

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT received 17/10/2019

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

School of Civil Engineering

*Subject(s):*

*Construction and Project Management*

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

Engineering Project Management and International Construction Management and Engineering

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

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.*

- Much of the teaching centres around case-based learning. However, as enrolment numbers increase this may be increasingly difficult to manage and discussions with staff already show this to be under-strain, with a lack of appropriate teaching spaces. But nevertheless, this is a strong piece of good practice that the university should do what they can to protect.
- While there are issues, which will be related below, the dissertation component continues to be a well-run and strong part of these programmes. But again, as numbers increase this will come under pressure as the team have to rely on external supervisors for dissertation students. However, a point of good practice is that external supervisors are encouraged to also provide some teaching which will integrate them better in to the programme and also provide a better focal point for the students.

**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 team have introduced general exam feedback to all students after an exam has been marked. This not only serves the students better but also may lead to better use of staff time in fielding feedback queries.
- I am pleased to note that my request to see the examiner's comments on my comments on their papers has now been acted upon, and it is useful to receive these comments so that I can gauge the appropriateness of my own comments. I have received perfectly fine and robust rebuttals to my comments which I am ok with.

**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 this year**

**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 / 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.*

The two programmes are similar in some areas but have sufficient individual aspects to make them viable as standalone programmes. The content of each programme is very appropriate to allow specialised learning and development in construction and project management. I have very few issues with the design of the programme (other than those noted in the text boxes elsewhere in this report) and consider it to be very comparable to those at other institutions.

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)*

All staff are research active and this comes into the teaching, particularly the dissertation delivery.

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:*

The programme is very oriented to the needs of industry and would not in my view, as it stands, be appropriate for integrated PhD other than very applied investigations.

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:  
The programme is accredited by the Joint Board of Moderators and meets those requirements very well.

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><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> <p>The programme is assessed by a mixture of exam and coursework all of which I find to be appropriate. It is pleasing to see that there is no over-assessment of the students with most modules having just one piece of assessment. This allows the team to provide good assessments that test the LOs very well and provides useful and detailed feedback.</p>		
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
<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>This is a comment made in previous reports, but it still seems to be valid for the current year: as expected there is quite a variable range of abilities on this programme. One weakness would be that a proportion of the students try to find the path of least resistance through the work and submit acceptable work. This is to be expected. On the whole, the assessment methods do reward students who have attempted to go beyond the expected minimums, however, in my view there is always scope for enhancement in this area to allow the very capable students to demonstrate their ability.</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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The dissertation module has seen changes each of the years that I have examined, 3 so far. In 2017 a research proposal document was introduced which, as I commented upon last year “has shown clear benefits in the general engagement of the students and in the quality of the final dissertation”. Unfortunately, and again as commented upon last year, the assessment of this report could theoretically lead to some students passing the dissertation module without passing the dissertation itself and so it has now been removed as a credit-bearing component. While I understand with the reasons for doing this it has resulted in some students not, in my view, doing sufficient planning of their projects with the result that their dissertations are weak in the introduction/framing/problem definition area. Overall while I commend the team for their efforts in developing this module it seems to be not quite there yet. I spent some time with the module organiser discussing these aspects and am happy to continue to do so with him in the future if necessary.</b></li> <li>• Feedback appears to be universal for all in-course assessments (not exams) though this appears to be exclusively written comments. It would be good to see if there are other forms of feedback – verbal, visual etc.</li> <li>• All courseworks receive good feedback and I have no issues overall with the quality provided. But I have noticed that some perhaps provide a little more than others. This is an issue I have seen at my own and other institutions and can lead to dissatisfaction among students. It would be far better to have consistent quantities &amp; qualities of feedback rather than some fewer examples of exemplary feedback.</li> </ul>		

## 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last year I commented that I found the university's refusal to round up marks at a borderline peculiar and goes against practice at other institutions. Fortunately, there were no such instances this year though I assume the policy remains in place.</li> <li>• On the other hand, there were discretionary considerations which I applaud and a number of students while not having their mark increased did receive a higher classification.</li> </ul>		

#### Other comments

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

I am not sure if this comes under the remit of an External Examiner but as it concerns the quality of the teaching experience for students then it should; it is also a point I feel strongly about:

Your two programmes in EPM and ICME are very popular and each year recently have seen an increased intake. The majority of students on the programmes are overseas and so the fee income from these programmes is not at all insignificant and I assume therefore that the programme is a priority for your School and the University. There are of course downsides and I wish to comment on two of these:

- First is that increased numbers will erode the student experience. This will happen in many areas, two of which I comment upon above, i.e. case-based teaching becomes more difficult and dissertation supervision needs to be contracted out.
- Second is that the workload on your staff increases and in my view there should always be a commensurate increase in teaching resource with fee income increase. I assume that student:staff ratios are important for your university and so I hope that this is under focus as student numbers increase. I understand that another increase is expected for AY 19-20.

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)***Title and Name of Examiner:*

Subject(s):

*Civil Engineering*

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Engineering Project Management and International Construction Management and Engineering

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

MSc(Eng)

*Title and Name of Responder:*

Position\*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

*Civil Engineering*

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) must be sent 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**

Thank you for the comments made. Once again, it is pleasing to note that the majority of elements of our programmes meet with your approval, such as case based learning and the dissertation component. In terms of case based learning, this is something that we are keen to continue with as we regard this as one of the core strengths and competitive advantage of our MSc programmes, particularly as the vast majority of our two cohorts are made up of international students who benefit greatly from the 'hands-on' experience that this brings.

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

Thank you for the comments made.

**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:*

Thank you for the comments made.

## 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 review our assessment and feedback procedures on a regular basis and will take on board the issues raised. The dissertation component, in particular, will be further reviewed to address the concerns highlighted.

## 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:*

*Progression and Awards Board:* Thank you for again highlighting the limitations for the current practice on awards. I will ensure that the School Teaching and Student Education Committee will be asked to discuss your recommendations and to take forward proposals for approval at the relevant Faculty and University Committees.

## Other comments

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

Thank you for raising these important points, however, I would like to reassure you that we are making efforts to address them.

We have increased our intake requirement for the current year from 2.2 in 2018/19 to 2.1 in 2019/20.

By appointment of additional staff in the subject area we have maintained our staff/student ratio.

We have provided additional pre-sessional courses in English language.

We have arranged on-course language support through our Language Unit; this is available on 2 days every week specifically aimed at our MSc students with specific students targeted.

Of course, we will continue to monitor progress.