

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19 QAT Received 17/02/2020

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Chemical and Process Engineering

Subject(s):

MSc Sustainable Energy, Energy and Environment, Bioenergy and PhD,
Bioenergy

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

MSc/PhD programme

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.

Overall the courses offer in-depth learning and complementarity, enabling the students to understand and appreciate the broader points of energy, as well as in-depth analysis for coursework, some exams and project work.

The processes for course work and hand-in submissions seems to work well for the students. The examination board process works well, with opportunities at some points over my period as external to meet and talk with 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 project work no longer required a paper style submission, which I thought was good point but I can understand why this additional burden on the student was stopped.

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.

Although one academic continues to mark in black ink, which makes it difficult to externally examine/check these exam scripts. I spoke to him at the end of the exam board and tried to make the reasons why it is beneficial to mark in a different colour to the students' text. This must present a problem when the marks are cross-checked. (Advanced Engines and Turbines).

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
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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 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?	NA
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

Overall, there has been an extremely high level of professionalism during my period of appointment, there have been some minor improvements to the courses, where necessary, during this period and the students have always provided a positive response to questions.

The school procedures work well, with borderline cases or for students struggling for a variety of reasons, considered with due care. Cases of plagiarism have been dealt with, and in most cases, of which there were only a few, the problems with plagiarism have been clearly explained to the students and they have gone on to produce good work.

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 touched on above, the programme structures (MSc and PhD) are entirely consistent with offering depth and breadth to these areas of energy. They are well designed and conceived offering appropriate ILOs, suitable for the cohort variance.

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)

This is particularly noticeable with the broad range and depth of projects on offer to the students, and indeed the questions for their exams.

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

The programme for the Bioenergy PhD offers excellent all-round training. As I have noted in previous reports, the Transferrable Skills and Professional Development module is exceptional and the students' reports are comprehensive and frank in places!		
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 / N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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>		
The assessment method is varied and relies on coursework submission and exams, with project work also requiring interim reports submitted. This is useful and corrective procedures can be taken to help students meet or exceed their potential.		
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
<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>		
The assessment methods are fair and appropriate.		
The cohort in general performed well. There were cases of students performing poorly in the combustion theory and design exam which was discussed at the examiners meeting, and this was not observed in previous years.		
Overall, the students' performances are comparable to other courses, and they demonstrate significant knowledge, especially in their dissertations, where in general the standard is very high.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

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?	N
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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

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):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Energy and Environment; Bioenergy and PhD, Bioenergy

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

MSc

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

Chemical & Process Engineering

Address for communication:

School of Chemical & Process Engineering
University of Leeds
Woodhouse Lane
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) must be sent directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at 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 programme operates within the organisational structures established by the School. We thank _____ for supportive comments and highlight the essential contribution made by the Student Support Office colleagues in ensuring the smooth and efficient operation of the programme.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We note _____ comments. The removal of the paper submission (which was in addition to a substantial report) reflects a cross-School initiative to reduce the assessment burden on students and also staff.

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:

The academic highlighted by _____ does not annotate scripts in accordance with School policy. As a result of the flexibility of both administrative and academic colleagues this situation does not have an observable impact on the outcome of the assessment process, although it does entail additional work load. The member of academic staff has been spoken to requesting that this practice has to change.

Staffing changes for AY 2020-21 are likely to help alleviate this problem.

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:

As this is _____ final year of appointment, we would like to take this opportunity to thank _____ for the contribution _____ has made as external examiner. We particularly thank _____ for consistent attendance at examiners meeting, and for this willingness to engage affably with colleagues at all levels.

We are pleased that the incremental changes made to the academic content over the last few years have had a positive impact. The School as a whole has improved its process over the same period, and it is good to learn that this has also had a positive impact.

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 pleased with _____ comments highlighting the strengths of the programme. Much of this is due to the strong research/teaching links that support the programme, as was noted in the recent Energy Institute accreditation visit.

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:

Internal programme meetings have previously discussed the poor performance of this cohort in combustion theory and design.

Colleagues suggested that weak English language skills may hinder the performance of some students who are not native speakers. Analysis of the data provides a mixed result, as there are many non-native English speaking students who perform very well. However there is some indication that non-native English speaking entrants with a 2.ii degree face considerable challenges in successfully completing this module.

This year, the School has greatly enhanced the support available for non-native English speakers through a 0.4FTE (4 days a week in term time) appointment from the Language Centre, and we will further review student performance in the light of this.

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:

We were pleased to read _____ responses to these questions.

Other comments

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

Finally, the School re-iterates its thanks to _____ for _____ service as External Examiner.