

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

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

School of: Music Programme(s) / Module(s): BA (Hons) Music BA (Hons) Popular and World Musics BMus Music Performance BA Music with Year in Industry Graduate Diploma	Subject(s): awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
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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.

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.

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. I received copies of previous external examiner's reports and discussed the comments and response of the School with the programme team.

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

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

Programme aims and intended Learning Outcomes were commensurate with the level of the award. Undergraduate programmes enable students to develop specialist pathways of study at the same time as retaining a core of essential modules that are central to the discipline of music. Standards were entirely appropriate for the awards under consideration.

2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

The programmes meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark for music and standards were comparable to other institutions within the sector.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

The programme team has a robust system of double marking and moderation and there is evidence of the University marking criteria being used across programmes. The music team has published very useful criteria for the assessment of written work. Whilst this written guidance is very useful to the programme team in benchmarking work across programmes, the development of additional criteria for different types of written work (studio reports, composition commentaries etc.) might also be useful. The team might also consider revising the criteria to reflect differences in programme level (year 1, 2 or 3) and in order to manage the expectations of staff and students.

Student results demonstrate a high quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods. Several modules had a number of minor assessment components and, although these generated a range of excellent work, the team might wish to consider reducing the number of assessments as part of the revised programme structure. This would enable students to focus on quality and depth and would also avoid assessed learning outcomes being duplicated from assessment to assessment.

The marking of modules and classification of awards were comparable with other institutions within the sector.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

Yes. Academic standards were very high and students across all undergraduate programmes produced some outstanding work. Final year Major 40 credit modules (composition, dissertation, performance etc.) demonstrated some of the best results, as students were able to demonstrate their abilities within an extended programme of study. There was evidence of good research techniques and independent learning as well as student work that had clearly been inspired by the research interests of staff within the school. This ranged from work on the psychology of music to electro-acoustic composition, musical analysis to popular musicology. The breadth and quality of work in these areas should be commended.

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

Although this is my first year in post, the programme team has clearly been reflecting on the effectiveness of degree programmes and considering ways in which the undergraduate experience can be enhanced. Identified areas of good practice include:

- The blurring of boundaries between classical and popular music – the integration of different genres, disciplinary approaches and methodologies into undergraduate programmes provides a model of good practice for music in Higher Education.
- The breadth of study (see section 4 above)
- The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching (see below)

7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

There is a strong influence of research on the curriculum and teaching and learning, and this is a particular strength of the programme. In particular, Music in Context modules enable students to engage with staff research interests and to develop their own research ideas around related topics. The breadth of subjects on offer – from the work of Michael Tippett to the influence of beat literature on popular music, from the psychology of performance to ethnomusicology – really enhances the student experience. Final year work in particular demonstrated some excellent practice-led and theoretical research work and students clearly benefited from staff expertise and a grounding in research methods.

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?**

I had sufficient access to materials in order to make informed judgements. The examinations team was very helpful in providing additional material when requested.

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?**

Yes. I was provided with access to appropriate documentation. Over the coming year, I would welcome a copy of the new programme specification.

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

Yes. I was given access to all award-bearing assessed work and viewed a significant number of assignments from dissertations to composition portfolios, music technology assessments to a variety of contextual studies essays. I also listened to a range of performance assessments via the University of Leeds VLE.

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

Yes. I was kept informed of arrangements for the Board of Examiners meeting and had time to discuss individual cases with the course team. The Board was conducted with fairness and transparency and members of the Board were fully engaged in the operation of the meeting.

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

Yes. Mitigating Circumstances had been considered prior to the meeting and due consideration was given to each candidate during the course of Board of Examiners meeting.

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.

I was impressed with the quality of student work across the programme. During the next academic year, I would welcome the opportunity to attend some student performances.

The VLE is a valuable resource and clearly provides students with essential information about their programmes and module content. However, I would urge the programme team to work on the consistency of content both at the programme and modular level to ensure that the portal remains user-friendly and easily accessible.

Professor T. Whyton
School of Media, Music & Performance
University of Salford
Adelphi Building, Peru Street
Salford, Greater Manchester M3 6EQ

Dear Tony,

Thank you for your external examiner's report for the academic year 2010–11.

We are pleased at your confirmation that our standards are appropriate the awards, and that our programmes meet National Benchmark expectations. Thanks you also for the many positive comments you felt able to make about student achievement, enhancements recently made to programmes, and the feeding of research into teaching.

We will be allocating time for a committee discussion of ideas that you have suggested regarding assessment. In particular, we will look at the your comments (a little paraphrased) below:

- Although the School has published very useful criteria for the assessment of written work but the development of additional criteria for different types of written work (studio reports, composition commentaries etc.) might also be useful.
- The team might consider revising the criteria to reflect differences in programme level (year 1, 2 or 3) and in order to manage the expectations of staff and students.

- The team might also wish to consider reducing the number of assessments as part of the revised programme structure

On the second point, we do have different criteria for each level, but we take it that you would like to see these further refined. On the last point, we are pleased to be able to say that the new programme design already has a substantially reduced assessment load.

Finally, I hope next year there will be an opportunity for you to attend some live performances, as I know you wish to do so

Yours sincerely,

Professor Derek B Scott (Head of School)

Dr Stephen Muir (Director of Learning and Teaching)

Dr James Mooney (Examinations Officer)

Dr Clive McClelland (Programme Manager, BA Music)

Mrs Jo Fairley (Programme Manager, BMus Music)