

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012**

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of Modern Languages
Subject(s):	<i>World Cinema/Film Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	This year I was given the opportunity to see and comment on the assessment and scripts for: MODL1030 Introduction to World Cinema 1 MODL2230 Film Noir to Asia Extreme MODL3230 Cinema in the Digital Age
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons)

**Completed report**

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six 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 – my second year of appointment

**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*

N/A – in second year of appointment

**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.*

This is another good year with a wide range of grades achieved across all modules – the full range of marking has been used throughout, in some cases from 20-80%, and fully deserved across this scale. Where appropriate the penalty system (as clearly indicated on the essay submission sheet) has also been applied and fairly used. From the evidence of assessments that I have seen and discussions with teaching staff, there appear to be high levels of teaching and interaction amongst staff and students pertaining to subject study matters. The learning outcomes and assessment are clear and the standards are more than appropriate for 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.*

Yes. From the evidence of work that I have seen, communications with staff over email and discussions in person, the subject benchmarks are all being met in line with competitor institutions.

**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.*

There is a good range of assessment methods in use and these are all more than satisfactory. From my last year's observations re the marking process (especially by GTAs, Teaching Fellows or early career Lecturers), these appear to have been addressed and smoothed over and marks and feedback were clear. Once again, the use of the qualified internal moderator for each unit is an excellent quality control procedure and she/he is doing their job well.

**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.*

Yes. There is a range of assessments and a good variety of testing questions at the appropriate levels from years 1 to 3.

**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. Please comment on 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.*

There is a sustained and continued through-line noticeable across all modules where the programme is brought together through a committed focus on questioning, interrogating and analysing all cinemas through a polycentric framework. This year during my visit I also had access to view on campus the on-line Blackboard system that staff and students are using and this also confirms my point here.

**7. Please comment on 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.*

As from last year - all staff teaching on this programme are active researchers publishing at national and international levels. From the course handbooks, reading lists and essays and exams, there was evidence of staff engaging not only with their own work in the field, but also as their own work dialogues and critiques established orthodoxies in the fields of film studies and world cinema.

There is also opportunity for young researchers and PhD students to make an active contribution to the teaching and assessment of the courses on offer.

**For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements**

**8. 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

**9. 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.*

Yes. I received all material in good time and my comments and feedback were all taken up collegially. Next year I will spend some more time going through the on-line course materials on Blackboard to see how and in what ways this is being presented and delivered to students.

**10. 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, marking criteria?**

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

Yes, as above.

**11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?**

No – this year no draft exam questions or assessment papers were run by me. I am not sure why this was the case.

**12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?**

Yes

**13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?**

I did not see or assess any dissertations.

**14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?**

Yes

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

This must have taken place at another meeting as we did not raise this or discuss this at the Exam Board.

**Other comments**

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

I am listing here my observations and suggestions for improvement during the course of the next academic year. These were all raised and discussed with staff at the exam board and are based on my observations and reading of material relating to an overview of the work that I saw, and in terms of curriculum development and also quality assurance.

1. In year 1 all students are rightly introduced to and grounded in a formal close textual analysis of films as texts with their own form and languages, genres and periods etc. However, looking at the assessment scripts of years 2 and 3 this year, in more than half of the work that I read there appeared to be more a focus on social and cultural studies readings of the films and less so on

the formal close scene analyses. This might well have to do with students taking the level 2 and 3 courses from outside the home Dept or Subject Area, and the levels of social and cultural studies readings in most cases were also very good, but I would still expect them to be engaging with formal close sequence analysis and being assessed on that. There is perhaps a case here for embedding from the outset in the marking criteria or the rubric of the course handbooks for these courses that students are expected to and will be assessed on close analysis as well. If new students are unfamiliar with this method or seem to have become relaxed or forgetful about it by the second or third year, they need to be re-engaged with this during the study of these courses. This will help to ensure coherence and a through line to one of the distinctive features of the Leeds programme, where film and cultural theory is also articulated alongside the formal textual properties of films as film.

