

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of: **Modern Languages and Cultures**

Subject(s): **World Cinemas**

Programme(s) / Module(s): **MA World Cinemas**

awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) **MA**

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.

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.

None.

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?

Yes.

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

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.*

This is an intellectually challenging, innovative, and in this form unique Masters programme in this country. Programme aims and ILOs are clearly defined, and fully commensurate with the Masters level of award. Standards are very high.

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 national benchmarks for media studies are too broad to be of any use in determining comparability, but in my experience, having been external examiner at various institutions, I can confirm that the ILOs of this programme certainly meet, if not exceed, expectations one would have at national level.

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.*

Well-planned assessment portfolio, with a consistent and transparent strategy for marking and feedback. The 'paper trail' that allows students (and external examiners) to follow the process by which first and second markers arrive at their decisions is exceptionally well designed, and undoubtedly facilitates students' progress. Written feedback is in most cases substantial, and always phrased in a constructive and encouraging manner. Some candidates from this year's cohort, the first I have looked at, produced outstanding work.

In my notes on individual modules which I circulated prior to the Board of Examiners, I noted how several students had used similar source materials and had written on similar topics for assessment in different modules. For many essays, students had had free choice over the film chosen for the essay topic, and one possibility would be to restrict choices to those films appearing in the module bibliography. While I do not wish to restrict student choice of topics, and also appreciate that focusing on a particular set of selected case studies could help in preparing for the dissertation, a situation could hypothetically arise were certain students are disadvantaged by choosing a broader range of examples in their work. All I am suggesting here is for the programme team to be aware of this issue and to monitor what kind of topics students write about across the range of their modules.

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.*

Out of six graduating students, three received a distinction, two were awarded a merit and one got a 'pass'. One further student did not graduate, as she was excluded after having failed to attend a plagiarism hearing. This latter student was clearly a problem case, but constituted an anomalous exception amongst an otherwise strong cohort. It is worth noting that the group was also mixed in terms of linguistic abilities and academic background. Given this diversity, the programme team needs to be congratulated for having managed to get nearly all students to such a high standard by the time they finished their course.

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.

As reported at the Board of Examiners, the programme team had responded to the previous EE's comments and adopted his recommendation to use typed feedback on all feedback sheets. I commend this development as model

practice. It was also noted that the handbook had been developed with further information, and presented under clearer headings. As mentioned under previous points above, I find the documentation of the programme very transparent and lucid.

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.

The programme is clearly research-led – the content of modules and of the programme more generally reflects the world-class expertise of the staff associated with it. As stated above, the programme in this form is both unique and intellectually at the cutting edge of the discipline, especially with regard to developments in European and World Cinema. Judging especially by the dissertations, students are benefitting immensely from the research-led structure of the programme.

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.*

I was sent all relevant and necessary documentation, and also received the coursework for the following modules:

- MODL5000M World Cinemas: Core Module
- MODL5602M: Gender & Sexuality in World Cinemas
- MODL5603M Dialogues with Hollywood
- MODL5606M World Cinemas: Research Methods
- MODL5607M World Cinemas: Dissertation

I have been in direct contact with the programme leader and the administrative support team, who have answered all y queries, and responded to all my requests.

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 have understood how my role is defined in the University of Leeds regulations, and consider these definitions to be in line with similar functions I have fulfilled elsewhere.

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

Yes. In light of the plagiarism case that came up this year, and the fact that I received all assessed work only in the summer, I suggest that I receive the First semester coursework earlier in the academic year, ideally once it has been marked.

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

The BOE was exceptionally well organised, and was conducted smoothly, efficiently, and fairly.

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.

Other Comments

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



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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

Professor Lúcia Nagib
Centenary Professor of World Cinemas
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University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

9 December 2011

Ref.: Reply to External Examiner's Report

Dear

In the name of my colleagues and my own, I would like to thank you very much indeed for your detailed and positive report about the structure and performance of the MA in World Cinemas, University of Leeds, academic year 2010-11. We are delighted to hear that you approve of our programme's general design, research-led teaching, marking and feedback procedures, and that you found some of the students' assessed work of outstanding quality. On our part, we would like to express our appreciation of the care with which you examined our programme, your prompt replies to our enquiries, and in particular your help with identifying, following up and resolving an unexpected and disappointing case of plagiarism, which constituted, in your words, 'an anomalous exception amongst an otherwise strong cohort'. In order to minimise any possibility of this happening again in the future, we have now made electronic essay submission through Turnitin compulsory across the programme.

However, you have identified an area where improvement could be made, as follows:

‘Several students had used similar source materials and had written on similar topics for assessment in different modules. For many essays, students had had free choice over the film chosen for the essay topic, and one possibility would be to restrict choices to those

films appearing in the module bibliography. ... All I am suggesting here is for the programme team to be aware of this issue and to monitor what kind of topics students write about across the range of their modules.'

Unfortunately, by the time we received this advice, handbooks and essay questions had already been distributed to the current 2011-12 cohort of students, so the format of essay questions could not be altered. However, we have repeatedly advised our current students not to write about the same films in essays for different modules, including the dissertation module, and we will make sure this advice is included in module handbooks for the next session. We will also endeavour to restrict the film choices for essays to the viewing lists of the respective modules.

Thank you once again for your sterling work as our external examiner, and please do not hesitate to contact me, should you need any further information.

Looking forward to meeting you again in October 2012,

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Lúcia Nagib'.

Lúcia Nagib
World Cinemas Subject Leader
MAWC Director