

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

Research Methodology**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Faculty of Performance, Visual Arts and Communication/School of design
Subject(s):	Design
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Design/ Research Methodology, Negotiated Project, Reflective Report, Design Issues, Marketing for designers, Choice for Specialist Knowledge Acquisition, Sustainable design and Digital Design Practice.
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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.

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
I have some recommendations which are indicated below but nothing I would class as urgent.*

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?

Not that I am aware

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

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, modules, structure and content of the programme are all appropriate for M level.
The standards in terms of the teaching, assessment and outcomes are commensurate with M level.

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 programmes aims and ILO's are equivalent to similar M level Design programmes and the relevant national benchmarks.

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 methods employed are varied and appropriate to the assessment of the related ILO's. They include presentations, essays, reports and a range of design outcomes in line with those used at other institutions. Marking is generally very good and the marks were within the appropriate range for the standard of work. There were some excellent examples of multiple marking e.g. Negotiated Project. However I would recommend that the process for second marking is formalised across the course e.g. second marking of all work that is Fail or Distinction or borderline between Fail/Pass, Pass/Merit or Merit/Distinction. The criteria for moderation should also be made explicit i.e. when and how it takes place. There is also the need to ensure consistency in mark sheets used particularly within a module.

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.*

On the whole the academic standards demonstrated by the students were very good and comparable with students on similar courses elsewhere. The best students demonstrated an excellent understanding of research methods, collected useful research data which once analysed was used as a foundation to some innovative design solutions. Weaker students showed a more limited understanding of research and its application to the development of a design outcome. Some of these weaker students also lost sight of their original aims and were sometimes unclear of their target audience/user and whether the final design solution was fit for purpose.

My main concern was with the Design Management subject group in relation to their negotiated project. In terms of the topics chosen for study it was not always clear that were specialising in this area. I recommend that the team consider how this subject is differentiated from the individual design subject groups such as graphics. I believe a clear definition of what constitutes a "Design Management" project is required in which the a more strategic design management approach to the negotiated projects is actively encouraged.

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.

N/A as it is my first year

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.

It is evident that research methods as a subject is effectively taught and usefully employed by a majority of the students on their project modules. In most cases the students demonstrated a good understanding of both secondary and primary research methods which they had implemented in their projects. These included literature review, interviews, questionnaires, observations, case studies and competitor reviews. Stronger students made good use of this research to justify their design thinking and design decisions. The weaker students did not make clear connections between their research and design development.

In future it would be useful to explore with the team how their own research can be used to inform curriculum development on the course.

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

The mentor support from the programme leader <> has been excellent.

The Examination/Assessment Process

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.*

I am happy with the guidance and support provided.

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 appropriate documentation was provided.

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 exams set

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?

I visited the course 3 times and had access to all the work and marking in terms 1 and 3. In term 2 I attended one full day out of 2 days of negotiated project presentations.

Scripts were clearly marked and annotated. I have already made recommendations earlier in this report regarding second marking, moderation and mark/feedback sheets.

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

The choice of subjects for dissertation based on the students' negotiated project was equivalent to those at other institutions. There were some excellent discussions of research methods and application of the results. The method and standard of assessment was appropriate but adequate time should be given for the second marking of work which is fail, distinction or borderline grade. If this means delaying exam boards so be it.

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?

I attended two exam boards. The arrangements and operation were satisfactory and the recommendations were appropriate. I must commend the university on its real time marks inputting system employed during the board itself.

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

Yes

Other comments

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

My only other comments refer to student feedback. I was able to meet the students on 2 of my visits. The students seemed generally satisfied with the course during semester 1 but some concerns were raised with semester 2. The main concern was with the lack of group interaction. The student I met felt it would be useful during semesters 2 and 3 for all the students to meet together perhaps once a week to continue relations developed during semester 1, to see the progress of other student projects and perhaps to have some formal taught input. My view is that they found the transition from taught modules to independent working quite challenging and in some cases isolating.

The second issue raised was a desire for more software and practical skills input in semester 2 to support their major project. Specifically there were requests for 3d computer modelling, web design, photoshop, screen printing and packaging workshops. Unfortunately I was unable to meet any students at the end of term 3 to discuss their experience of dissertation supervision. On the whole I have enjoyed my first year on the course and hope that my feedback will help it to develop from what is already a strong position.

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10 February 2014

Dear <>

Thank you for your report on the MA/MSc Design Programmes for Session 2012/13. As always your comments are incisive and constructive. You observed that it was not clear what constituted a “design management” project. This has been fully discussed by the programme team and steps have been taken to make this clear. We can discuss the steps taken during your visit for the autumn semester (2013/14) Exam Board.

<> has taken over leadership of the programme this session and has put in place actions to deal with the “lack of group interaction” felt by some of last session’s students and the desire for more software and practical skills input in semester 2.

I look forward to meeting up again at your next visit to the School.

Yours sincerely

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