

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

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

School of:	Performance and Cultural Industries	Subject(s):	Managing Performance
Programme(s) / Module(s):		awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)	BA
PECI 2301 Managing in Arts Organisations PECI 2302 Arts Marketing PECI 2303 Cultural Entrepreneurship PECI 2304 The Performing Arts in Context 2 PECI 3102 Independent Industry Study PECI 3107 Enterprise Project PECI 3109 Contemporary Issues in the Cultural Industries PECI 3301 Strategic Arts Management PECI 9104 Industry Year			

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.

The main issue that was discussed with the programme team was the extent to which the overall learning objectives for the degree are supported by the focus and content of level one modules. These modules are not seen by the External Examiner but in discussion with the team there is evidence that some of the learning objectives at years two and three could be supported more strongly by revisiting the requirement for some of the school wide modules which do not support the aims of this degree so well especially in the context of the recent changes the school has approved to the curriculum for years two and three. Specific topics/subject areas that were noted as being limited at year one are finance, planning, marketing and HRM. It may be necessary to prioritise from amongst these but modest changes at year one will enhance the student experience at levels/years two and three.

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?

Comment: if it is not automatic then I would like to suggest that my successor is provided with:

1. A brief overview of the degree which provides a year by year statement of each year's key Intended Learning Objectives, the curriculum structure / content, the assessment profile (to reveal the diversity of

assessment techniques used each year).

2. An overview of proposed developments to the degree programme for 2011-2013

The benefits of this would be that the new External would more quickly develop an overview of the whole programme and thus be able to support the team, the programme and the student experience more effectively.

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.

The BA in Managing Performance has undergone a number of important developments during my period of office through which the team have increased the rigour and integration of the curriculum, its aims and content, at levels two and three (hence the comment about level one above).

One key development has been in the area of cultural entrepreneurship in which the module at level two and the Enterprise Project at level three now provide a strong focus on individual philosophy and skills/knowledge which are apposite in the light of the current changes in cultural policy and practice in the British context.

Another important change is the substitution of the professional development modules (seen in years 2007-2010) by the level three module Peci 3109 Contemporary Issues in the Cultural Industries. The latter provides an opportunity for a deeper reflection on cultural practice which contributed to a stronger exit velocity for graduating students. The best work is, I believe, of publishable quality and the team has indicated that they will explore how the university can develop an on-line journal for this work. This could also provide a great PR opportunity for the university in terms of demonstrating to potential applicants what can be achieved.

Two further changes also merit comment. This is the decision for 2011-12 to move the Independent Industry Study from level 3 to level 2. Providing opportunity for students to undertake a work placement in year two complements the management modules in year two and also prepares those few students who may be eligible for it to enrol on the Industry Year module. Both of these are distinctive features of the degree which will add considerable value to student experience. It was clear that the two students who had taken a year out for the Industry Year had returned with a more mature perspective on their practical and academic work and this was reflected in their strong performance in their final year.

The other, existing modules i.e. those seen in all four years of my period of office continue to demand considerable application by students and to produce good work by the better students.

I should like to note here the particular contributions to these developments of <<<<>>, <<<>>, <<<>> and <<<>>, <<<>> retired in 2010 but his positive influence was still felt this year.

Teaching and Learning: the positive comments noted above are a product of a keen commitment to ensuring that the degree is based upon sound teaching and learning practice. This is evidenced through the module handbooks some of which are models in terms of clarity, direction and brevity – the programme structures are clear and the handbooks include good guidance on seminar work too. The diversity of assessment methods is also a strong feature of the programme though, in the absence of much groupwork, the cohort sizes still create a large volume of marking at the end of semesters one and two. This is an issue that needs to be kept under review in order that staff do not become overwhelmed.

Marking and feedback: the team have developed a tighter and more consistent approach to both marking and feedback. In some cases the quality of the feedback is most impressive and students would have derived guidance through the feedback received on how to improve. In some cases feedback was more descriptive which was less beneficial for students' learning but such instances were more evident in years 2007-9 and less so 2009-11. Clearer evidence of double marking is the only issue that the team have to resolve. There is evidence of second marking but it is not always clear how this is shared with the students, though it is understood that some of this is the product of time pressures.

Linked to this point is the ability of staff are able to remain research active. It can be difficult for staff to remain on top of their areas of expertise when teaching on BA and post graduate courses are a major feature of their staff loading. I noted through my discussion with the team members that there is evidence that this is beginning to limit their ability to undertake new research and to publish. This is a source of frustration for staff but also a loss to students who will miss the additional energy and academic edge that comes from staff teaching from a research driven perspective.

Student experience: on the basis of the academic work seen this would appear to be a positive and strong feature of the programme. Anecdotally student feedback on modules would appear to be good but perhaps the team could do two things for their next External examiner:

1. Agree a date for when the External Examiner could come to Leeds in order to have a meeting with some

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of the students, possibly around the time of student presentations or other significant event in the student calendar

2. Make available a summary of student issues (positive and negative) obtained from student feedback – and proposed staff response

Employability: not all degree courses aspire to be vocational, the BA in Managing Performance achieves a distinctive balance that results in it having a strong academic base but also preparing students for employment too.

