

External Examiner - Report

Reference: EX20415
Name: Dr Heike Schmidt
Academic Year: 21/22
Home Institution: University of Reading
Examining Department: History
Course(s):
Year of Study: 19/20

Programme Information

Did you receive or have access to:

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
1.1 Programme handbooks, programme specifications, including programme learning outcomes?	Yes		
1.2 Module descriptions including module learning outcomes?	Yes		
1.3 Assessment briefs/marketing criteria?	No	The adjustments made on university and department level in response to the Covid-19 crisis were excellent - timely, clear, and forward looking. However, the initial criteria and briefs were not available.	We will ensure that this is rectified for 2020-21 if the COVID situation demands
1.4 Is there any additional information which could have been provided?	No		

Course Content and Design

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
2.1 Are the modules and discrete programme elements well integrated resulting in a coherent degree programme?	Yes		
2.2 Do the relevant learning outcomes align with the QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies	Yes		
2.3 Where applicable, does the curriculum match the requirements of any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Yes		
2.4 Does the structure of the degree programme enable students to demonstrate progression?	Yes		
2.5 Where appropriate, did the placement make an appropriate contribution to the degree programme?	Yes		
2.6 For collaborative courses only, do you think that the collaboration between the University and it(s) partner institution(s) is working well?	N/A		

Assessment Process

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
3.1 Did you receive all the necessary draft assessments/examination papers for comment in good time?	Yes		
3.2 Were the nature and level of questions and tasks appropriate?	Yes		
3.3 If applicable, were the comments you provided in relation to 3.1 and 3.2 acted upon?	Yes		
3.4 Did you receive an appropriate number of scripts for scrutiny?	Yes		
3.5 Were the marking criteria fit for purpose and appropriate?	Yes		
3.6 Were the standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Yes		
3.7 Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Yes		
3.8 Were moderation processes clear?	Yes		

Academic Standards

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
4.1 Were academic standards appropriate for the award?	Yes		
4.2 Was the overall assessment load for students registered on the degree programme appropriate?	Yes		
4.3 Was the Board of Examiners conducted fairly?	Yes		
4.4 Were criteria for determining borderline cases appropriately and consistently applied?	Yes	Yes, and especially in consideration of the Covid-19 health crisis.	
4.5 Were arrangements for consideration of mitigating circumstances appropriate?	Yes	Ditto.	
4.6 In your opinion, are the overall academic standards and achievements at least as good if not better than at other comparable UK institutions?	Yes		
4.7 For the medical degree (MBChB) programme only, were standard setting processes clear?			

If applicable, meetings with Students

Although we do not expect you to meet with students in your role as External Examiner, we are keen to have your observations in case you were able to meet with them when you visited the University of Warwick.

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
5.1 Were you provided with an opportunity to meet groups of students informally to talk to them about their degree programme?	No	Campus was closed due to the health crisis.	
5.2 If you met students, please can you comment on any issues raised by them which the School/Department needs to be aware of?			

Enhancement of Provision

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
<p>6.1 Please comment on any areas of good practice, distinctive and innovative features in relation to teaching, learning and assessment that would be worth sharing across the University.</p>		<p>Assessment The shift from 2018/19 to the planned assessment in 2019/20 is highly commendable! Having two formative essays with full feedback was much too much work for both students and markers. The new system of 10% oral participation, 10% short essay, 40% long essay, and 40% exam is very strong indeed. Having said this, clearly the strike and the Covid-19 crisis had its impact on this, and 'the new normal' of the coming academic year will require further assessment amendments, as oral participation cannot be expected under these circumstances unless it is formalised into presentations or such. Having said this, I strongly recommend to re-introduce the originally planned 2019/20 assessment as soon as we return to regular classroom teaching.</p>	
<p>6.2 Are there any areas where you feel that the School/Department and/or University has not responded to your comments or suggestions raised in previous reports?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>External Examiner Administration Last year was the first time that I served as external examiner at Warwick. My experience was bifurcated. On one hand, I truly enjoyed my visit on campus, meeting Warwick colleagues, getting to know your department, finding a most collegial and friendly environment, something that surely is reflected in the student experience. On the other hand, the technical obstacles were deeply frustrating and even worse this year. In 2019, gaining access to the system to the point of not being able to submit the final report? or indeed ever claiming my expenses? in a reasonable timeframe was not possible. The number of emails we had to send was time consuming and frustrating. I can absolutely not understand why that was such an arduous? and in my case, in the end unsuccessful? process. Having said this, this year I started my work as external examiner late due to my personal circumstances (Covid-19). The help I received was prompt and friendly. But again, there were technical problems. Once online, I could not access two of the three modules I was supposed to look at by the Board of Exams meetings. There were also organisational issues, such as being told only a day before the meetings that I was to look at dissertations and then sent the details. That should have been included in the moderation letter. In addition, information for submitting the final report should be provided by the Board of Exams meetings. In short, a lot is understandable, especially in 2020 with Covid-19. Still, more efficient preparation for external examiners both to show collegial respect as well as for the sake of receiving full feedback is desirable. External Examiner Report</p>	<p>WE are aware of the tabular issues, and we will reach out to all the externals earlier in the process to ensure they have the access they need.</p>

Issues requiring actions/response

Question	Response	Examiner Comments	Department Comments
7.1 Are there any essential actions matters, in your opinion which put academic quality and/or standards at risk and require immediate attention from the Head of School/Department?	No		
7.2 Are there any advisable actions matters where threshold standards are met but, where in your opinion, significant improvement could be made?	No		

Other comments

Question	Response	Examiner Comments
8.1 Do you have any other comments which you have not been able to mention anywhere else?	Yes	Covid-19 and Strike Action The History Department and Warwick University appear to have dealt extremely well with the Covid-19 health crisis and subsequent fall out as well as the autumn term strike action in ensuring continuous care for students and consideration of their interests in teaching, assessment, as well as upholding academic standards. The instructions were clear and to the point. I hope that it has also found recognition just how tremendously strenuous the lock-down has been in particular for support staff who cannot be expected to have a study at home, fully set up for online work. Also the strain on academic staff in turning the university into a virtual institution and now transitioning into 'the new normal' must be acknowledged against the continued excellence in assessment. All of this is clearly reflected in the tiny number of students who did not manage to graduate this summer. Congratulations!

Final comments as External Examiner

Question	Examiner Comments
9.1 If this is your last year as External Examiner, please provide an overview of your experience as an External Examiner:	