

# The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 01/07/2019

### Part A: General Information

#### Subject area and awards being examined

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

English

*Subject(s):*

English

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

BA

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

BA

### 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 before, I must commend the practice of retaining core components at all levels of the degree programme, a practice vital to ensuring coverage and range, but often lacking in other institutions. The option of editions or anthologies as final-year projects, in addition to the more conventional thesis option, is an original and welcome innovation that has produced some spectacularly successful results. The feedback offered to students continues to be exceptionally meticulous and detailed in comparison with the level and quality of such feedback at comparable Schools/Departments nationally.

#### 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 irregularities previously noted in the School's policy of moderating assessment are beginning to be successfully addressed.

#### 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 only**

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 only**

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?	n/a
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	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*

The programme has maintained consistently high standards of assessment and achievement throughout my tenure. The top candidates have been exceptional by any standards, but candidates in the lower range of classification also show an impressive level of fluency and clarity, which speaks to the commitment and rigour of the School's teaching staff. New options and innovative practices (as in the final-year project, see above), have been developed in response to varying student needs and abilities. The change in the marking range, from 20-90 to 0-100 is a welcome improvement and in keeping with national practice. The irregularities in the practice of check-marking or moderation have been acknowledged and are being ironed out. In sum, the School of English at Leeds stands out among comparable Departments nationally in the quality of its undergraduate achievement, the dedication of its staff, and their openness to new academic directions and to innovative teaching and assessment practices.

## 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 noted previously, the programme elicits and develops a wide range of student skills: in close reading, conceptual analysis and historical contextualization. Considerable care and thought has gone into curriculum and module design. The variety of assessment methods addresses the diversity of student strengths and abilities, and the expected learning outcomes are in every instance, appropriate to the level of study.

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)*

I can reiterate here what I noted previously, that the options, especially at Levels 2 and 3, achieve a literary-historical coverage comparable to other such programmes nationally, but with distinctive themes and emphases that relate directly to the research strengths of the teaching staff. In this way, programme uniquely reflects the research strengths of the school.

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.*

The assessment methods address the ILOs directly and test the extent to which they are achieved. The variety and range of assessment modes encourage and foster a comparable variety of student skills. The quality of teaching and the direct effect of the detailed and helpful feedback offered by the academic staff are reflected in a general tendency of improved performance, perceptible across the cohort, from the first to the final-year of the programme. An especially valuable feature of much of the feedback is that it details the level of achievement of each ILO.

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:*  
As I wrote in my opening summary, the level of achievement of your students is a credit to the University, and an example of how standards, not only of academic content, but also of writing style, can be rigorously upheld by an English degree programme. Not only the top students, but also students in the 2.1. and 2.2. class bands showed a solid competence and a fluency of writing that made the work a pleasure to read.

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:*  
None

### 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:*  
There were a few administrative blips this year because of the turn-over of support staff. For future reference, it would be helpful for externals if the date of the final Board, and the courses that he or she are expected to oversee, were made clear at the start of the academic year.

### 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):	English
Programme(s) / Module(s):	English
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:	Head of School
Faculty / School of:	AHC/ English
Address for communication:	School of English
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) must be sent 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**

The retention of cores is a principle that the School is committed to at all levels in the curriculum 'refresh' process, as is the principle of coverage and range which is possible in a large School and appeals to applicants in the context of a shrinking market for English.

The School appreciates the recognition of originality and innovation with respect to the opportunity to write editions of material and anthologies in the context of the FYP.

Typically, the quality of feedback is praised in this report, and the School will consider, led by the **DSE** and **Programme Leaders**, how this comparative excellence can be communicated to students via SSF and student reps.

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

It is heartening to hear that the advice provided in previous years about moderation practices is being productively heeded. The DSE routinely communicates with the School about moderation protocols at points of assessment.

**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:

None

**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:

Completed term of appointment: it is gratifying to have it as a matter of record that the School has responded positively to suggestions for improvement, and that the School responds to comments and recommendations have been evident.

It is extremely welcome to hear that ‘the School of English stands out among comparable Departments nationally in the quality of its undergraduate achievement, the dedication of its staff, and their openness to new academic directions and to innovative teaching and assessment practices’. The School is committed to maintaining the consistently high standards of assessment and student achievement noted in this highly positive report and is grateful for objective confirmation of its positive endeavours. The transition to the universal 0-100 marking scale is completed. The School continues to benefit from the advice of external examiners with respect to the moderation/check marking protocols and remains vigilant on that score. The School continues to reflect on effective ways of supporting exceptional undergraduate performance, and to provide excellent advice with regard to employability/further study.

## 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:*

The School continues to scrutinise its programmes forensically when it comes to establishing varieties (and points) of assessment. It is heartening that varieties of assessment methods are acknowledged as testing and developing a wide range of students’ skills and this is something to which the School is committed.

We note that the Learning Outcomes are ‘in every instance’, appropriate to the level of study.

It is excellent to have confirmation of the ways in which the programme is informed by research expertise.

## 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:*

It is helpful to have the connection between LOs and assessment methods outlined. It is extremely valuable to read this statement about verifiably improved student performance as a result of feedback and teaching quality; and to read of notable achievement in the quality of student writing across all bands.

## 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:*

The School notes the importance of providing external examiners with the dates of Boards of Examiners well in advance, along with notice of the courses to be overseen. The School thanks all examiners for their patience at a time of significant change in SES personnel and the effect on some processes.

It is noted that the Progression and Awards process was unproblematic.

## Other comments

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

No ‘other comments’ were provided, but comments are fulsome in other parts of the report. The School wishes to thank \_\_\_\_\_ for the exceptional care and commitment with which \_\_\_\_\_ has discharged \_\_\_\_\_ responsibilities, and for \_\_\_\_\_ conscientious approach to the work of external examining. \_\_\_\_\_ guidance and recommendations have been of immense use to the School, and we have found it a privilege to work with \_\_\_\_\_.