

## 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:	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](mailto: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?*

Yes.

##### **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. Marks awarded in Leeds, though without question fair, are typically a shade lower than those likely to be awarded to comparable work in <> (3-4 points lower perhaps).

### 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

*It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.*

This was my first year as External Examiner. No recent programme enhancements were brought to my attention.

### 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.*

I found relatively little evidence that research personally undertaken by members of the School had influenced learning and teaching, but close connection with wider research literature was fully apparent. Cultural policy teachers have a fine line to tread: much of the academic research available is fiercely critical of current (government-directed) policy approaches. Students hoping for careers in the cultural industries rather than academia need to be made aware of academic debate, but should also be shielded from excessive cynicism. Leeds strikes a sensible balance, in my opinion.

## 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 in retrospect, along with students' answers to them) that the nature and level of questions was appropriate without exception. Student weaknesses were exposed. Students with exceptional ability/commitment to the course had opportunities to shine. An eloquently wide spread of marks resulted.

**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. But see Other comments, below, for my thoughts on possibly excessive annotation of scripts.

**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. I did attend the Board of Examiners. I was fully satisfied with its recommendations.

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

Yes. Arrangements seemed fair, effective and suitably discreet.

## Other comments

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

1. Some clutches of work were very extensively hand-annotated, with annotations duplicated in typed/online feedback. Marking as thorough as this must be enormously time-consuming. In the interests of efficiency, some simplification/streamlining could possibly be considered – a writing club for instance, where students could discuss general academic writing issues (including referencing) with members of staff running it on a rota basis. Specific assignment feedback could then focus on content, not presentation and lapses therein. A move away from routine double marking of assignments toward single marking with moderation could be considered too.
2. Students are lavishly briefed before take-away exams happen, giving them the opportunity to prepare template answers in advance. I wondered what purpose these take-away exams serve. Could/should assignments of the normal more leisurely type replace them?
3. Under the “student weakness” heading: limited life and work experience (inevitable given their age) hampers student understanding of, e.g., Arts Council policy documents and government policy statements. They respond naively, taking official words at face value, where people with more experience would read between lines or disregard the statements

altogether. I wondered whether the programme could do more to counter this slightly credulous tendency (though without breeding cynicism – see 7 above). A first-year module requiring students to map the Leeds city cultural scene c.1912 for instance: this would show them what “culture” looked like before the Arts Council existed to “develop” it, promoting useful debate around the political, socio-economic and technical causes of cultural change.

4. Modules allowing students to gain up-to-date insight into the world of work (run in conjunction with Opera North, e.g.) seem to me to be exceptionally valuable. I shall attempt their partial replication at <>. Students in other University of Leeds schools might benefit from them too, if there is room to expand.

**SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES**

**RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT**

**ACADEMIC SESSION 2011-12**

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

We would like to thank <> for <> useful, supportive and positive report. Given the specialized nature of the programme, it is most welcome that <> acknowledges that the *“staff seem to me to have an expert understanding of real-world performance management expectations, and the programme succeeds in explaining these to students.”*

We are pleased to note <> recognition of the quality of teaching, the rigor of assessment methodologies, the ability of the students and the integration of real world experiences into a programme, *“aiming at standards of excellence/ professional competence defined by cultural industry insiders not by academics, and feasibly achievable given the quality of teaching evidenced.”*

It is clear that the range of assessments examined was considered to be a good and representative sample, and we welcome <> remarks about the thoroughness of the assignment briefings and the tone and quality of the feedback provided. Given the exceptional set of results achieved by the current third year cohort, it is useful to note that he considers marks awarded to be fair.

We acknowledge the point that clearer evidence could have been provided for how staff research feeds into the curriculum whilst also welcoming <> recognition that, *“close connection with wider research literature was fully apparent.”* This was in part due to the modules that have been allocated to <> (ie. no dissertations, nor coverage of modules where staff research interests fall into other areas of the School’s curriculum) and part due to the failure to explain some specific research connections within the modules examined. We will ensure that this is made more apparent this year, especially following the appointment of <> to the staff.

We are grateful for the specific comments made under the following headings:

1. Feedback: <> notes that the scale of feedback provided is ‘enormously time-consuming’ and we welcome <> suggestions for ‘simplification and streamlining’. The School does have an accepted policy in this area and whilst all feedback adhered to this policy there were some instances where the feedback provided was more extensive. This has recently been addressed in a Staff Development Day and thus a greater consistency should be evident next year, especially with regards to annotation of scripts.

2. Take-Away Examinations: The rigor and status of take-away exams will be revisited. This particular mode of assessment has worked well over a number of years. However, we would be happy to reconsider the nature and form of these assessments that apply in the Level 2 Arts Marketing and the Level 3 Strategic Arts Management modules under the curriculum review process that is currently underway within the School.
3. Cultural Policy Framework: The Programme Leader and <> have talked at some length about the issues of developing a better framework for the subsequent examination of cultural policy in Levels 2 and 3. We welcome <> thoughts concerning the introduction of a more appropriate cultural framework earlier in the course. These ideas will be fed into the curriculum review process as appropriate.
4. Industry Links: We are grateful that the value of the linkages with Opera North and other industry partners are recognized. The range of our current operations, and the manner in which other programmes and schools are already engaged with such links, could perhaps have been explained more fully.

In conclusion, we would like to once again thank <> for <> positive report and helpful comments. We look forward to developing the relationship further with <> over the next few years.

**Signed:** <>

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012