

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 Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	BA Managing Performance
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Designated modules: PECI2104 Independent Industry Study; PECI2301 Managing in Arts Organisations; PECI2302 Arts Marketing; PECI2303 Cultural Entrepreneurship; PECI3107 Enterprise Project; PECI3109 Contemporary Issues in the Cultural Industries; PECI3301 Strategic Arts Management; PECI9904 Year in Industry.
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.*

The programme Aims and ILOs seem to me to be entirely appropriate – challenging, aiming at standards of excellence/professional competence defined by cultural industry insiders not by academics, and feasibly achievable given the quality of teaching evidenced.

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.*

See above. This is a specialized programme, practically unique to Leeds. National subject benchmarks are not relevant. Staff seem to me to have an expert understanding of real-world performance management expectations, and the programme succeeds in explaining these to students.

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.*

Assessment methods are well designed and structured: varied, with real-world roots in some cases (business planning exercises and reflective accounts contextualizing actual work experience, e.g.); rigorous both in the demands they make of students and the demands they make of markers.

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.*

Yes. Students were given ample opportunity to demonstrate their achievements. Assignment briefings struck me as exceptionally thorough. Feedback to students who, through lack of application, had achieved relatively little delivered necessary messages politely yet firmly. I found the tone of feedback generally to be very well judged. Comparing Leeds students with those on my own university's music management courses, I sense that the Leeds Managing Performance cohort has (on average) a clearer vocational focus, and greater willingness to exercise individual initiative.

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.

Where module syllabuses had been revised, changes seemed to me to be always in the direction of improvement -- making Aims clearer and smoothing the way toward achievement of ILOs. Teaching staff work hard to keep the programme fresh and relevant.

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.

Research personally undertaken by members of the School seems to be exerting greater influence on learning and teaching (more than I noticed last year, looking at reading lists for instance). This is an interesting trend. As before, close connection with wider research literature is apparent. Learning and teaching happens in a lively yet practically-grounded intellectual atmosphere.

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.*

Fully sufficient, 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.*

I was fully, efficiently and very courteously briefed. Thanks.

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 not provided with draft exam. papers/assessments. I am nevertheless confident (having looked at questions actually set two years running, along with students' answers to them) that the nature and level of questions was and remains appropriate without exception.

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; yes.

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

N/A. I did not examine dissertations.

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?

Administrative arrangements were exemplary. Regrettably I was unable to attend the Board of Examiners this year. I submitted a fairly detailed written report on my findings as external examiner ahead of the Board meeting: I have no doubt that my views were taken fully into account and have no reason whatever to question the Board's recommendations. Board-approved marksheets were emailed through me after the meeting for checking and signing off.

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

I cannot comment on this. Mitigating circumstances would have been discussed by the Board of Examiners. See 14.

Other comments

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

FOR THE RECORD, THE WHOLE OF MY PRELIMINARY WRITTEN REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS IS PASTED IN HERE. AFTER THE BOARD MEETING I WAS ASKED FOR SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THREE MODULES NOT ADDRESSED INDIVIDUALLY IN THE PRELIMINARY REPORT. THESE COMMENTS COME RIGHT AT THE END.

PRELIMINARY REPORT prepared in advance of PCI Integrated Exam. Board meetings, Wednesday 12 June 2013

Sorry I'm unable to be with you in person this year. The PCI Board clashes head on with mine at <>; and while my wife's away I have childcare responsibilities not compatible with overnights in Leeds. Thank you for your understanding, and for sending all necessary material through to me in advance. I have had a good look at it and am pleased to report as follows. (I met most of you last summer of course, and spent a useful day sitting in on classes back in March 2012. I now have a good feel for the way

BA Managing Performance works.)

Your marking procedures seem to me to be impressively rigorous both in their design and in the conscientiousness with which first and second markers adhere to them. All the work copied to me for review had been marked fairly and appropriately, in my opinion. Work in your 1st class and high 2:1 zones would have been comparably positioned by markers in my own institution. Weaker work earns lower marks in Leeds than it would be likely to receive in <> (in my department anyhow). You use a wider marking range that's to say – and I believe you're absolutely right to do this. Last year you gave a few very high marks (up to 90) for outstanding Managing Performance work. I thought those marks were merited then, and I think you're right not to award any quite so high in 2012/13.