2. We discussed the Personal Development Boxes and Feedback Action Plan and this was another excellent quality assurance and student developmental feature which I feel adds real value to the student teaching and learning experience. However, there needs to be consistency with the PDBoxes as some staff were ticking this on the feedback sheets and others were not. I was provided with one course unit student questionnaire evaluation result for the MODL2230 Film Noir to Asia Extreme course. Overall, this course received positive and excellent student feedback. It was interesting to note on the results and feedback for Q.9 about library resources that this was the question that got the most 'neither agree/nor disagree' or least favourable scoring. I do not know how this compares with the same question on other course unit feedback questionnaires, as I did not see others, but might this raise an issue for pause and reflection as to why this scoring? Are our contemporary cohort of students using the library and its resources very differently now as to a few years ago, not least due to on-line access and resources? How, if at all, are Leeds colleagues working with Library colleagues on course delivery and in what ways might we engage our students with the library in useful and meaningful ways? Or do we need to ask a new set of questions about the role and place of the University library in our undergraduate teaching and learning experience?
3. I found the Leeds policy or guidelines on borderline marks confusing and frustrating. It was explained to me by the current Assessments/Exams Officer that marks of 59 or 69 were the first set or run of marks in a 2.1/upper second or first class degree boundary respectively, i.e. that a 59 was not the top end of a 2.2 but the first mark in the 2.1 category. At Manchester and at the University of Exeter (where I was External Examiner before Leeds, 2007-2010), I am not aware of the same kind of grading. This could also work against the student if employers or funding agencies ask for a transcript breakdown and in fact see a run of 59s or 69s on the profile but that this equates to a 2.1 or first respectively and therefore might this lessen the student's profile alongside a student from X University where his/her marks are made up of clear 60s and 70s? This is something for you to consider further as a team and as per the University or School regulations as to how degree classifications are awarded at Leeds.
4. On the module and course unit grids that were made available to us at the Exam Board and prior for consultation, the assessment components breakdown did not follow chronologically on the sheets and therefore was confusing to read and understand, and in quite a few cases I had to re-read the mark grids a few times just to be sure. This was because the latter assessment taken was listed first and the earlier assessment was listed as second or last. This gave an unclear impression as to be able to see from the grid whether students were developing chronologically, or not, from one assessment to the other. Might this be reviewed and adjusted for clarity and ease of use in our review of student progression – due to a simple software adjustment perhaps?

Overall, I would like to congratulate the teaching and administration team on another successful year in terms of the delivery of the programme, collegial and professional communication between each other and myself, and as always a ready willingness to be attentive to and take on board useful points from our collective work and discussions.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**From the Centre for World Cinemas  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures**

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13 July 2012

<>  
<>

**Ref.: Reply to External Examiner's Report**

Dear <<>>

Thank you very much indeed for your detailed and overall positive report on the 2011-12 performance of the Centre for World Cinemas' undergraduate elective and Joint Honours core modules, MODL1030 Introduction to World Cinema 1, MODL2230 From Film Noir to Asia Extreme: Questioning Genre in World Cinema and MODL3230 Cinema in the Digital Era. I am sorry that you were not given enough time to examine MODL1040 Introduction to World Cinema 2, as this year we had a particularly strong course design and cohort, but we will do our best to avoid this problem next year.

We are pleased to hear that you are generally satisfied with our programme design, and that you have found evidence of excellent teaching in our students' coursework. Equally rewarding is your identification of robust film scholarship behind our research-led provision.

It is also reassuring to hear that you are satisfied with action taken in response to your comments last year. This year you had the opportunity to visit our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) on site, but we hope to be able to grant you full access to it next year, prior to the exams board, as a significant part of our teaching and assessment activities now takes place there.

You have made various helpful suggestions for improvement of our programme, which we would like to address individually:

- 1) **External's approval of exam and essay questions.** The draft exam and essay questions for MODL1030, MODL2230 and MODL3230 were sent to, and commented on by, you in the autumn of 2011. The only script not sent (MODL1040) was because no changes had been made following the 2010-11 session. In any case we will ensure attention is given to this process next year, in particular given the Subject Leader's research leave and the appointment of replacement staff, which may entail heavier changes in the current module content provision. We will also be happy to send all scripts regardless of repetition.
- 2) **The lack of close textual analysis in levels 2 & 3 assessed coursework.** Thank you for calling our attention to this. As discussed during the board, the lack of close textual analyses in students' essays may be due to the lack of familiarity of some of them with the specificity of film, if they come from other disciplines and are taking these film modules as electives. But we fully acknowledge that this aspect requires action, and we will endeavour to embed the development of this particular skill both in the module handbooks and coursework.
- 3) **Students' dissatisfaction with library resources.** The results of our year-2 module evaluation by students, viewed by you, although overwhelmingly positive, suggest that students are not entirely satisfied with library resources available to them. As explained during the board, this issue has already been raised by our Library Rep (<<>>) and a scheme is now in place through which lists of core readings and viewings are sent directly to the relevant library officer, who ensures enough copies are purchased of these items.
- 4) **Interpreting the marking scale.** We fully understand your concern regarding the Leeds marking scale and our method of interpreting borderline cases. In your view, it compares unfavourably with marking systems at <<>> and other universities. This is however an issue upon which CWC has no power of decision. In any case, we will endeavour to raise this issue at the relevant committee (STSEC) in the School of Modern Languages for further discussion and deliberation. You will be kept abreast of the progress of this issue.
- 5) **Confusing order of marks on the marking grid.** Again, this is a realm upon which CWC has no control, as this grid is centrally run in the School. However, we will draw SMLC administration's attention to the confusion caused by the fact that marks are not entered in chronological order, and will keep you informed.

Should you need any further clarification or information, please do not hesitate to contact me as per details above.

Yours truly,

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Director, Centre for World Cinemas