School wide modules: these are a distinctive feature of the degree but as noted above there is a need to review the suitability of the school wide modules to match the ILOs for the BA in Managing Performance, especially at level one. The team have given much thought to the shape of the Managing Performance curriculum and made significant changes some of which have been to the shared modules. There is evidence that this commitment to keeping the whole curriculum fresh should be applied to level one too.

Examination Board process: the processes have become stream lined over the four years and in 2011 these were well run, thorough and efficient.

Future developments: my recommendation to the team was to have a year for consolidation but such is their enthusiasm that they are looking as noted at the level one offer. Nonetheless, allowing some time for the changes at levels two and three to become firmly embedded, could be a good strategy.

Team development: the comment about consolidation is as much to do with the team's own development as it is to do with the curriculum. I have noticed several changes in those who make input to the degree and the new regime of <<>>, <<>> and <<>> need time to grow as a team.

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 degree provides a good intellectual challenge for a BA in Managing Performance and one which is certainly in line with similar courses run by my own institution and others with which I am familiar. Indeed it has certain features that are a model for others to consider.

The degree offers good variety and depth in terms of the inputs by staff and the outputs in the form of the assessments (grounded both in academic theory and practice), especially now that the issue of exit velocity from level three has been addressed.

It is in this spirit that I discussed with the programme team how the ILOs at level one support the ILOs at levels two and three, especially with respect to finance, planning and other basic management topics. The team has already identified the need to review these.

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.*

To my knowledge there is no single benchmark to which programmes such as the BA in Managing Performance can be referred. However the knowledge that I do have of equivalent statements from an array of cognate areas is that this degree is appropriately focussed and the challenges presented through completing the degree would enable students to demonstrate ability in a range of skills and knowledge areas appropriate for finding employment.

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 programme includes assessment in a variety of ways suitable to such a programme – essays, reports (reflective and industry based), presentations and examinations. The two levels for which work is provided indicate a number of points of good practice which will be summarised below. Such features are as good as I know from other universities, including my own.

For a programme that encourages students to engage with practice it is encouraging to note that the best students engage confidently and frequently with academic literature and are not overly focussed upon industry reports and other grey literature.

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 work seen for moderation revealed a good use of the full marking range by the programme team. The standards revealed are consistent with work in other institutions. The best work was amongst the best that I have read and some was of post graduate standard. This comment reflects the confidence that some students demonstrated for engaging with a rich array of sources.

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

As noted previously the BA in Managing Performance combines a strong academic base with some important opportunities for developing and engaging with practical study. There are three specific examples of this the Independent Industry study (PECI 3102 but level two from 2011-12), the Industry Year (taken as year three) and the Enterprise Project (level three). These are each strong features of the overall programme and it is good to learn that whilst the two taught modules are school wide modules that MP students enrol on them in large numbers. These modules are similar to equivalent modules run in other institutions.

6. 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 main issues are the effective integration of Cultural Entrepreneurship (level two) and Enterprise Project (level three) and the way in which these are supported by other, existing modules. Comment has already been made about the industry study and year.

7. 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.

It is clear to me that the intellectual base to the degree is strong. The core team are all PhDs and this is clearly reflected in the rigour with which the modules have been developed and, especially in the past 2-3 years, the curriculum changes noted in my opening comments have been pursued and implemented.

Academic research: <<>> and <<>> as recent recruits to the team also need to have adequate space to pursue their research interests. There was some evidence that this may be proving difficult.

Reflective practitioners: <<>> brings a great body of practical experience to his teaching and as such is a role model for staff and students.

Student research: there is clear evidence that the curriculum provides/encourages/demands that students develop their primary and secondary research skills. The best students, for example the two who took the Industry Year, revealed a mature understanding of both pure and applied research.

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?

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

I have always found that the university's protocols are adhered to effectively and that the team have been willing to discuss their approach to Teaching, Learning and Assessment. In the main their approach has been characterised by:

1. Transparency
2. Openness
3. Honest reflection

On the basis of the work seen and their discussions with me the programme team prioritises the student experience. Confirmation of this would be achieved through some direct contact by the next External Examiner with some of the students.

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?

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Module handbooks, assignment descriptors, assessment criteria were provided in advance or on request. All provided clear guidance for students. This material compares favourably with that in use in my own university.

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

Yes. The only question concerns student dissertations which as a common module are seen by one External Examiner and not by the Examiner responsible for the subject area. As the final and in some cases most distinctive piece of work that students complete it would be a good idea to offer the new External Examiner the opportunity to speed read a small selection in order to obtain a fuller overview of the degree and students' performance.

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

Yes. All was managed well even when the link to the database was lost. All student profiles were considered.

12. ^{PCI005} Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

Yes. The exam board was run effectively and efficiently and this included appropriate time for consideration of those students whose performance may have been affected by special circumstances.

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.

