.ac.uk). External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

## Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

N/A

## Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Thank you for your comments. As you recognise, online access to assessments was intended to be an enhancement on the previous year. The concerns you have expressed concerning Minerva access are ones that are replicated elsewhere, ones we recognise and ones we must respond positively to. The overall experience of both externals and the School of Law has been both frustrating and disappointing. We will pursue this problem further until we are assured that the systems are appropriate.

## 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:

Although GDPR training is a university requirement, we recognise that the way it has been approached has been unnecessarily cumbersome and time consuming. We will follow up this issue with a view to ensuring a much smoother experience next year. We will seek advice as to whether academics who take essential and compulsory GDPR training at their own institutions are able to transfer this across.

Similarly, regarding the Information Security Essentials training, we hope to work with the University to ensure the processes which allow continued access to Minerva run smoothly and do not provide unnecessary barriers in the review process.

## 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:

I would like to thank you for your commitment to external examining during a challenging year. As you are aware we developed a process to assure quality and integrity of the assessment process could be maintained. This process

was ratified at university level. The role of our External Examiners was crucial in this respect and we are extremely grateful for your effort in this regard. The integrity of the assessment process is critical on many levels but most particularly students must have confidence in the process. This year we were able to maintain and even bolster confidence through the strict processes invoked.

## 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:*

Thank you for confirming the standards of the degree – this is, of course, absolutely at the core of the external examiner process and we are very pleased to have your endorsement on this.

## 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 acknowledge your comments in relation to Environmental Law. The module is not running in 2018/19 and on its anticipated return in 2019/20 will be delivered by a different team. They will be made fully aware of your comments and I'm sure they will respond very positively. Enhancing feedback is a crucial plank in our education strategy and changes will follow.

## 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:*

Following some difficult cases in recent years we now have a stepped approach to the number of resits a postgraduate student can take. If a taught postgraduate reaches a certain number of credits that they need to resit then their resit period is automatically extended to ensure that they haven't been 'set up to fail'. Occasionally this may also mean that the dissertation has to be delayed as a result and therefore at the examination board, a number of results may be confirmed but the overall degree classification cannot. This is a process that is recognised and supported by the University, though a clearer explanation of this to External Examiners is necessary.

## Other comments

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

I would like to reiterate my thanks for your attendance at this year's Board, the attendance of External Examiners adds an extra element of scrutiny and accountability which are vital for student confidence in the process, particularly this year.