

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

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of:	Subject(s): Textile Design
Programme(s) / Module(s):	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
Textile Design – Full range of modules	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.

There are no matters for urgent attention

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.*
- 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

- 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 was rigorous and fairly conducted, which in turn reflected the quality of outcomes and ILOs

- 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

- 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.

The introduction of the reflective journal module has had a positive impact in helping students to understand the role contextual research plays in relation to informing design direction and outcome. In turn this has also ensured that students are more rigorous in their investigations and have fed these findings through to a more focused practice.

- 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 staffs continual involvement with research and design practice continues to provide a contemporary outlook to teaching practises and a greater sense of personal design direction for students development.

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.*

Yes

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.*

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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.

I would like to thank the textile team for all their hard work this year in providing me with the relevant information and a good cross section of course work to look at. This provided me with a very clear understanding of course content and the range of design work be produced. Having the opportunity to meet with staff and students also provided valuable information in support of the external examination process and helped the process to run smoothly.

- The assessment process was conducted in a fair and rigorous manner and the grades achieved clearly placed students within the correct banding in relation to the peer group.
- The cross section of students that I met were very complimentary about the staff team and the hard work they have put in to running a challenging and well organised programme. Again students articulated their responses very well and overall gave clear reasons for wanting to study at Leeds.
- **Degree show and work as a whole**

The course work and the Degree Show overall this year had a more varied range of work which reflected a greater sense of personal design direction from the majority of the student cohort. This in turn created a fresher feel to the show and demonstrated a wider variety of approaches through areas of inspiration, use of scale, colour, materials and

design resolve. It was noted that within knitted textiles a more experimental approach to texture and three dimensional exploration has taken place, which has helped underpin 2D-3D understanding and translation of ideas. The printed textiles also has a fresh and more individualistic approach to design, which utilises a number of approaches confidently to result in an accomplished design resolve. Again students experimenting with three dimensional forms following the fashion module, still appear to be compromised when taking these through to garment form. Where experimentation has allowed students to work more abstractly, and not with predictable garment shapes, this has allowed for greater personal expression and a more innovative design outcome to be achieved. Within woven textiles the two students specialising in this area demonstrated a good understanding of cloth construction and yarn awareness and how this could be exploited to translate their visual inspiration. Though the student work is accomplished and of a good standard, it is within this area there is cause for concern about the role it plays within the programme as a whole and the number of students specialising in weave. I understand that the option to specialise in weave has been put on hold to current students to allow further discussion and planning to take place in deciding how best to utilise the resource in relation to the future direction of the programme. This could provide an opportunity to consider a number of options, for example:

1. It becomes part of a constructed textile pathway bringing together weave and knit
2. It forms the base in which to establish a multimedia pathway
3. Reconsideration takes place into how the subject is introduced to students as a specialist pathway

All of which will require a series of debates and discussions to future direction and the key driver of the programme as a whole and course dynamics . I feel the decision to place weave on hold is a positive move and allows further discussion to take place, thus avoiding a rushed outcome that might be regretted.

- **Technical support**

The limited amount of technical support and reliance on academic staff to also provide technical support remains an issue across the programme. Students commented on the fact that when some equipment had broken down and a member of technical or academic staff were not available, it resulted in some students not being able to continue working and producing textile samples. It was felt that they had to wait for repairs to be made/resolved, which lead to periods of time being wasted and the development of project work being delayed. Which in turn can be particularly stressful during the build-up to the final examination, submission of portfolio and degree show. It would be useful to look at the demands on resources over the academic year as a whole to identify where the key pressure points occur and consider what technical support is required. This would then provide a case for support to clarify the appropriate support systems needed within the programme and University to help resolve this situation.

- **Visualisations skills**

The use of visualisation skills remains a key design tool where students can communicate clearly the context in which they intend to place/apply their design work. The use of CAD has helped support this understanding which is technically executed in a confident manner. Further development could take place within the visualisations, in terms of styling, to create visual statements which have a more contemporary and innovative outlook in there development. In support of this the work and contextualisation developed through the reflective journal and visual research could also allow further experimentation to take place to enable more individual styles to be exploited. Therefore encouraging a broader range of skills and media to be used as a means of creating a personalised visual language.

- **Tutorials and feedback**

The combination of group and individual tutorials remains to work extremely well and over-all there was very positive feedback from the students as a whole. It was felt that it gave them the opportunity to discuss ideas with a wider audience and enabled them to explore project development from a range of different design perspectives. Some students made comment about the frequency of tutorials, and in some cases, felt that they did not always need a tutorial (or as many tutorials) at particular points within a project. But could have used this time to actually develop/produce their textiles. All students felt that the tutorial system provided an excellent mechanism in which to receive clear feedback to support project development and progression. The formal feedback stages provided a very clear sense of their personal development and progression and offered timely points for reflection, therefore giving students the time and opportunity to respond and act upon these stages. A few students commented that on a few occasions the feedback was received quite late, which did not allow them time to respond to this fully. This comment only came from a small number of students.

- As with previous years, the balance between theoretical studies and design practice within the programme, students demonstrated a thorough understanding of the discipline. The design outcome with the higher achieving students is comparable to other students on more skills based courses and places them on a good competitive level.
- The student outcomes are on par with similar textile programmes in the UK. The students overall have very good communication skills through both written and visual means, which is thoroughly underpinned by sound design research.

Dear

Thank you for your external examiners report for BA Textile Design for the 2010 / 2011 academic session. The textiles staff have expressed their gratitude for your continued support and advice, and are very pleased that you have agreed to remain as External Examiner for the coming academic year.

It is pleasing that you feel the range of work has improved, especially within the knitted textiles area, as well as the level of personal engagement that students have demonstrated. The Critical Studio Journal forms the basis of a new module for BA Textile Design, and it is encouraging to hear that it is working well after a short space of time.

Your suggestion of a review of the woven textile design is currently underway, and I am sure the staff involved will consider your points closely. The Textiles for Fashion pathway at level two has been taught by a member of the textiles team this year, and the work produced has a more pronounced emphasis on contemporary textile design, rather than the reliance upon standard garment shapes that you describe. This will continue into level three teaching for Textiles for Fashion this coming year, so we are hoping that this format of textile concepts for fashion (rather than final pattern cut garments) will continue to produce work that falls quite distinctly into textile design.

I am pleased to inform you that we have recently appointed a technician for the textiles area. I am sure that this will help both the staff and students enormously, and hopefully avoid any problems with using machinery and equipment.

The use of digital visualisation is an area the team is keen to develop further. The intention is to make this a core element of one of the level three module options available to students. Given the balance between theoretical and practical textile design modules, this area of visualisation can provide us with not only the means to explore a wider range of textile products in a relatively tight timeframe, but also to give further transferable skills to the students who do not wish to pursue a career in textile design itself.