

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): Theatre and Performance
Programme(s) / Module(s): Theatre and Performance programme, as well as a number of common modules.	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)

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.

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 ^{PCI002}

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 ILOs are all entirely commensurate with the level of the award, and appropriate for the programme and modules. They are also appropriate for the particular form of assessment being used.

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.*

Yes, in comparison with similar programmes, the aims and ILOs very much meet the national benchmarks.

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 the assessment methods and their relationship to the ILOs demonstrate an excellent range of assessing students in different contexts, which are entirely appropriate to the individual module. Within a programme such as this, a range of assessment methods is necessary, and the programme as a whole reflects this in a sound and well thought-through manner.

All marking arrangements, and classification of awards, were entirely appropriate and carried out thoroughly.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is seen by a good all-round student performance. In particular, the modules where a more research element was involved which pushed the students, resulted in some excellent written work. There were also some excellent examples of practice work on the Processes of Performance modules, which demonstrates the quality of teaching and supervision work, and clarity of assessment criteria.

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.*

Due to the range of assessment methods, the students were given a good opportunity to demonstrate their achievement in a number of ways. This benefits those who are stronger in some areas than others, as well as allowing for good all-round students to demonstrate their ability in all areas.

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.

One area I noted in particular is a definite improvement in the presentation of written work with regard to spelling and grammar, which should be applauded.

I note that my suggestion for extending the written component to the Processes of Performance modules will be followed, and look forward to seeing the results of this.

I raised the question last year of using the full range of marks, and am pleased to see that there is now a clear set of marking criteria across the full range of marks which is now being used. This has allowed for a greater confidence in giving marks at both ends of the scale.

The students who undertook a year out in the industry seem to have done particularly well at the end of the programme. This is a particular feature of the department in Leeds, and demonstrates the positive effect for students to take the year out.

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.

As with last year, the modules taught by members of staff based in their research strengths show a very strong level of teaching and learning, with some excellent written work being produced which demonstrates students engaging with their own research. Similarly, there was some excellent practice work produced, particularly in the field of applied drama, where students engage with performance outcomes outside the department. This raises the stakes for the students, and in many cases has led them to producing strong and original work. I note that some of the more research based options such as Staging Histories and Cultural Flashpoints will now become option modules available to students from any discipline. These modules produced particularly strong written work, and I hope that this standard is able to be maintained if the course has to cater for students not familiar with drama.

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.*

The material was sufficient.

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, I received all necessary documentation.

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

I was sent a selection of work well in advance, and saw a good sample on the day before the Examination Board. This gave me sufficient material to look through, and any requests I made for additional material were met immediately.

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

All administrative arrangements were handled satisfactorily and smoothly throughout the whole process.

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

Full procedures were in place, and were met fully. The procedures were explained to me in detail, and demonstrated to have been carried out with care.

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.

Other Comments

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

Members of staff have discussed the new structure of the programme with me, and it appears to be well thought-through, and I look forward to seeing it take effect. In particular, I feel the changes to the dissertation module will be of benefit to students.

One of the department's unique selling-points is its links to the industry, and with the current focus on employability, is clearly an area that can be promoted.

As with last year, I would like to note the immense dedication and care taken by all staff members in the Department towards the development of the students on the programme.

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2010-11

PROGRAMME TITLE	BA (HONS) THEATRE & PERFORMANCE
NAME OF EXAMINER	

The Theatre and Performance team would like to thank <<<>> for her extremely useful and supportive comments. We feel the report to be constructive and beneficial to all concerned. In general terms, it is re-assuring to note <<<>> feeling that the *'quality of teaching, learning and assessment is seen by a good all-round student performance.'*

Our observations about her specific comments are offered below:

1. *The design and structure of the assessment methods and their relationship to the ILOs demonstrate an excellent range of assessing students in different contexts, which are entirely appropriate to the individual module.*

The team has worked hard to ensure that our methods of assessment connect in the most meaningful ways with the processes of student learning. Our focus on developing varied means of formative and summative assessment in modules across the programme has been successful. Our willingness to engage with this issue is perhaps best demonstrated by our move to involve students in choosing their own Assessment Criteria in PECl 3501 Processes of Performance 5: Independent Project.

2. *There were also some excellent examples of practice work on the Processes of Performance modules.*

This is pleasing to note, as it indicates a high level of investment, understanding and creativity from our students. It also reflects favourably on the ongoing and individualised modes of verbal feedback we offer throughout each of the Processes of Performance modules.

3. *One area I noted in particular is a definite improvement in the presentation of written work with regard to spelling and grammar, which should be applauded.*

Our attempts to develop competence and skill in this area reflect a School-wide engagement with this issue (particularly evident in the work we have done on the Level 2 module, PECl 2101 Strategies for Research). We feel that a definite and coherent approach, not only to written work within Theatre and Performance, but also in the School-wide modules, has impacted beneficially on the written components of the Processes of Performance modules.

4. *The modules taught by members of staff based in their research strengths show a very strong level of teaching and learning, with some excellent written work being produced.*

We are delighted that the link between research and learning and teaching is so evidently beneficial, be it in the core curricula of the Processes of Performance modules or research-based options like PECl 2508 Staging Histories, PECl 2505 Cultural Flashpoints and PECl 2506 Performer Training. There is a definite and

growing sense that the students appreciate staff research application within their learning experience, and the nature of student response can be gauged by the *'particularly strong written work'* that these modules produce.

5. *There was some excellent practice work produced, particularly in the field of applied drama, where students engage with performance outcomes outside the department.*

We welcome this comment very much, endorsing as it does our collaborative ethos and externality. Not only do the students respond positively to the challenges this kind of work presents (external locations, particular client groups) but they also understand the value of working with various institutions in terms of their own employability. We feel that all strands of the Theatre and Performance programme address this agenda.

Recommendations for action:

I am happy to report that all recommendations for action are already in place and/or being acted upon. We have, for example, actioned <<<>>> suggestion to extend the written component of the Processes of Performance modules. Similarly, we have taken on board her advice to utilise a fuller range of marks.

Finally, acknowledgement of our industry links – one of our unique selling-points – helps builds confidence about the employability of our students. It also confirms our conviction that we are well placed to deal with the challenges and change that 2012 will present.

Signed: <<<>>>

Date: 14/10/11