

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

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

<b>School of:</b> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DESIGN</b></p>	<b>Subject(s):</b>  
<b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b>  <b>MA Advertising and Design</b>	<b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b>  <b>MA</b>

*Name and home institution/affiliation of examiner:*

<b>Title:</b> <>	<b>Name:</b> <>	<b>Institution:</b> <>
Address for communication: <>		
<b>Email:</b> <>	<b>Telephone:</b>	<>

*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.*

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 – 2011 report and predecessor's full exit report (2012). I was also provided with responses from the School of Design to the previous External Examiner's Report.

***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.*

Given the programme's overarching aims and the dual business-design input on the course, the outcomes identified (and achieved by this cohort) are appropriate to a Masters-level degree. The work submitted demonstrated a requisite underpinning of research, application and creativity necessary.

### 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.*

As the previous External Examiner noted, this particular course combines two distinct disciplines - business studies and creative (advertising) practice - with differing skill sets. Therefore it cannot be easily compared to one subject benchmark. Nonetheless the level of attainment is consistent with programmes Masters-level specialist programmes in creative and strategic advertising, nationally and internationally. These are particularly evident in terms of the evident research skills, creative application and reflective learning through practice, most clearly apparent through the final stage course work.

### 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 were layered so that students received interim formative feedback during the modules before summative assessment at the end of projects. A range of assessment methods were employed to fulfil the published assessment Criteria. This included team 'Assessment Panel' marking (of the visual presentation, poster presentation and the portfolio) and first and second 'blind' marking (of the dissertation, project brief scripts and reflective logs). The team had also held a Moderation Meeting to assess the cohort's overall levels of achievement and the ranking of final stage outcomes, to ensure overall consistency of the assessment process.

The assessment regime was therefore found to be robust and fairly applied. The performance of students this year was indicative of high quality teaching/learning support, with clear evidence of academic rigour and tailored development of skill sets.

### 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 course incorporates a range of learning and teaching styles, which enables students to develop existing strengths and acquire new practical advertising skills. The range of specialist input on the course - which includes a visiting lecture programme and input from University specialists - ensures that students get a rounded educational experience of the trades related to contemporary communications. This span of input resonates through the range of media and strategies used by students in their coursework. The project-based nature of the programme enables students to develop a professional portfolio while demonstrating their competencies, in line with the intended learning outcomes.

The overall performance this year - which saw no fails, no distinctions but 12 *Passes with Merit*, reflects the underpinning rigour of the programme but also the difficulty of achieving top grades on such a diverse programme. With the different skills sets needed to excel through the programme's taught business and creative module, few students enter the one year programme equipped to achieve high grades in all areas. However the range of skills will prove beneficial to students entering a changing workscape, where the skills of business, research and creative application are in high demand.

### 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.*

Having noted the previous Examiner's remarks on the programmes incremental improvements, the areas of particular good practice noted this year include: the breadth of specialist input on the programme, though the supervisory base and lecture series; the ability to engage in qualitative, quantitative and visual research material; the linkage between R&D and creative application, and the assessment methods used to arrive at fair evaluations of student achievement.

Visiting speaker program, use of Alumni and bringing in more expertise from different disciplines in the School has reaped benefits in expanding the professional and academic network.

**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 development of a new Masters level course in Digital Mobile & Social Media responds to the growing demand for digital communications skills and new forms of communications content; rather than compromising MA Advertising and Design, if the new modules are made available, it will enable the course to maintain its contemporary currency.

Within the existing programme content, it remains clear that research and analysis is encouraged and embedded in the curriculum, evidenced through the calibre of work examined.

### ***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 given access to Stage One 15-credit modules taught from the School of Design during my first visit (May 2013). I was also given access to all necessary regulations and course descriptions, and I was able to discuss issues and obtain information directly from staff during the visit. During my second visit all Dissertation and Creative Direction course work was made available to me, which had been organised for ease of sampling.

Given the relatively small scale of the cohort this year (15 students) it was appropriate for all work on Dissertation and Creative Direction routes to be made available. This material was certainly sufficient to base evaluations on the performance of the cohort, and for me to act effectively as an External Examiner.

**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 was provided with handbooks at the start of my tenure. For this visit I was provided with up-to-date regulations and assignment briefs for the Dissertation and Creative Design pathways, as well as guidelines for the assessment methods used.

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

Yes. The one dissertation student work and supervisor assessment sheets were sent to me in advance, while all 14 of the Creative Direction module students material plus internal assessment mark sheets were made available to me during my second visit. Given the size of the cohort (15 students), having access to all final level work was appropriate in 2012/13.

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

Yes.

I was sent guidelines, reports and text-based material under examination well in advance of the Examination Boards.

**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.*

For note in next year's report - statistics from the 2012-13 cohort:

DESN5250M Dissertation (30 credits)

- 1 student, 65% – Pass with Merit
- demonstrated a keenness to engage with data, though rather mechanical in its evaluation (surveys, direct reflection on findings without a wider cultural context)

DESN5240M Creative Direction (30 credits)

- 70-90% Distinction                      0
- 60-69 – Pass with Merit                13 (from 56- 1x team at 69\*)
- 50-59% - Pass                            1 (+1 resubmission)

Overall: 12 Merits, 3 passes

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Dear <>

Thank you for your report sent to us in November 2013 and please accept my apologies for the delay in my response. Your report reflects a positive and supportive analysis of the MA Advertising and Design programme, which we find encouraging.

The course team have worked hard to concentrate the minds of the student cohort on the integration of research, strategy and application and in developing a wider range of skills and knowledge than those normally associated with a programme in creative advertising, which you have identified in your analysis. We have noted your comments about the importance of utilizing expertise from industry in order to expand students understand of the professional working environment to which many of our students aspire. As a result we have increased the range of visiting speakers for 2013/14 and in addition have instigated a programme of inviting alumni to talk to current students about their perspective of the creative industries in which they work and the process by which they gained employment.

Your positive response to the introduction of a new programme MA Digital, Mobile and Social Media is most welcome, although I have to report that there has been a delay in gaining 'In Principle Approval' as the member of staff identified to manage the programme has now left the University. However, <> a University Research Fellow from the PVAC Faculty CSI research hub, has agreed to re-draft the documentation and submit a new programme proposal to the School's Student Education Committee in February 2014. We are confident that this new proposal, now called MA Digital, Mobile and Social Design with Enterprise, will successfully recruit for September 2015 and we will further explore the possibility of new modules from that programme becoming optional choices for MA Advertising and Design students.

It is worth noting that there are some proposed changes to the current module structure which are being drafted and will be scrutinized by the School's Student Education Committee this month. Effectively we have proposed that the final two optional modules, Creative

Direction and Dissertation, increase their current credit value from 30 to 35 and reduce one of the Leeds University Business School modules 'Marketing Communications from 15 to 10 credits. This change is being proposed in order to increase the importance and value of the two final modules, encourage greater student engagement in the conclusion of their programme and create further opportunities for challenging creative and academic study.

The Course Team have asked me to pass on their appreciation of the supportive and constructive nature of your visits, they have found the discussions that have occurred and the suggestions that you have made to improve the programme extremely helpful and thought provoking and they look forward to the continuation of this positive working relationship.

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Deputy Head of School  
Programme Manager  
MA Advertising and Design

10.02.14