

## The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

**PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION***Subject area and awards being examined:*

School of: English	Subject(s): Theatre Studies/English
Programme(s) / Module(s): Theatre Studies with English	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BA

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to [exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to:

**Head of Academic Quality and Standards,  
Academic Quality and Standards Team,  
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building,  
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT**

**PART B: COMMENTS FOR THE INSTITUTION ON THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS*****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.*

N/A

***Only applicable in first year of appointment***

*Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?*

N/A

***For Examiners completing their term of appointment***

*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.*

Acting as External Examiner over the last four years has been a truly enjoyable experience. I have been consistently impressed by the quality of work produced, by the curriculum design and by the commitment of staff and the high standards of teaching they engage in. I have witnessed a steady improvement in practical work – the only detectable weakness in the programme as a whole. I would encourage further focus on improving performing and scenographic skills, if possible.

I have been constantly impressed by the quality of marking – there is consistent evidence of moderation and double marking across all courses and the quality of feedback given to students is some of the best that I have experienced in the sector.

I have been impressed by the degree to which the disciplines of Literature and Theatre seem to communicate and mutually support each other. This is rare in the higher education sector and I would encourage further interdisciplinary approaches where possible. It has been a joy to have been able to read material from Literature courses that seem to work so well with Theatre based ones. Leeds, I feel, has a unique offer here and one in which students have the opportunity to excel within. All in all, this is an excellent programme and I have no doubt that it will continue to be a success in the testing times that lie ahead.

## Standards

### 1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

- *The appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes are entirely commensurate with the level of the award.

### 2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The aims and the intended learning outcomes fully meet the expectations of the national subject benchmarks.

### 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

- *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.*

The assessment methods and appropriateness of these to the ILOs are succinctly described in all the course documentation that is provided to the students, assessors and external examiners. The curriculum structure allows for a range of assessment methods that include conventional examinations, essay writing and practice-based projects and work/logbooks. The marking is consistent and there is ample evidence of double marking and moderation.

The students generally get very good results in their assessments. This year there were fewer firsts than in previous cohorts with most students achieving a 2:1 degree result. There is a slight bunching in marks but I do not see this as an overt problem. This range of marks most likely is a result of a quality intake and high quality of teaching with relatively low numbers of students. They also benefit from excellent feedback of student work across the whole degree programme, which allows them to substantially improve their work as they move from course to course and from year to year.

It is clear as external that the students are working with reference to the learning outcomes. This again reflects excellent paperwork covering information the student needs to fully understand and participate in the assessment process. As I have mentioned in previous reports, the quality of the course documentation is to be commended.

### 4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

- *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.*

As in previous years the overall standards demonstrated by the cohort are high and I would say they are entirely comparable with the best work in higher education institutions. The strengths of the cohort lie in the quality of written work where there are examples of outstanding academic endeavour. There has been a marked improvement of practical work with students beginning to take on formal/aesthetic issues. I would encourage staff to pursue this further in any future curriculum developments/changes.

### 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N/A

### 6. The nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

*It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.*

I do not think there were any major changes from the previous year. The increased tuition time in the Practical Essays appears to be paying off. There was an overall improvement in the work but less example of outstanding practice in this part of the programme.

### 7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

*This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.*

There is ample evidence that the research interests of staff directly inform curriculum design across a large number of courses in English and Theatre Studies. The effects of a research led approach is felt in the best of the student work produced – there is ample evidence of independent learning and an originality in both knowledge acquisition and in the written argumentation produced in the assessment process.

### ***The Examination Process***

**8. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?**

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

The guidance as to the roles, powers and responsibilities of External Examiners is clearly laid out. It is entirely sufficient for me to carry out my duties. I had access to all the materials needed to make the required judgements. I have always been encouraged to ask for further information, if needed and had excellent support from all quarters.

**9. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks?**

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

I received all the relevant documentation, which is clear and well organised. The policies and procedures match the roles that I am asked to perform. The administrative support is first-rate. My thanks go to the administrative team.

**10. Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

I saw an array of work that included examination scripts, essays and I spent one day in May with the teaching team assessing The Practical Essays. This has enabled me to have full confidence in my evaluation of the student work and the assessment processes across the degree.

**11. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

The administration arrangements have been excellent and have been so across the preceding three years.

**12. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

Yes.

### ***For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements***

*If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.*

N/A

### ***Other Comments***

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

Another excellent year. As outlined previously in this document there is much to praise here - an excellent teaching team, excellent programme that imaginatively and testingly engages with the traditions of Theatre and English Literature. I can think of no other course where the combination of Literature and Theatre works as well. The work being produced in Leeds is of the highest quality and it is rare to read written work that is of a poor standard. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as external examiner and will miss my engagement with such an outstanding programme and department.



## UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

10 November 2011

Dear

Thank you for your very helpful report as External Examiner on our BA English Literature and Theatre Studies programme for 2010-11 and, more generally, for all your extremely valuable work for us over the last four years.

Your report has now been considered by the School's Taught Student Education Committee and I have incorporated that committee's response into my comments.

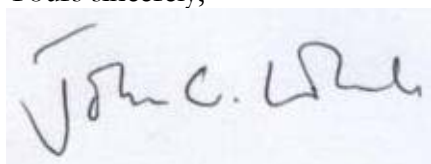
We note with pleasure your perception of high standards of teaching by committed colleagues and, more particularly, your sense that there has been a steady improvement in the practical work you have witnessed. In that regard, we also note your suggestion that there should be continued focus on the improvement of performing and scenographic skills.

Your statement about the impressively high quality of marking – with ample evidence of moderation and double-marking across all courses – provides helpful confirmation of our recent transition to new procedures; while your comment that our feedback 'is some of the best' you 'have experienced in the sector' provides a helpful external perception as we undertake a review of the nature and focus of our feedback in response to student opinion.

It is good to have your confirmation that the two parts of the degree scheme 'communicate and mutually support each other' and that its inter-disciplinarity constitutes a unique aspect of the student experience here at Leeds.

I am glad that you have found your tenure as External Examiner here in the School to be an enjoyable experience. We have certainly valued and benefitted from your rigorous and perceptive responses over the last four years. On behalf of the School, I would like to thank you for all your excellent work.

Yours sincerely,



John Whale  
Head of School