

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

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

Faculty / School of:	Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	<i>Dance</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Dance in Context, Choreography 2 and 3, Theoretical Concepts in Dance, Strategies of Research, Dissertations
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

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 intended learning outcomes of the programme are appropriate for the award and the structure of the programme enables students to progress incrementally and with confidence.

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 content, aims, learning outcomes and modes of assessment are comparable to similar dance programmes in the country. A particular strength of the programme at Leeds is the development of the student's research skills in applied and theoretical contexts.

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.*

At Level 2, the assessments were appropriately designed across the programme giving students opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the intended learning outcomes. In Choreography 2, students demonstrated good awareness of contemporary approaches to making and were able to develop structurally sound and pleasing compositions. Excellent feedback was offered from the academic staff and there was evidence of a rigorous dialogue between the markers across the modules that I examined. The offer of advice on what could be improved in the work in feedback is a very good practice. Dance in Context offers a thorough preparation in the development of applied practice. There was evidence of a useful curricular link between Dance and Context and Theoretical Concepts in Dance with students cross-referencing their work, which is encouraging to see. I wonder if there might be some more discussion on curriculum development across these two units. The theories of creativity offered to students in Theoretical Concepts were very good and in the application of theories and ideas, many students chose to focus upon education and applied practice, when other possible choices might have been to discuss processes in Choreography and Performance. Across the two units of Dance in Context and Theoretical Approaches, I wonder if there might be some more discussion on how the practices and theoretical ideas relate, both to enable the development of depth and breadth. The assessment design in Strategies of Research is excellent and offers students a thorough preparation for undergraduate research and for the dissertation.

At Level 3, I looked at Dissertations and Choreography 3. The choices of topics for the dissertation were impressive, with some very mature and sophisticated projects from the stronger performing students. Across the cohort, students generally evidenced a comprehensive, rigorous and organised approach to the development and completion of the dissertation project. Feedback from academic staff was very detailed and thorough. A good dialogue between first and second markers was evidenced on the marking forms and email exchanges. The marking form is very well designed, with marks indicated for different areas of the work. There was a small inconsistency in the use of the form by staff – a grade of 84 was awarded 3 x A+ and 1 x A, while a grade of 83 was awarded 4 x A+. The numerical marks awarded were appropriate. The work produced for Choreography 3 was of a very good standard and comparable to other institutions. The marking range was appropriate for this cohort, whose work was in the mid 2.2 to high 2.1 range. Feedback was clearly related to the grade and made use of very well written choreography specific assessment criteria. The evaluative discussions produced by students evidenced an appropriate engagement with the literature and practices from the field.

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.*

At Level 2, the students demonstrated a good grasp of contemporary dance practices and an improving ability to contextualise and discuss their work in more coherent ways across the programme. This particular level 2 cohort also demonstrate promise in choreography and creative work. At Level 3, the strongest work that I saw was produced in the dissertation projects. In the dissertations, students demonstrate an informed engagement with current research literatures and practices. The stronger students are able to interrogate contemporary academic debates with authority, detail and confidence, and, in some cases, offer sophisticated analysis and original insights. Overall, the programme offers students adequate opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

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.

At Level 2, the work produced in Choreography 2 demonstrated an improved approach to composition and performance from previous years. The Dance in Context module also seemed to be more focused with a very well designed assignment brief.

The new version of the dissertation unit seems to be encouraging the development of stronger work.

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.

Both the Strategies of Research and the Dissertation modules offer students a sustained and in depth undergraduate research experience. The students have the opportunity to develop as skilled researchers and strong performing students in this area of the curriculum are well prepared for post-graduate study and research.

The work in applied practice draws upon current research from the field and offers students opportunity to develop research informed professional practice for specific client groups and community settings.

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 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.*

Yes, the guidance and materials have been helpful.

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

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 broad assignment briefs prior to receiving the student work.

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. Comments were detailed and thorough. Feedback was clearly related to the assessment criteria. Conversations between markers were well documented, which gave me confidence in the ways in which the markers arrived at the marks.

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

The choice of subjects for dissertations was impressive. Assessment methods were transparent and rigorous. There were a number of very strong dissertations and I would encourage the use of the full range of marks at the top end of the scale.

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

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2011-12

PROGRAMME TITLE	BA (Hons) Dance
NAME OF EXAMINER	<>

Thank you for your report for the BA (Hons) Dance programme 2011-12.

We are grateful for your positive comments on our programme's learning outcomes. We are particularly pleased that you highlight particular strengths in the development of our students' research skills in applied and theoretical contexts.

Your feedback on the individual modules is very helpful. Your comments on Choreography 2 indicate that our increased focus on contemporary approaches is having a positive effect on the students' compositions. We are delighted you feel that the feedback was 'excellent' and the dialogue 'rigorous' between first and second markers. You point to good practice in the listing of areas for improvement within our written feedback. This is included in our School guidance on good practice for feedback across all modules.

You note the potential for further discussion about connections between Dance in Context and Theoretical Concepts in Dance. This year these two modules are being delivered by the same tutor so that these synergies and connections can be picked up more directly and profitably for the students.

We are grateful for your positive comments on the strengths of our Strategies for Research and Dissertation modules. We are delighted that you describe the learning journey as 'sustained and in depth', preparing students well for postgraduate study and research. You are satisfied with our numerical marks for Dissertation but you picked up on a small inconsistency in the use of our marking matrix, which we are addressing this year.

You note the strength of our work in applied performance, drawing on current research and enabling our students to develop research-informed professional practice. We are in the early stages of developing a new Masters degree in applied performance, offering opportunities for our students to take this work on to postgraduate study.

Signed: <>

Date: 28th February 2013