

External Examiner - Report

Reference: EX20473
Name: Professor Elizabeth Tingle
Academic Year: 21/22
Home Institution: De Montfort University
Examining Department: History
Course(s): History (Modern) | History (Early Modern) | History (Global & Comparative) | History of Medicine |
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 | I had adequate information and when I wanted more, I asked and it was provided. | |
| 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? | 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 | The MA History degrees pathway structure is comparable to similar programmes across the UK. It offers core modules in historiography/historical theory and a dissertation, which is the subject norm. The optional modules are wide ranging and the student has a good choice of options, according to their specific named pathway. | |
| 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)? | N/A | | |
| 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? | 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 | The course does not have examinations and therefore did not require comment. I did not receive essay questions as these are negotiated by students and therefore the external examiner's comments are not required. | On behalf of Claudia Stein, Acting PGT Director: The comments from the external examiner were very useful. |
| 3.2 Were the nature and level of questions and tasks appropriate? | Yes | The nature and level of tasks were appropriate. My only comment on this, raised at the June award board, was that there was a uniformity of assessment across all modules, which is unusual in a MA programme (all long essays). I had a discussion of this with the programme leader, who is in the process of reviewing the assessments for the MA going forward. | On behalf of Claudia Stein, Acting PGT Director: The comments from the external examiner were very useful and the assessment is currently still under review. |
| 3.3 If applicable, were the comments you provided in relation to 3.1 and 3.2 acted upon? | N/A | | |
| 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 | The standard and consistency of marking was excellent. Detailed feedback was given on assignments by first and second markers, working independently and there was good correlation between their standards. Also, the consistency of marking across different modules was apparent. | |
| 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 | Detailed comments on the assignments were provided for students, which made it clear why marks were awarded. | |
| 3.8 Were moderation processes clear? | Yes | Moderation processes were clearly conducted; I saw markers' independent reports and a rationale for their subsequent joint decisions. Moderation is carried out to a high standard. | |

Academic Standards

| Question | Response | Examiner Comments | Department Comments |
|--|----------|--|---|
| 4.1 Were academic standards appropriate for the award? | Yes | The assessment practices of the MA History are of a good standard. The standards/marks awarded to students are equivalent to those in other HEIs. | |
| 4.2 Was the overall assessment load for students registered on the degree programme appropriate? | Yes | Yes, although ideally there would be more variety in assessment forms in the taught course element of the MA. | On behalf of Claudia Stein, Acting PGR Director: This is good to hear. The issue of more variety of assessment will be taken into account in the assessment review which is currently undertaken. |
| 4.3 Was the Board of Examiners conducted fairly? | Yes | The board of examiners was conducted to a high professional standard. The chair was efficient and knowledgeable, and all staff present were keen to ensure fairness for all students. Mitigating circumstances were dealt with appropriately in each individual case. The emergency regulations related to COVID19 were applied clearly and consistently to all student awards. There was carefully discussion of each individual student's achievement (anonymously, as is appropriate) and great care was taken to ensure fairness and the best outcome for the student. | |
| 4.4 Were criteria for determining borderline cases appropriately and consistently applied? | N/A | There were no criteria for determining borderline cases, for degree result was based on an absolute mean average. I have a recommendation related to this, below. | On behalf of Claudia Stein, Acting PGT Director: See response to recommendation under 7.2. |
| 4.5 Were arrangements for consideration of mitigating circumstances appropriate? | Yes | As above | |
| 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 | Overall academic achievement is very good compared to other UK institutions. One pass degree was confirmed, there was a majority of merit level awards and an almost equal number of distinctions awarded. The distinction-level work is excellent, and in one or two cases, outstanding. But the merit level work is also good, informed by historiography, collections of primary sources and all the work is critically analytical. | |
| 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 | | |
| 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 |
|--|----------|---|---------------------|
| 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 use of COVID19 cover sheets for students, noting the challenges to their work during lockdown, is good practice. It allows tutors to see easily, the issues faced by students with regard to obtaining resources, and the challenges of home working. It is clear that many students have had to adapt their assignment topics and resources to the availability of online materials. | |
| 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 | | |

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 | No essential actions | |
| 7.2 Are there any advisable actions matters where threshold standards are met but, where in your opinion, significant improvement could be made? | Yes | <p>There are three suggestions I would like to make:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nature of assignments in the taught course: All T1 and T2 modules have the same assessment strategy, a 6000 word essay. This is unusual across the sector compared to equivalent MAs, in that a variety of assessment forms is more common, usually combining written, verbal and other types. As a new external examiner, I would ask whether answering a question on one topic per term can test the module learning outcomes; is the student being prepared for the whole degree learning outcomes using only one form of assessment for the taught course? Also, having 100% of marks for one assessment per module can limit progression for students who underachieve or who fail that one assignment. I raised this with the programme leader, who is taking forward discussion of assessment forms with the course team. 2. I observed to the programme leader that there seems to be little political history for the early modern programme, given it is marketed as a ?general?, period-based MA ? it is mostly social, cultural and religious, playing to the strengths of the department. This was an observation more than anything else, but the PL is discussing this with the programme team. 3. For the final award of the degree, the student's degree classification is based on an absolute numeric score with no discretionary band. The majority of other History MAs in the UK have a discretionary band of c.2%, such that awards can achieve a higher category if this is attained along with other achievements eg more than 50% of credits in the upper category or a dissertation in the upper category. With no discretionary band, a student with 69.7% can be awarded a merit at Warwick, where in most other HEIs it is likely to result in a distinction. This disadvantages Warwick students and particularly when it comes to application of AHRC studentships etc. for PhD. I would recommend that the current regulation be changed to reflect other HEI practice. | <p>On behalf of Claudia Stein, Acting PGT Director:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The discussion regarding a greater variety of assessment forms is taken forward to the course teams and will also be discussed with relevant colleagues and in committees responsible for teaching and assessment in the Department. 2. The MA director is discussing the observed underrepresentation of political history in the early modern MA with the course leader and team. 3. The possibility of a discretionary band to be considered in the final degree classification is being discussed with the Deputy Head of Department in Teaching and Learning and in the relevant committees. We believe that the University will be introducing a discretionary band for PGT borderline students from the academic year 2021/2022 and the department will follow this new policy. |

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 | I would like to thank the PG programme administrators for their efficiency and clarity in preparing materials for the external examiner. They do an excellent job. I would also like to thank the programme leaders for responding to my questions and comments with openness and efficiency. Overall, the MA History programmes at Warwick are of a high standard and taught by staff who are dedicated to the success of their students. Thank you and well done to everyone involved. |

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: | |