

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

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| Faculty / School of: | Performance and Cultural Industries |
| Subject(s): | <i>Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship</i> |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | PECI 5105M Creative Work PECI 5202M Culture and Development PECI 5204M Theoretical Perspectives PECI 5205M Cultural Policy: Issues and Evaluation |
| Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc): | MA Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship |

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

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

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 aim of this MA programme is to produce successful graduates who will occupy leadership roles in public and private organizations, working at the leading edge of creative development. The programme addresses theories, strategies and practices for developing and managing creative entrepreneurship across the breadth of the cultural field, including the arts, the cultural industries and the creative industries. The programme aims and ILOs usefully address the distinctions between cultural and creative economies, and the relationships between different sectors and activities which comprise the cultural field through the theoretical frames associated with studying the cultural field. The programme explicitly foresees that strategic and practice developments in creativity will have important relationships to other critical areas of the economy – notably education, health, industry and commerce. These areas are included in the scope of application of creative and cultural entrepreneurship addressed in taught units, and students are encouraged to explore the broader socio-economic contexts for these activities, and to critically examine how these contexts are changing, and how they present challenges for their own professional development as future cultural leaders.

The structure and content of the programme respond very well to these challenges, providing access to theoretical foundations of professional knowledge and research skills and perspectives in the core modules, and by supporting students to explore more personalised areas of practice and application of knowledge, through the elective modules. These offer a range of pathways, so students can make their own routes through specialisms, and can opt to take more research- or practice-based routes. The programme provides students with research and analytical skills and specialisms in culture, creativity and entrepreneurship at standards which are entirely appropriate to postgraduate level.

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 programme compares very well with other programmes with similar aims and objectives, and provides standards for achieving the stated ILOs which are focused on critical exploration, interrogation and developing understanding of the different processes, concepts and theories of creative professions and economies.

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 mix of assessment methods include opportunities for students to develop and undertake self-directed learning, different research methods and practices, policy appraisal, research and evaluation of case studies, including observational and reflective practice methods. There are three modules which are assessed by a long 6,000 word essay. Whilst this is good practice for improving students' research and writing skills, it feels like a missed opportunity for different kinds of assessment which might examine ILOs – e.g. interrogation of organisations and institutions, critical approaches to professional development – in different ways. It is also unclear whether students have the opportunity for group / team work and how they develop presentation and communications skills which are apt for the development of future creative leaders.

The focus of the programme – on creativity and entrepreneurship – and the stated aim to produce students “who will occupy leadership roles in public and private organizations, working at the leading edge of creative development” suggests that there could be more focus on practices and on the application of students' developing skills and knowledge in 'real-life' or 'live project' situations. It is unclear whether students have an opportunity as part of the core modules in assessment of their own critical reflective practice. Although the Creative Work option encourages critical reflection on industry practices through the placement element, this appears to form 20% of the assessment only, and to be related more to ethnographic observation than to the application of reflexive learning based on experience. I wonder if there might be opportunities to build this into the assessment for taught units, and increase the variety of assessment modes for the programme?

The Cultural Policy module assessment focuses on the development of evaluation strategies for case study organisations and projects. Although this device raises a range of relevant issues for students about the value and efficacy of creative entrepreneurship and cultural interventions and proposes a range of practical measures which students must learn about and undertake in order to evaluation activities, I feel it might limit students understanding of cultural policies to contemporary institutional and organisational settings. It would be interesting to see how students are encourage to further contextualise their understanding of cultural policy in relation to the influence and forbearance of historical periods and other, less institutional/everyday settings. .

The mark sheets and marking arrangements offer the students excellent feedback commentary, which is supportive

and informative and includes both formative and summative feedback. The final text box for Overall Comments and objectives for improvement is used particularly well by markers, and hopefully produces effective results. There is a very clear grading system articulated on the mark sheets through letters and overall percentage marks which supports markers in using the full spectrum of possible marks. There appears to be the opportunity for formative feedback on written work within Creative Work, although this is unclear, and it is unclear whether there are other opportunities for students to receive feedback on draft work built in to other modules.

Student performance is on the whole very good, with the marks spread between 50 – 83, and with module averages uniformly within the merit mark, between 62 – 67 (where seen – I only received grids for Creative Work, Cultural Policy and Research Project ahead of the exam board). The marking scheme supports markers in awarding high distinctions. This is particularly impressive given the proportion of non-English language students and the IELTS selection criteria of 6.5 (6.0 writing). As noted above comprehensive formative feedback is given and this includes where students have been awarded high marks, e.g. in the 70s and 80s. The range of topics chosen for assessments and for the dissertation also suggest that students feel stimulated to and confident in exploring personal and professional interests through their research.

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.*

As noted above, the performance of the students overall suggest that the programme provides opportunities for students to acquire the knowledge and experience required to satisfy learning objectives of the programme. However the lack of variety of different types of assessment (as noted above) may prohibit students in demonstrating their application of 'concepts and theories of the arts, cultural industries and creative industries' within practical contexts, and prevent the opportunity for a more practice-based perspective on creative entrepreneurship in the cultural field.

Strengths – intellectual curiosity, ability to identify, understand, analyse, summarise and synthesise theoretical concepts in relation to a complex field of specialisms (at upper end), general research skills and understanding of importance of methodology, particularly demonstrated by research project.

Weaknesses – Formatting and presentation of assessment – there was a noticeable lack of uniformity across taught unit assessment in the way work was presented; there were some weakness in expression in English language style and structure; could have been better use of diagrams and visual content, in some cases; there was some areas of weakness in handling of research materials (e.g. interview data).

