

## The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies
Subject(s):	History of Art
Programme(s) / Module(s):	History of Art
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

**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](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?*

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*

In my final year as an External Examiner on the History of Art programme, the excellent quality of the academic provision and the high standards of achievement by students signal this programme as one of the best in the UK. Over my 4 year appointment, there have been a number of innovations: the reorganisation of the curriculum in response to staff changes and shifting research interests; changes in the management of the size of the student intake and the move to a greater use of VLR and on-line teaching and feedback. These changes have been managed highly effectively and efficiently demonstrating not only the dedication and professionalism of the academic and administrative staff, but also their flexibility in maintaining academic excellence in a changing and challenging HEI environment.

## 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.*

I confirm that the intended aims and learning outcomes for the modules that I reviewed were appropriate as was the structure and content of the programme. The standards were appropriate for the award.

### 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 design and structure of the aims, ILOs and standards achieved were comparable with similar programmes at other HEIs and in line with the national subject benchmark 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.*

The assessment methods were varied and highly effective in assessing student performance and achievement in relation to the ILOs. The arrangement for the marking of modules was efficient and access to the VLR allowed extensive review of student work and feedback. Internal marking systems were robust and the mechanisms for reaching the classification of awards were transparent and clear. In the case of a divergence in the provisional marks allocated at module level, third markers were used as required and final marks agreed by negotiation. Student performance was impressive and many students achieved grades in the high 2.1 and first class bands. Again it was clear that variation in class sizes created some pressures in terms of marking loads and feedback for staff. The reduction in time available this year for marking, second marking and assessment administration leading up to the Board was especially tight and this needs to be reviewed in future as it places added pressures on what is already a tight turnaround.

### 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.*

As stated in my previous reports, I was impressed by the critical abilities and theoretical expertise of students at the University of Leeds studying the History of Art. The course is demanding and intellectually challenging with a distinctive and wide ranging mixture of visual analysis, historical examination and critical theory. It is to be commended for being research-led, current and theoretically ambitious. There were many excellent dissertations and a high proportion of students gained first class honours awards. The staff team has responded positively to my advice that they should fully reward student achievement by going into the upper reaches of the first-class band as appropriate.

### 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.*

The programme exploits the range, currency and vitality of staff research and the curriculum also makes excellent use of the creative dialogue and synergies that exist between the disciplines of History of Art, Fine Art and Cultural Studies as they are aligned within the School.

### 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.*

The breadth and ambition of the curriculum is informed by the range of staff research and scholarly activity. This underpins the innovative and distinctive nature of the teaching of History of Art on the course at the University of Leeds.

## 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 arrangements have worked well.

## 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.*

The arrangements were well organised and efficient. Any requests to see additional material were responded to quickly and effectively and I would like to thank the staff and admin teams for all their support.

**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.*

I received the documentation and assessment material promptly and the policies and procedures matched the role that I was asked to perform.

**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?**

All draft papers were provided for me to review and my feedback was acted upon. The questions were appropriate to the level of study.

**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 had full access to the VLR covering the modules that I was asked to review, and any other work was provided in hard copy as necessary. This allowed me to confidently assess student achievement and performance. The exam scripts were fully annotated by first and second markers and the variation in the quality of exam feedback noted last year was no longer in evidence. There was clear and consistent feedback of assessed work across all the modules I reviewed.

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

The dissertations as noted last year are a clear strength at the University of Leeds. I was impressed again by the range of topics selected by students and by their sustained engagement with the subjects they had chosen. There were many very high marks awarded and this was appropriate to the intellectual ambition, rigour and critical attainment evidenced in the dissertations. Standards remain very high and the tutors are to be applauded for the support and guidance they offer to their students, which is clearly achieving excellent results.

**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?**

Yes

**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

University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9LJ



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

8<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Dear

Many thanks for a most gratifying report from you.

I was pleased to read that you highlight the 'excellent quality of the academic provision and the high standards of achievement by students', which you noted 'signal this programme as one of the best in the UK'.

I was also happy to read of your approval of the changes we have implemented during your tenure: new staff recruitment and new research projects, as you noted, have been reflected in our curriculum.

We have indeed embraced the VLE for the provision of study materials and for feedback on assignments. I am glad that you agree that 'these changes have been managed highly effectively and efficiently demonstrating not only the dedication and professionalism of the academic and administrative staff, but also their flexibility in maintaining academic excellence in a changing and challenging HEI environment'. I can only hope that the changes in the HEI environment will make our innovations worthwhile.

The tight turnaround time for marking (noted by you under 3) has already led to a concerted planning effort ahead of next year, with a draft timeline in place.

All other rubrics you cover indicate that we have if anything improved on our already excellent performance.

It remains for me to thank you for your four years as our external examiner. Throughout, you have been a true supporter of History of Art at the University of Leeds.

Best wishes,

Head of School