

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

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

|                                  |  |                                       |            |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>School of:</b>                | <b>Design</b>  | <b>Subject(s):</b>                    |            |
| <b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b> | International Foundation Programme in Art and Design | <b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b> | Non Degree |

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.*

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.*

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes continue to be coherent with the level of the award. In keeping with previous years, I have commented positively on how the balance of practical work and theoretical studies readies students for potential further study at BA (Hons) level. In particular, how the manner in which international students are introduced to western art and design cultures, and practices, in many cases for the first time. This continues to be the case with a varied curriculum that encourages students to explore different approaches to design problems and able to communicate their decisions and take responsibility for the outcomes.

### 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.*

There are no national subject benchmark standards for this award, but the intended learning outcomes are coherent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in that students are exposed to learning experiences that will enable them to approach study at HE4. The programme is therefore comparable with similar programmes at other 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.*

As in previous years, assessment methods and marking arrangements continue to be fair and robust with evidence of dialogue between teaching staff regarding internal moderation at appropriate points in the assessment cycle. Due to the late response from the School to my 2009/10 report, recommendations regarding the mapping of marks against assessment criteria and learning outcomes on feedback forms have not been addressed. Whilst I have confidence that methods are appropriate and that assessment against ILOs is being fairly applied, it is nevertheless helpful to consider ways in which students are provided with greater clarity in the feedback supplied. However, I am assured that this will be looked at by the programme team, who will discuss ways in which to implement any necessary changes for the 2011/12 academic year.

I take note of the School's response to my additional comment regarding greater transparency over second marking by confirmation that procedures undertaken are in line with other programmes within the School. Whilst I do not question that second marking is rigorous and fair, I feel it is important to clarify the reasons for highlighting this issue. It would be helpful if the staff team could consider providing annotations next year on how any variations between first and second markers were discussed and the resulting mark negotiated and agreed. One suggestion could be the provision of a moderation sheet for the cohort listing first and second marks, the agreed mark and relevant comments. This would aid clarity and assist the team and myself in identifying best practice in using the full range of marks.

### 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 overall standards are consistent with previous years with stronger students demonstrating engagement and experimentation and the weaker students failing to complete tasks satisfactorily, or in one instance, refusing to tackle an assignment. In speaking to the student in question, <<>> felt that the (knitting) tasks was, 'not for boys'. The staff team successfully renegotiated the brief with the student so that the ILOs were met without excluding <<>>, which subsequently resulted in a satisfactory outcome. Compared to previous years, there was a noticeable lack of commitment to finish assignments by the weaker students as well as difficulties understanding the tasks. Also, there were some problems with attendance, which the staff team worked hard to address with those concerned.

Listening to the four students I met on my first visit, there were accounts of confusion at the beginning of the programme. In some instances, students had little idea that they would be studying on a design programme because they had ambitions to study communication media at undergraduate level. The programme leader informed me that there is no communication media foundation offering, hence central admissions directing these students to the School of Design, which would explain their confusion. One student said <<>> did not know what

<<>> was expected to do, wanted more structure and to know what <<>> was learning. This is understandable given the lack of prior interest in the subject.

However, students enjoyed the programme and felt they had learned a great deal and were confident to enter undergraduate study. Asking which elements could improve their learning experience, there was a universal appreciation of graphic design, which they enjoyed, but felt they would like more. This resonates with my observations concerning student achievement in this module, which was generally under-developed compared to other practical modules. Whilst the programme aims to provide a varied learning experience, it would be fair to say that a subject such as graphic design deserves greater attention. Student work failed to demonstrate basic skills in typography, image, layout and key principles of graphic communication. In the time allocated, the outputs were to be expected, so I would like to suggest that the staff team consider ways of embedding graphic design more fully across the programme to include greater engagement with the key elements of the discipline (image, layout, message, type, symbols etc).

**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.*

There have been no changes to the programme since last year.

**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.*

Given the lateness of the School's response to my previous report, I have not had opportunity to learn about the specific instances where research had an impact on the curriculum and learning and teaching. However, I do recognise, as pointed out in the School's response to my previous enquiry, that staff undertaking research, particularly at PhD level, are able to instil a culture of research enquiry, which is demonstrated in student project work and how they are encouraged to work independently whilst being supported at every stage. However, I would be keen to learn how staff research is nurturing a research culture on an ongoing basis, how this is articulated to students on this programme and how experiences with this unique group of international students might inform other programmes.

## ***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 information provided centrally by the university was sufficient to act effectively in my role as an External Examiner. However, I did not receive the School's response to my previous report prior to my visits this year, which meant I was obliged to refer to my observations from 2009/10 at the first visit without the benefit of the programme team's contributions. This has now been rectified and I received a response on 21 June 2011, which has greatly assisted writing this report.

**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.*

Documentation was appropriate and compliant with the explicit roles I have been expected to perform.

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

Student work was made available one week prior to the Board of Examiners where I had opportunity to inspect sample portfolios and discuss outcomes with staff. Time was made available to meet in private with a representative group of students when I was able to discuss their learning experiences and hear their assessment of the programme overall.

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

The operation of the Board of Examiners was satisfactory and due time was given for detailed examination of marks including appropriate discussion surrounding my observations on student achievement.

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

There were no instances of mitigating circumstances tabled at the examination board this year.

***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.*

Dear <<>>

**RE: Response to external examiners report: International Foundation Programme in Art and Design**

Thank you for preparing a thorough review of the programme.

I would like to thank you for spending an extended time within the department, in addition to the review of individual modules your discussions with individual students underlined both the achievements of the programme this year, and also some of the difficulties encountered.

I am pleased to note from the report that you feel that the balance between practical work and theoretical studies provides students with a good understanding of both areas in preparation for undergraduate study. This is an area that the programme team has been working on for the last four years. Within this time the importance of DESN0040 has been identified and used as both valuable theoretical support for all practical modules and an important means to monitor and assesses subject specific English skills.

One area for further development within the programme is the graphic design provision; this has become a more important issue as the number of students selecting undergraduate studies within the subject area increases. The programme team will review the current provision and consider ways to embed the key principles of graphic communication within semester one modules so that these ideas can be applied to subject specific work within DESN0030 in semester 2.

In response to your comments about assessment and feedback this is a matter that will be addressed before the next academic year. Although you acknowledge that assessment and marking arrangements are fair and robust it is important that students can see how marks are mapped against specific learning outcomes and new assessment forms will be introduced to make this explicit. In regards to second marking procedures, your suggestions will be discussed by the programme team so that moderation is clearly recorded for clarity.

I would finally like to inform you of changes taking place in both the teaching and management of the Programme. This is the last year that <<>> will be involved in the Foundation Programme within the school, and I would like to thank you on <<>> behalf for the support and constructive feedback that you have provided over the last three years. From September <<>> will take over all teaching and management responsibilities.

Yours Sincerely