

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of: Design	Subject(s): Graphic & Communication Design
Programme: Graphic & Communication Design	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BA Hons
Programme: Graphic & Communication Design (Run Out)	BA Hons

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.

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.

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.*

The learning outcomes for the programme were commensurate with the level of the award as was the structure and content of the programme.

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 Graphic & Communication Design programme is comparable to similar programmes at other institutions and against the national Art & Design benchmarks and the framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

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.*

Assessment methods were robust, as were the structures and arrangements for the marking of modules. There was clear evidence of quality in respect to teaching and delivery throughout the programme and this was reflected in overall student performance and achievement.

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.*

The academic standards demonstrated by the students were comparable to similar institutions. I was able to see a wide selection of work across all levels of the programme and from a broad array of modules.

It was clear that students were provided with opportunities to demonstrate their achievement via a series of coherent and challenging projects, live briefs and work placement opportunities. Students possessed strengths in respect to their ability to discuss their work, whilst the level of student research underpinning each module was both broad and robust.

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.

Student's ability to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their own work in relation to intended target audience, marketplace and client was in evidence at all stages of the programme and in all modules. It was clear that the programme leader and their staff team have continued to enhance this aspect of their students overall skill-set and that students themselves were aware of the importance of this aspect of their studies.

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.

Many of the staff delivering upon the programme are research active and this naturally filters down into aspects of the programme, its content and delivery. It was evident that research forms an integral aspect of the design curriculum and that students are actively encouraged to support their practical outcome via in-depth research and rigour.

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 policies of the University were clear and matched the roles I was required to perform. Documentation relating to external assessors was sent in advance to aid my role as external and made clear in relation to policy and procedure.

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.*

Relevant information and documentation was provided prior to my visit including examples of dissertations. Additional documentation was also requested, provided and reviewed at the time of my visit.

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

Yes. I was able to see a wide selection of work across all levels of the programme and from a broad array of modules. In addition I also met with and reviewed the work of students completing under the original Graphic & Communication Design programme who had undertaken a year out in industry and were therefore completing their final studies this academic year.

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

The examination processes and arrangements were both clear and thorough. Module and Programme assessment boards were efficient and well organised, whilst it was evident that the utmost care and consideration was shown in respect to the final grades and awards allocated to students.

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.

This is the final year of my tenure as External Examiner for the Graphic & Communication Design programme and I would therefore like to thank <<>> (current programme leader) and <> staff for their time and assistance whilst undertaking my role as external examiner, across a variety of design programmes over the past 5 years.

In addition I would also like to extend my thanks and gratitude the previous programme leader <<>> for their assistance and support in undertaking my role. Both <<>> and <>> should be commended for establishing an engaging and challenging programme, as should their staff team, all of which it has been a pleasure to work with over this time.

The team have succeeded in maintaining core elements of the 'old' Graphic & Communication Design programme whilst transferring and adding a series of structural and content based revisions in respect to the programmes current format. All of which I believe will only benefit their students and ensure the future success of the course.

Throughout my time as external it has been evident that all the staff from the area have been extremely receptive to ideas and suggestions regarding the programme's content, structure, policies and procedures and I have very much enjoyed working with the programme leaders and their teams in respect to this goal.

The programme possesses many strengths, but perhaps its key strength lies with its staff team and their evident professionalism and knowledge of the subject area, all of which they have brought to bear in respect to the content and day to day delivery of the programme. As such the programme benefits from a dedicated staff team all of which are committed to ensuring quality and diversity of curriculum content and delivery.

In closing I would again like to thank the Programme Leader and all members of the teaching staff for their time and assistance whilst undertaking my role as external examiner and I wish them every success in future years.

Many Regards

<<>>

BA Graphic & Communication Design

External examiner report response.

We very much appreciate your comments, and we welcome the insightful / objective view that these bring to the continued development of the programme. Where these comments offer suggestions or advice about elements of the programme which would benefit from some consideration, then we will ensure that these are discussed by the course team as part of the process of reflection and development, and these decisions about changes or revisions will be sent to you in due course, whilst also forming the foundation of initial discussions with the new External Examiner for 2011/12.

Your report contains many complementary comments this year and doesn't really highlight any negative aspects of the programme, it does however highlight many positive changes and practices that have been implemented over the last year. The report highlights the creative challenges we give to students and I believe as a programme we need to continue to evolve and enhance this with more live briefs, challenging projects and placement opportunities. It also mentions student understanding of the audience and problem has improved since your last report and this is something the programme team will enhance further over this coming year.

There also seems to be a clear impact of research active staff on the programme that is filtering down to the students through the delivery and content. This area would improve more if we had more research active staff in the area but over the coming year/s there should be a natural improvement with staff finishing their Phd's and new appointments.

The report suggest many strengths but the key strength is the knowledge and professionalism of the staff team that should be encouraged and enhanced on a constant basis. This area should improve with the development of more research active staff within the area over the coming years.

In discussions with yourself and the staff team were points raised in relation to student experience. One main point was the length and delivery of particular studio modules. Students commented that they were too long and needed more structure so the morning group got the same experience as the afternoon group (just in level 1 and 2). This year there has been a change of programme managers and the implementation of year tutors that aims to address the students support and experience issues. All module managers now teach the full module so this should address any issues regarding different delivery. We are also introducing some new elements to the programme to address any student experience issues. These include weekly visiting speakers, wednesday workshops (skills and creativity), educational trips and progression meetings.