

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): | |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | | awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) | |
| Performance Design | | BA | |
| Image-based Performance (PECI 2401) | | | |
| Individual Project (PECI 2402) | | | |
| Design Presentation (PECI 2403) | | | |
| Theatre, Technology and Performance (PECI 2405) | | | |
| Collaborative Performance Project (PECI 2102) | | | |
| Scenographic Scheme (PECI 3401) | | | |
| Performance Project (PECI 3106) | | | |

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.

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?

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

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.*

In my judgement, and in my first year as External Examiner for the BA Performance Design, the aims and ILOs are entirely appropriate for the programme and modules which I moderated. The structure and content of the programme is coherent, offering clear pathways for students' progression, and encouraging and supporting increasing complexity and independence in their thinking and practice. The standard of work which I sampled was entirely commensurate with the level of award.

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 aims and ILOs matched national subject benchmarks and were of a significantly higher standard than those which I have experienced on some similar programmes. This was particularly apparent where they evidenced a very successful interweaving of practical and conceptual approaches towards the study of Performance/Performance Design.

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.*

One of the strengths of the Performance Design programme is the diversity of assessment modes employed. This seems to me entirely appropriate to the subject area, equipping students with skills which have both a specific vocational application and a wider, more transferrable reach. (For instance, the intelligent use of digital technologies to document and develop design work.) Programme and Module Handbooks, together with information on the VLE, provide clear descriptions of what is entailed in these varied modes of assessment, supporting students in adapting to the range of different criteria and demands.

Assessment is clearly carried out rigorously, with widespread evidence of double-marking, moderation and team marking. Again, this is entirely appropriate given the challenges of marking practice and group work, and of achieving consistency in modules delivered by a range of tutors/lecturers. I have no doubt that the staff team devote considerable thought, time and energy to ensuring this consistency and continue to monitor and develop assessment strategies to maintain and improve standards.

In the work I sampled, written feedback was generally full, specific and constructive, giving students clear direction on their performance and advice on how to improve and develop in the future. Continued attention should be paid to ensuring that written feedback matches grades awarded and grade descriptors.

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.*

In the range of work I sampled, students appeared to be performing at a standard which I would consider comparable to that seen in similar institutions, with a significant proportion of work at a high level. The strongest work, in the sample I moderated this year, appeared in the modules Image-based Performance (PECI 2401), Theatre Technology and Performance (PECI 2405) and Scenographic Scheme (PECI 3401). These modules demonstrated an impressive integration of theory and practice, image and text and made intelligent and appropriate use of new technologies (for example, digital imaging and projection). In these modules I saw real evidence of experimentation and learning through practice and of the acquisition of both technical/craft and conceptual skills applicable within the theatre/performance sector and in a range of wider contexts.

Some of the written work I read was less strong. (For example, in the Collaborative Performance Project [PECI 2102]). In some instances, students appeared to be being rewarded for including quotes from secondary reading in their essays/reports, even if this secondary material was not especially well-integrated or whether it served a function in supporting or advancing an argument. Some attention might be paid to providing training for students in critical writing at university level at an early stage in the degree programme. The differing functions of the written elements in different modules might also be clarified. For instance, as discussed with the Module Leader of the Collaborative Performance Project (PECI 2102), it may be more appropriate if the written element in this otherwise excellent module took the form of a report, reflecting on the project in the context of the collaborating institution, rather than a more traditional academic essay. As the previous External Examiner noted, considering combining the 'logbook' and 'essay' elements for the Performance Project (PECI 3106) might help to clarify the role of the written element of this module - at present, despite clear descriptions of the requirements of each of the two elements, there is considerable repetition. This might also help to reduce staff workload.

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. 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.

N/a.

This is my first year as External Examiner.

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.

There was clear evidence that research interests led elements of the programme. The programme reflects contemporary scenographic practice and research in, for example, its emphasis on scenography as a collaborative practice, its exploration of the phenomenological aspects of scenography and its intelligent and critical approach towards new technologies (in both the design process and live theatre/performance). There was also evidence of students undertaking practice-led research - or reflective, critical practice. For example, in the modules cited above: Image-based Performance (PECI 2401), Theatre Technology and Performance (PECI 2405) and Scenographic Scheme (PECI 3401). In this respect, I would agree with the previous External Examiner who noted that the Performance Design programme is one of the best of its kind within the UK.

^{EC1003} **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 was given a full range of material from the modules for which I have responsibility. This was made available on-line (through the VLE), sent to me or made available when I visited the School. This included supporting documentation (Programme and Module Handbooks) and a wide range of samples of work. I was also able to attend one live performance. In was invited to request any additional information I required.

As discussed with the Programme Leader, I have some minor suggestions for improving access to material. These would comprise: ensuring that documentation of all live work is available (except in situations where this is not possible - for example in the Collaborative Module with the Prison Service) and that more attention is paid to the way in which design work - particularly 3-dimensional work - is documented. Not only would this enable the External Examiner to gain a fuller impression of this work, but it would also allow students to develop - highly transferable - skills in documentation.

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.*

Yes - see above. The Examiner's pack, External Examiners' Handbook and other supplementary material provided further useful information regarding my role.

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

Yes.

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

Yes. The Board was conducted with efficiency, transparency and integrity.

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

Yes. In all cases due consideration was given and, in my estimation, a decision which fairly advantaged the student was reached.

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.

N/a.

Other Comments

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

N/a.

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2010-11

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| PROGRAMME TITLE | Performance Design BA |
| NAME OF EXAMINER | |

We thank the external examiner for her detailed comments.

We note that she has identified the 'significantly higher standard' of the practical and conceptual work in comparison to similar programmes, and the way the programme develops in students both vocational and much wider, transferable capabilities. Further, the external examiner identifies the productive level of experimentation on the programme. These distinctions are things that we should continue to draw on in developing information for applicants.

We note that whilst feedback is generally full and constructive, we should ensure that comments match the grades awarded. The Programme Manager will ask that staff second marking or moderating Performance Design modules pay particular attention to this in the coming session.

We note the very positive comments on PECI 3401, PECI 2401, PECI 2405. This last module has not run as an option in this current session (although some material from it has been presented through PECI 2507) but we hope it may be possible to run it again in the future.

The Module Manger for PECI 2102 is reviewing the guidance to students on the reflective written element of the module. Training in critical writing 'at an early stage' was reviewed during 2010-11 and this led to changes aimed at strengthening students' approaches to essay writing in the L1 common modules PECI 1101 and PECI 1103. We will be able monitor the effects of these changes during 2011-12.

In PECI 3106 considerable thought has already been given to the appropriate focus within and balance between the various elements through 2009 -10 and 2010-11. In the coming session, we have removed the requirement of a logbook and instead there is a focus on an extended reflective essay which now more closely builds on assessment requirements of collaborative practice in levels 1 and 2.

Finally, we are very pleased to note that the external examiner states that 'the Performance Design programme is one of the best of its kind within the UK'.

Signed: <<<>>>

Date: 24 October 2011