Module handbooks are clearly and accessibly worded. Assignment requirements are unambiguously set out. Assessment Feedback text reinforces grades awarded against the stated criteria. Everyone giving feedback identifies areas for improvement (at every level: even when high-performing students are addressed). Marks close to class borderlines are justified. Feedback to weak or unambitious students is polite but very firm. I found the quality of feedback given to be uniformly high.

Discussion between first and second markers aimed at resolving differences of opinion is efficiently documented. Sensible mark compromises are the usual outcome.

Comparing Assessment Feedback addressed to two dyslexic students, I noted that dyslexia-related errors in work otherwise of a high standard were uninhibitedly discussed while in work of much lower apparent quality they were not referred to. Assessment Feedback addressed to one student who is obviously not a native English speaker, and whose work was very poorly written, avoided what seemed to me to be the real problem. Are university-provided writing support services dependably available to dyslexic students and to international students in need of them, I wonder? Or are PCI academic staff left to improvise?

My overall impression, as last year, is strongly positive. BA Managing Performance is a high quality degree programme, well designed and skilfully delivered. I'm happy to sign off all the provisional marks forwarded to me for external review.

Just few comments on specific modules:—

2104 Independent Industry Study

A very useful module, co-delivered by academics and university careers service colleagues – an exemplary collaboration. References to academic literature, which the stronger students have managed to incorporate, have a slightly artificial/ornamental feel arguably, there because they *should* be. We have a similar problem at <> with reflective account work. Two-part reports could be suggested perhaps: part one a context description and analysis (thoroughly referenced), part two offering personal reflections on experience gained in that context, referenced only where appropriate?

2303 Cultural Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial ventures are described in great detail in the stronger portfolios – too much detail, considering their imaginary nature? For first class marks firm connection with academic literature does have to be established, but an element of make-believe persists even at the top end of the mark range. A possible solution (were this thought to be a problem) could be to switch focus onto real-life case studies instead, making genuine business information available and asking students to analyse it.

3109 Contemporary Issues in the Cultural Industries

Brave student engagement with contemporary issues, generally. There must be some excellent teaching happening to get those issues discussed. The long essay assignment brief along with "Tips and Hints" seem to me to prepare students as effectively as possible for definitional and political-ideological debate. Still some student inexperience inevitably shows. "The current 2012 coalition government in the UK reflects the increased understanding of distributed power sharing within society", wrote one. Really? Considering the difficulty of the concepts dealt with, and the breath of reading required, a case for marking slightly more generous than would be appropriate in most other contexts possibly could be made. This is a notably demanding module (demanding both of staff and students). Its successful delivery is a great departmental achievement.

3301 Strategic Arts Management

A particularly appealing handbook.

9004 Year in Industry

Most of the value of the Year in Industry lies in the CV-enriching experience gained while away from university, undoubtedly. Again students report on an impressive range of quality placements, alongside some not so successful. Feedback on presentations and on written material seems balanced and humane. Some students found themselves in challenging situations: good to see the resourcefulness with which they dealt with difficulties at work acknowledged. University support services are available to students while away on placements I take it?

<>

10 June 2013

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, AS REQUESTED – 27 September 2013

PECI2301 Managing in Arts Organisations

A skilfully designed syllabus in its current form, it seems to me, giving due weight to most essential topics and avoiding overlap

with other modules, Management pathologies could be addressed more explicitly perhaps. Rent-seeking theory is a favourite of mine (it has great explanatory power). Also worth exploring is the tendency of some up-and-coming artistic directors to use institutional resources more to advance personal career interests than those of their (temporarily colonised) hosts. Kenneth Boulding's *A Preface to Grants Economics* (1981) could be a useful addition to the reading list; or my own essay "The Grampian Hills: an empirical test for rent-seeking behaviour in the arts". While I agree it would be a mistake to send graduates out into the arts world full of cynicism, I still think it is important to alert them to prevalent anti-social management practices as well as the virtuous variety, to set an ethical compass as it were.

