

External Examiner - Report

Reference: EX20394
Name: Dr Natalie Zacek
Academic Year: 21/22
Home Institution: The University of Manchester
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? | Yes | | |
| 1.4 Is there any additional information which could have been provided? | Yes | In future, each autumn I would like to receive a list of the modules I will be examining. | |

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 | History graduates are well versed in the history of the post-medieval world, and especially on the connections between distinct geographic regions in particular eras. | |
| 2.2 Do the relevant learning outcomes align with the QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies | Yes | These are appropriately aligned. | |
| 2.3 Where applicable, does the curriculum match the requirements of any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)? | N/A | | |
| 2.4 Does the structure of the degree programme enable students to demonstrate progression? | Yes | Over the three years, the modules become more tightly focused and the written assessments longer and more ambitious. | |
| 2.5 Where appropriate, did the placement make an appropriate contribution to the degree programme? | N/A | | |
| 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? | No | I did not see the assessments/exam papers for most of the modules for which I was responsible. | We will ensure this happens in 2021. |
| 3.2 Were the nature and level of questions and tasks appropriate? | Yes | Progression through the degree programme is reflected in the increasing length and complexity of these tasks. | |
| 3.3 If applicable, were the comments you provided in relation to 3.1 and 3.2 acted upon? | No | I didn't hear much from the department during the autumn, and in future would like more regular contact throughout the academic year. | We intend to reach out to the externals in the autumn term, telling them the moderation we will be sending etc. |
| 3.4 Did you receive an appropriate number of scripts for scrutiny? | Yes | The amount of student work that I received was appropriate, but none of it was in exam form. | |
| 3.5 Were the marking criteria fit for purpose and appropriate? | Yes | But I would prefer that in future markers made reference to these criteria in their feedback, particularly for work which received a borderline mark. | This has been communicated to staff. |
| 3.6 Were the standard and consistency of marking appropriate? | Yes | Yes--I did not see significant divergences between marking standards across modules, and the marks given were generally appropriate to the work assessed. | |
| 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 | But please see my response to 3.5. | |
| 3.8 Were moderation processes clear? | No | It was not obvious to me how this process was carried out, or how any differences between the first and second markers would be adjudicated. | There is a new moderation process for 2021 including a form that will provide much clearer information on the process. |

Academic Standards

| Question | Response | Examiner Comments | Department Comments |
|--|----------|--|---------------------|
| 4.1 Were academic standards appropriate for the award? | Yes | Standards in the History department are laudably high, but reasonable. | |
| 4.2 Was the overall assessment load for students registered on the degree programme appropriate? | Yes | Students were given an appropriate amount and variety of assessment. | |
| 4.3 Was the Board of Examiners conducted fairly? | Yes | As questions arose, they were discussed in detail, and consensus established. | |
| 4.4 Were criteria for determining borderline cases appropriately and consistently applied? | Yes | These were carefully explained to the externals. | |
| 4.5 Were arrangements for consideration of mitigating circumstances appropriate? | Yes | This was a challenge in light of the strike and COVID-related disruptions, but it was clear that all relevant cases had been extensively discussed and appropriately resolved. | |
| 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 | I wish that my institution's were as high! | |
| 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.

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|---|----------|--|---------------------|
| 5.1 Were you provided with an opportunity to meet groups of students informally to talk to them about their degree programme? | No | Not possible, due to the COVID-19 situation. | |
| 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? | N/A | | |

Enhancement of Provision

| Question | Response | Examiner Comments | Department Comments |
|--|----------|--|---------------------|
| 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. | | The nature and variety of the modules on offer was very impressive. Students can't fall back on what they learned at A-level; they are pushed to encounter new eras, locales, and ideas. | |
| 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? | No | There are no unresolved issues. | |

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 | The department's academic and administrative staff did an excellent job of maintaining quality and standards despite the challenges of this academic year. | |
| 7.2 Are there any advisable actions matters where threshold standards are met but, where in your opinion, significant improvement could be made? | Yes | In future, I would like to receive the dissertations for which I am responsible at least a week prior to the exam board--this year I had less than 48 hours to read them. | We will look at marking deadlines and try to ensure externals get more time to look at these. |

Other comments

| Question | Response | Examiner Comments |
|---|----------|-------------------|
| 8.1 Do you have any other comments which you have not been able to mention anywhere else? | No | |

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: | |