

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19 QAT Received 13/11/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Electronic and Electrical Engineering

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Communications and Signal Processing, Digital Communication Networks, Embedded Systems Engineering, Engineering Technology and Business Management

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.

The overall standards of assessment are excellent and the degree programmes I am responsible for provide the students with a very good level of depth and specialist material.

The internal moderation procedures for exam questions and the associated marking schemes are very robust, with a good number of usually minor issues picked up and responded to with due consideration by the setters.

The examinations board team have done a commendable job throughout the year. The organisation of the required documentation by the administrative staff has been excellent, and they have responded quickly and effectively to any queries raised. The Director of Student Education and Examinations Officer have been very helpful with regard to explaining policy and responding to my queries throughout the year. The examination board meeting was run professionally and efficiently.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.

As a new examiner, I have only had limited insight into the previous year. The removal of the mapping of marks onto the 20-90 scale is a positive step from the information I have ascertained about the process.

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
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?	Y
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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

N/A

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 school provides a good range of in-depth modules relevant to the different degree programmes. Each specific programme has an appropriate amount of specialist material.

Examination papers are of a very good standard, commensurate with expectations. The overall structure of exam questions is appropriate and they are of a good length which allows questions to build to a suitable level of depth.

It is pleasing to see the students undertaken substantial individual projects as a key part of their MSc.

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)

It is clear that many projects involve research and are on topics aligned with the supervising members of academic staff.

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:

N/A

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:

N/A

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y
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<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p> <p>Many of the degree programmes are accredited by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET). This is important as a key training requirement for subsequent registration as a Chartered Engineer (CEng). Accreditation by the IET is a strong indicator of the quality of electrical, electronic and related degree programmes, and is expected from the best universities in the UK.</p>		

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>I looked in detail at core assessment methods and they are appropriate for the degree programmes offered. Examination papers test the students to an appropriate depth and are of a consistently high quality, no doubt aided by the internal and external moderation processes which are very thorough. The students are continuously assessed where appropriate.</p> <p>I spent a lot of time looking at individual projects, with the associated marking procedures, grades and feedback given to the students. The quality of the project work was naturally varied but the resulting marks and feedback meets expectations. Each project is marked independently by two academics and there was notable consistency in the marks awarded by each marker. This gives me a lot of confidence in the marking scheme.</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>The school has a high proportion of students at merit level or above. Based on the level of examinations I have seen and the quality of the project reports, this may simply reflect the quality of the students, but it is something I would like the examinations board to keep an eye on.</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>On the whole, I find the assessment procedures to be robust and appropriate for MSc level.</p> <p>The school operates an exam marking checking procedure which is additional to what I am familiar with. I think this is a useful process to have, and it seems to work quite well, but I observed a couple of cases where there were significant discrepancies between the marker and the checker, which I was a little surprised to find. These discrepancies were followed up, but I suggest that more emphasis needs to be placed on getting the marking scheme right in the first place to avoid such problems. These were quite isolated cases and is something I can monitor in the next academic year.</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
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> <p>None.</p>		

Other comments

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

It has been a pleasure to work with the examinations board team and co-examiner throughout the year. The degree programmes offered are of a very high quality and an effective set of examination and assessment procedures are in place.

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

Electronic and Electrical Engineering

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MSc Communications and Signal Processing
 MSc Digital Communications Networks
 MSc Embedded Systems Engineering
 MSc Engineering Technology and Business Management

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

BEng/MEng/BSc

*Title and Name of Responder:**Position*:*

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Engineering / School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering

Address for communication:

School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering,
 The 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

We are pleased that the External Examiner considers that the standard of assessments and internal moderation are high, and that the arrangements and conduct of the Examination Board meeting are considered efficient and professional.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We note that the External Examiner was briefed on the previous system of marks mapping, and has endorsed the decision by the University to discontinue this approach.

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:

No points for urgent attention were raised.

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 points for attention were raised.

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 that the External Examiner has commended the range of modules and associated assessments for each programme. We agree that a substantial project should always be considered an essential element of an MSc programme, and this has been our practice for many years. All of our engineering MSc programmes are accredited by the IET and, as the External Examiner has noted, this provides a significant additional mark of quality assurance.

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 note the External Examiner's confirmation that the overall assessment and feedback processes are satisfactory and appropriate. On the specific point concerning the large proportion of students awarded at Merit or Distinction level, we would want to avoid introducing an approach that may deny students higher marks simply to reduce the number of higher classifications award. However, we are reviewing the alignment of marking criteria with the upper end of the marking range, especially for project modules, to ensure that marks commensurate with a 'Distinction' reflect work that is truly excellent, rather than a simple linear extension from a threshold attainment.

The check-marking process for examinations does occasionally produce initial discrepancies. These are often attributable to a different interpretation of the marking scheme by the check marker (who was not directly involved with writing the examination paper or the marking scheme). In most cases, we find that this was more a matter of clarifying the marking scheme, the first maker having applied the scheme consistently and as originally intended. It is relatively unusual for marks to be changed following the check making process but, nevertheless, we use this mechanism to provide an additional element of confidence in the quality of the marking.

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 points for attention were raised.

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

We are pleased to note again that the External Examiner has confirmed that our examination and assessment procedures are all satisfactory.