

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:	Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	<i>Dance</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA(Hons) Dance
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	

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

N/A

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?

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

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 programme aims and learning outcomes were rigorously integrated into the structure and content of the programme, with learning outcomes clearly mapped in assignment briefs and comprehensively referred to in the feedback given to students. The consistency of this integration across units was impressive.

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 learning outcomes of the programme are in line with benchmarking and similar programmes nationally. The programme team is to be commended on their ability to nurture students to produce practice of very high quality, given the low amount of skills training and technical preparation available in this area, compared to other institutions.

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 design and structure of assessment methods is appropriate and gives students excellent opportunities to demonstrate the learning outcomes. Design of assessment methods is varied and appropriate. I looked at a range of work that included presentations, practical performances, extended reports, journals and dissertations. In each case, marking criteria were made explicitly clear to students and excellent guidelines for preparation and submission were offered. Student performance was strong, particularly in year 3, and some excellent mentoring was in evidence in the choreography module, and in the dissertation module.

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 students demonstrated excellence in the theoretical areas of the programme. Work submitted for the dissertation unit was of excellent quality, with grades appropriately awarded. There were many strong dissertations submitted, some with exceptional and innovative thinking in evidence. Work produced for the choreography unit was of a very good standard and appropriate to the learning outcomes of the specific programme. The programme team seems to have refined their mentoring of students, with projects in theoretical concepts, choreography, strategies of research and the dissertation being more focused and appropriate to the specific award context at Leeds than in previous years. It was very pleasing to see students pushing their conceptual ideas and creating dance and performance works that were conceptually sophisticated. The students evidence a greater clarity of thinking and organisation in their work than in previous years. Additionally, the work produced by students was more contextually aware and conceptually sophisticated than in previous years. The programme seems to be developing a distinct and useful approach to the development of the academic dance student in the sector.

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.

Work produced for the dissertation unit was very strong and well tutored. Excellent leadership of the module was in evidence and the marking calibration exercise is an exemplar of good practice and an excellent strategy for developing parity across a large team of supervisors/markers.

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.

As stated in previous years, the Strategies of Research and Dissertation modules offer students an excellent research development framework at the undergraduate level. This year, work produced for choreography evidenced more independent thinking and a research approach from the students.

There is evidence of refinement in teaching and learning in terms of the clarity of work produced by students and the relevance of that work to the academic and professional contexts. A more distinct approach to the development of rigorous conceptual work seems to have emerged and this has enabled stronger performance from the students in some

areas of their work. Students seem to be thinking more as researcher-makers in their work, which is a very positive development for the programme, and the students.

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.

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?

Yes

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 – annotations were extremely detailed and rigorous in their referencing of assessment criteria.

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

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 – the board was conducted professionally and with due care given to each individual student.

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

Yes – cases were considered appropriately.

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 2012-13

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

Thank you for your report on our BA (Hons) Dance programme 2012-13. We are grateful for your positive comments about the quality of our programme and its delivery. We are particularly pleased that you highlight the rigour with which we integrate programme aims and learning outcomes into the content and structure of our teaching. We appreciate your comments on the very high quality of practice that our students have achieved this year, and we are delighted at your recognition of the high quality mentoring that we provide to our students in their written and practical learning.

We would like to thank you for your supportive feedback again this year on our Strategies for Research and Dissertation modules and your description of these modules as providing “an excellent research development framework at the undergraduate level”. Your comments about the “excellent” leadership of the Dissertation module are much appreciated, as is your recognition of the detailed strategy used to ensure parity of marking across the large team of assessors. You note that some of our students evidenced “exceptional and innovative thinking” in their Dissertations and you mention that the Choreography 3 assessed work evidenced “independent thinking” and “a research approach”. We are particularly pleased by your overall comment that “students seem to be thinking of themselves more as research-makers in their work”. This is precisely what we are aiming to do, so it is deeply encouraging to hear that it is evident to an external eye.

We appreciate your comments about the very high quality of practical work that our students produce, “given the low amount of skills training and technical preparation available in this area, compared to other institutions”. We experience particular challenges in aligning the initial expectations of our students with the academic depth and rigour that we demand as the only single honours Dance programme in a Russell Group university. It is good to know that you believe our programme to provide “a distinct and useful approach to the development of the academic dance student in the sector”. This corresponds with the positive feedback that we receive from employers of our graduates, who appreciate the flexible critical thinking and cultural awareness that our graduates exhibit alongside their other dance skills.

You note that the Dance students this year produced work that was more developed in terms of conceptual ideas and research, particularly in Level 3. You suggest that this is down to more refined mentoring than in previous years. We work hard on enhancing and refining our teaching, mentoring and course content each year and we continue to develop our existing high quality provision for the 2013/14 Level 3 students, who form the final cohort to study on this programme.

Signed: <>

Date: 11th October 2013