

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):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	History of Art with Museum Studies
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.

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

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.*

I can confirm that, on the basis of the materials that I was asked to review, the intended learning outcomes for the HAMS programme and modules and the structure and content of the programme were appropriate. The standards were appropriate to 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.*

I can confirm that the aims and ILOS of the programme are entirely in line with other comparable programmes at other institutions and with national benchmarks 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 methods of assessment offered are generally well formulated and carefully structured, providing students with transparent and effective tools with regard to their performance and results. The internal system for marking the modules is clear, efficient and well balanced and ensures rigour, with a good use of third markers in the event of significant discrepancies in the marking.

Generally the feedback offered is appropriately detailed, providing students with well-defined and constructive advice and with concrete suggestions on how to move forward. However, some discrepancies are occasionally visible between the marking criteria and the language used in the feedback as well as in the tone, character and level of detail offered. I would suggest that to ensure greater consistency across the School more formal feedback guidelines are set up.

The impressive quality of the teaching, learning and assessment is demonstrated by student performance. The highest level of student work fully reflects the wealth of choice in the subjects taught, the considerable knowledge base provided and the productive cross-pollination given on the programme. The students consulted commented very positively on the intellectual vibrancy of the School and fully acknowledged the advantages of the research-driven teaching offered and of the fertile crossover across the different programmes.

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 academic standards of the student work are generally very high, demonstrating an ability to engage with often complex debates with subtlety and originality and to articulate nuanced arguments clearly and effectively. This was especially noticeable in the best dissertations, demonstrating a significant level of independence in the research and of intellectual confidence in the articulation.

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 demonstrates a dynamic approach to teaching and an on-going effort to review the modules offered to maintain high levels of performance.

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 module outlines and the assessed materials that I was asked to review show a very healthy, direct relationship between the research interests of the staff and the teaching on the programme. The teaching provision is rich and varied and engages with substantial, often topical questions at the forefront of art history and museum studies.

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**

N/A

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 and support made to assist me in my role as external examiner were generally excellent. The sample materials that I was asked to review during the course of the year were sent to me well in advance and provided me with a good idea of the range of teaching offered and of the student work produced. I was given full access to the VLE system and support on how to navigate it. On the day preceding the Exam Board meeting staff were extremely helpful in giving me access to other relevant materials – such as a larger sample of dissertations – and answering my questions, fully supporting my role. This year I was also given the opportunity to meet a group of students and this provided me with significant new insights in to the programme and the student experience.

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.*

The materials and guidelines provided were appropriate and allowed me to fulfil my role as external examiner.

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?

I was provided with all the relevant examination materials. The level of the questions was generally appropriate, offering a wide spectrum of choice and responding to the demands of students operating at all levels of ability. A variety of approaches is visible in the formulation of questions and briefs, a testimony to the didactic and academic vitality of the programme. Appropriate arrangements were made to take my comments into account.

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?

Yes.

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

Yes. The choice of subjects is testimony to the rich and diverse teaching and cutting-edge research culture of the School, with the best dissertations operating at the forefront of the discipline. The level of feedback provided for dissertations was to be commended for the detailed insight offered and for the constructive and encouraging approach in the evaluation of the work.

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. I attended the meeting and was fully satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

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

Yes. The discussion during the meeting demonstrated the ability to take into account mitigating circumstances and medical conditions appropriately and with great sensitivity.

Other comments

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

This was my second year as external examiner for HAMS and I thoroughly enjoyed the process. I am generally very impressed by the culture and the standards of the School and the programme, which demonstrate an exceptional level of commitment to the students and a creative, ambitious and dynamic approach to teaching and research. The students consulted greatly commended the energy and dedication of the tutors, emphasising the 'passionate lecturing' carried out and speaking of the 'contagious enthusiasm' of the teaching staff. Students are very appreciative of the wide choice of modules and of the cross-pollination offered across the School, of the academic rigour of the teaching and the assessment process and fully recognise the benefits of the research-driven teaching offered, commenting very positively on the School's research culture, of which they feel an active part.

An area of some possible concern for staff is the balance between teaching and assessment vis-à-vis research. While the pressure is not at present having a negative effect of the quality of teaching and assessment offered, the overall workload for tutors looks potentially challenging. It is important to ensure that the research leave provision available to staff is sufficient to continue to allow for this vibrant scholarly community to thrive and for the high level of research activities to be maintained.

An exciting area of future development for the HAMS programme that was discussed with tutors and emerged from the conversation with the students concerns the proposed new focus on curating. I am fully supportive of this proposal, which would enable the HAMS students to further enrich their professional portfolio with appropriate skills and work experience suited to entering the world of curatorial practice.

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9LJ



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

8th October 2013

Dear

We thank you for your external examiner report on our BA History of Art with Museums Studies programme. We are very pleased to hear that your experience of the HAMS programme remains a very positive one and that you 'thoroughly enjoyed the process' of acting as external examiner. We thank you for your thoughtful observations, encouraging, positive and very complimentary comments, and the insightful suggestions for future refinements to the programme. It is very gratifying to hear that you were so impressed by the culture and the standards of the programme and the School. It was also pleasing to hear that you considered that our assessment methods are 'well formulated and carefully structured' and that our internal marking systems are 'clear, efficient and well balanced'.

We are also very pleased to note that you consider that the standard of the student work was 'very high' and that our students consistently demonstrate 'the ability to articulate nuanced arguments clearly and effectively', with the very best student dissertations 'demonstrating a significant level of independence', and 'intellectual confidence'. We are encouraged by your comments on our plans for the future developments of the HAMS programme and the renewed focus on curating; like you, we feel that this is an important area, both in terms of theoretical engagement with the issues, and in preparing students with a diverse portfolio of skills for future employment.

We note your comment that you detected some discrepancies between the marking criteria and the language employed in the student feedback forms and we will certainly raise this issue at the Student Education Committee to ensure that any misunderstandings are kept to a minimum.

Overall we found your comments very encouraging and we will gladly pass on your congratulations to the programme team. We are sure that they will very much appreciate your comments and the acknowledgement that their hard work,

dedication and commitment is providing a consistently high quality teaching and learning experience for the students.

We would like to thank you for your informative support and positive contribution in helping us to maintain a critically informed and fair assessment process and we very much look forward to meeting you again next year.

Kind Regards

Head of School