Not applicable

Other Comments

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

Year one foundations

Is sues of particular merit that warrant note as Good Practice:

Quality of modules

Quality of teaching

Quality of student work – publishable cf public dimension enjoyed by perf mod

Pr value for course promotion

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2010-11

PROGRAMME TITLE	BA (HONS) MANAGING PERFORMANCE
NAME OF EXAMINER	

I would like to thank <<<>> for <<>> very useful, supportive and positive report. <<>> input during his tenure as External Examiner has been most helpful in taking the programme forward and in helping to clarify the importance of its focus and position within the University sector. <<>> summary of the significant developments made in Levels 2 and 3 over the past few years is welcome and highly appropriate; affording us proper reflection on what remains a strong and focused degree within a constantly changing external and internal environment. We are pleased <<>> sees this is evidenced through the *“increased rigour and integration of the curriculum.”*

<<<>> identifies the importance of the developments undertaken, in particular *“in the area of cultural entrepreneurship ... which are apposite in the light of the current changes in cultural policy and practice in the British context.”* It is gratifying that the consistent standards across all modules are recognized, and that all modules continue *“to demand considerable application by students”* who *“produce good work.”*

<<>> acknowledges the excellence in teaching and research-based teaching but also identifies the important position the programme holds in terms of employability. *“Not all degree courses aspire to be vocational, the BA in Managing Performance achieves a distinctive balance that results in it having a strong academic base but also preparing students for employment too.”*

Examining the report in more detail we are grateful for the specific comments made under the following headings:

1. Teaching and Learning. <<>> comments on the quality of teaching and learning, the excellence of the handbooks, the diversity of assessment methods are most welcome. We agree that the changes at Level 2 in relation to Industry Study module and the Year in Industry opportunity complement management studies and provide *“distinctive features of the degree which will add considerable value to student experience”*
- 2.

Marking and feedback. We welcome the recognition that the team now has *“developed a tighter and more consistent approach to both marking and feedback”* which is providing students with proper guidance and in some instances is *‘most impressive.’* The team will continue to work to develop further evidence of the double marking process where appropriate. We have reviewed the overall assessment timetable and its associated impact on staff. The School’s strategic plan is already starting to address concerns relating to the SSR and the size of the staff team and the consequent large

volume of marking.

3. Research and Teaching: The importance of providing sufficient opportunity for staff to continue to develop research alongside their teaching commitments is also seen as important. It is recognized that this academic year was pressurized, given the loss of a full time member of staff from the programme team, but new positions are currently in train for the next academic year which will alleviate this situation.
4. Examination Board: *“the processes have become stream lined [...] and in 2011 were well run, thorough and efficient.”*

With regards to comments and recommendations for the future we would like to offer the following observations:

1. *The team needs a period of consolidation.* There has been a good deal of change in recent years, new modules have been introduced and existing modules modified. The stability of staffing is key to maintaining the quality of programme delivery and it is hoped that changes over the next few years will be minimal given the flexibility afforded by new appointments and the necessity to consolidate the new Level 2 and Level 3 changes in the curriculum.
2. *Review of Level One modules.* This comment pertains to the interface with some of the Level One common modules and follows a lengthy discussion with the programme team concerning the degree to which such a limited number of specialist first year modules can properly prepare students for the challenges of Level 2. This is an area that the Programme team needs to address given the coincidence with satisfaction issues in some module feedback from common modules and satisfaction surveys. We recognize the need for an underpinning knowledge-base focusing on the discipline of performance for all students within the School and we will continue to ensure that perspectives appropriate to Managing Performance students are incorporated in each of these L1 modules. A significant development has already been undertaken in PECI1102 for example providing an excellent example of applying the suggestion of “keeping the whole curriculum fresh” in level one study. This module has been revalidated, is now delivered in Semester 1 of the first year of study and in contrast to previous years focuses much more explicitly on the management aspect of creating collaborative work in response to a brief, rather than a focus on devising processes. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the new academic post in Creativity and Collaboration for 2012 session will be instrumental in addressing some of these perceived concerns. The programme team will continue to monitor this issue closely and to contribute to on-going School-wide developments and discussions relating to the overall undergraduate student experience.
3. *Induction of new External Examiner.* There are University of Leeds guidelines and procedures for the induction of new examiners and the School will ensure that these helpful suggestions are followed once the new appointment is confirmed.
4. *Meetings between External Examiners and students.* Although this is not a requirement of the role of the External Examiner we will endeavour to arrange meetings with L3 students if requested and within the constraints of the agreed timetable and the availability of students.

5. *Make available a summary of student issues (positive and negative) obtained from student feedback – and proposed staff response.* Module reviews are available for External Examiners and it is the intention this year that module reviews from 2010-11 will be published on-line this academic year. We would welcome the visit of an External Examiner to observe assessments/presentations during the academic year and this might be the best opportunity to meet with students..

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank <<<>> for his very positive report, helpful comments and insightful developmental ideas over the past four years. As <<>> leaves his current academic post we wish <<>> well in all <<>> future endeavors.

<<<>>

23 October 2011