PECI3107 Enterprise Project

This module gives students an opportunity to gain practical business expertise, enhance their CVs and earn academic credits, all at the same time. Strong support structures are in place: students get all the advice they need, and have to complete formal risk assessments for each project (good). Some students are naturally much more enterprising than others. Levels of student investment in these projects were very variable. Marks and feedback seemed to me to discriminate accurately between students who had put a lot of time into projects genuinely intended to meet consumer needs, and others whose essays presented little evidence of project involvement (as opposed to desk research). Not a module worth taking half-heartedly – though I can think of no better ways to get this message across than the ones actually adopted.

PECI3301 Strategic Arts Management

A valuable module challenging students to read widely and think hard. Concepts introduced from management literature are worth getting to understand, and I've no doubt that fluency in management language will impress when graduates enter the professional workplace. It's probably covered in lectures: but if not I would suggest giving some attention to government as a strategy-setter for subsidized and/or regulated organisations, government issuing orders directly or via its quangos. The nature of the competition actually faced by subsidized organisations might be worth exploring – not a lot in the case of the National Theatre or the Eden Project, arguably. Mainstream management literature says less about cartel behaviour than future arts managers could do with knowing. A lecture focusing on arts industry deviations from "normal" management practice might be worth including, along with notice of a likely essay question encouraging students to research these deviations individually. [See my similar comments on PECI2301, above.]

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2012-13

PROGRAMME TITLE	BA (HONS) Managing Performance
NAME OF EXAMINER	<>

The programme team thanks <> for <> measured, thoughtful and supportive report. <> acknowledgment of the status of the programme, *'a specialized programme, practically unique to Leeds'* is welcome along with <> support for the clarity of the structure, *'aims and ILOs seem to me to be entirely appropriate'* and the manner in which the content is updated and kept relevant for students, *'teaching staff work hard to keep the programme fresh and relevant'*.

We warmly welcome <> confirmation of the quality of teaching, *'Staff seem to me to have an expert understanding of real-world performance management expectations, and the programme succeeds in explaining these to students'* and <> recognition of the work undertaken by the school and the course team to further improve assessment clarity and the quality of feedback to students.

<> comments about student achievement in relation to national standards and similar programmes at <> own University are much appreciated. In particular we are grateful for <> comments about our students having *'a clearer vocational focus, and greater willingness to exercise individual initiative'*. These comments highlight the achievement of two key strategic aims of our programme. They are reinforced by his confirmation of the value of the Independent Industry Study module and the Year in Industry.

It is pleasing to note <> comments on the clarity of module documentation, the administrative arrangements and the operations and communications with the Board of Examiners. As always, <> specific comments and modular feedback is most helpful in providing appropriate prompts and reminders for us to build on our current high levels of satisfaction and further enhance the quality of student experience.

1. Marking procedures and feedback: These are seen as, '*rigorous both in their design and in the conscientiousness with which first and second markers adhere to them,*' with feedback that, '*reinforces grades awarded against the stated criteria.*' This is most welcome given the efforts made by the School to respond to the NSS in previous years, and is also born out by the very high levels of satisfaction at all levels in the programme's student surveys. The comment regarding feedback to dyslexic students reflects the University's policy in this area which facilitates differing responses according to individual assessments.
2. Module Assessments: <> comments '*Assessment methods are well designed and structured: varied, with real-world roots.*' Further to the response made last year to 'take away' examinations', we intend this year to reconsider the relative strengths and weaknesses of a 'case study analysis' as opposed to the currently validated 'hypothetical business proposal' within the Cultural Entrepreneurship module.
3. Curriculum development: The discussion last year concerning the throughline of our Cultural Policy framework was most useful in helping us to reconsider how and when this framework was introduced within various modules. This has also fed into new course developments. Thus, the comments concerning management pathologies, management terminologies and the manner in which we teach the reinforcement of, and deviation from, traditional management approaches within our specific niche of the discipline are appropriate to be reconsidered at this juncture.

<> is obviously aware that the current intake on the programme will be its last. Nevertheless, the dynamic manner of his engagement with <> role as External Examiner will help us to continue to challenge students whilst maintaining and developing the quality of student experience, safe in the knowledge that <>, '*overall impression, as last year, is strongly positive. BA Managing Performance is a high quality degree programme, well designed and skilfully delivered.*'

Signed: <>

Date: 25th November 2013