Within the sample provided there was also one example of a student who had re-used the same theoretical framing across three separate pieces of assessed coursework – and although this work had been checked for plagiarism via Turnitin, this raises questions about student confidence and impetus to use the programme to critically explore the broad range of theoretical perspectives or resources made available to them.

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 is my first year as external examiner for this programme, so comments on enhancements are based on judging progress against the previous examiner's written reports.

The reflective log/case study account of organisation or individual in 'Creative Work' appears to have arisen through previous comments, and is note-worthy as good practice, as it allows students to locate case studies in relevant contextual analysis and to relate their descriptive and interrogative analysis of observations to these and to the wider cultural field. That said, as noted above, it was a little unclear whether the primary aim of the module was to provide students with work experience or with experience of how to observe cultural work, and there was evidence that some students found the brief for Creative Work to be confusing.

Based on the previous comments, 'Culture and Development' has clearly been improved on the basis of recommendations. From this year's assessment the module appears to have provided a fantastic opportunity for students to explore case studies of cultural projects, programmes and organisations from across the world, resulting in a set of (mainly) dynamic and interesting analyses, and drawing on the diversity of nationalities and experiences of the student cohort.

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.

Staff research activities are clearly evident in the programme through their pivotal role in providing the learning objectives and delivery strategies relevant to the programme's mission, and in keeping it up to date. The previous Programme Director clearly brought professional expertise and experience to the programme in relation to the use and management of evaluation and research in the cultural field. It will be interesting to see how the change to Programme Director may result in further additions to the contribution of staff research interests to the content and approaches of the programme.

Students' own research as part of the programme appears to be very well equipped by the Research Perspectives research training element, which is shared across the three MA programmes, as revealed by the competence, standard and achievements of Research Projects. Research skills are also embedded in the other taught units for CCE, and reflect the research types and methods – academic, applied, market and evaluation – pertinent to professional practices in the creative and cultural sector.

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

I was invited to shadow the outgoing External Examiner during the Exam Board 2010-11, and received regular contact and advice from programme staff. I can commend and highly recommend this practice.

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.*

Yes – support staff were very accommodating, and the VLE provided full access to relevant materials.

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.*

Yes. Materials were available through the VLE and also via programme staff. One question was raised about lack of information on moderation of assessment and markers' comments on agreement of marks – this has been clarified following the exam board discussion by the relevant PG Written Feedback Form, which was forwarded by the Director of PGE to all external examiners involved.

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?

Yes – I was consulted about changes to course assessment questions ahead of their inclusion in the programme handbooks.

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.

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

There was a wide and interesting choice of subjects, reflecting the breadth of the field. Both method and standards were appropriate, reflected by awarding of high distinctions at the upper end of the cohort range.

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?

Yes – satisfactory arrangements were made, although better communications about the value of the external examiners' meeting ahead of the examination board to review work and discuss the common taught unit would have been helpful. I am satisfied with the recommendation of the Board.

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

Yes.

Other comments

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

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES**RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT****ACADEMIC SESSION 2011-12**

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| PROGRAMME TITLE | MA Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship |
| NAME OF EXAMINER | <> |
| <p>We would like to thank <> for <> useful and constructive comments, which will help us immensely in the next phase of refreshing the programme.</p> <p>This year we are particularly pleased with <> encouraging comments about the intended learning outcomes, structure and content of the programme and regarding the continued potential CCE has to make a distinctive contribution to our students and to the academic field.</p> <p>Overall Programme Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways: We were interested in <> comments regarding the 'pathways' students can take to navigate their own routes through the programme. We have taken this on board and are committed to developing more choices and options as our students are continuing to fall into two natural cohorts: Cultural Policy and Arts Management. These are being presented at the next School education committee in February 2013. • Assessment methods: The report highlights the current homogeneity of assessment methods, which are based predominantly on the extended essay. We have therefore proposed a range of module modifications to implement a more balanced portfolio of assessments, including presentations and case studies to develop students' team-working and communications skills. • Presentation of written work: We agree with Abigail's comments about the lack of uniformity in the style and presentation of students' written work and have decided to produce a programme style guide to cover all written assignments. Regarding the comments about the apparent challenges students face in presenting and analysing interview data and about the apparent case of self-plagiarism, we have decided to reconfigure the Research Perspectives module so that it runs over both semesters and focuses more on research methods, ethics and academic conventions. This also responds to comments in the students' survey that they felt under-prepared for their Research Projects. • Marking and feedback: We were delighted to read <> comments about our marking, our marking scheme and the feedback we provide to our students. We are committed to supporting our students through personalised and highly tailored feedback, which relates back to the learning outcomes of each module. However, we also take on board the need to be more rigorous and transparent about opportunities for formative feedback. | |

- **Research-led teaching:** The report acknowledged that the programme team's research interests and expertise were evident in the curriculum design and delivery and that this synergy was important in keeping the programme fresh and up-to-date. The University and the programme team are committed to research-led and research-based teaching, and will continue to refresh the programme to keep up to date with the staff team's research development.

Module-specific comments

- **Cultural Policy:** We note <> observations regarding the need to contextualise students' understanding of cultural policy in relation to the influence of historical periods and in the context of everyday settings. We are planning to refresh this module to shift the focus away from policy evaluation and to base it around contemporary policy issues, with a historical background and underpinning introduced at the start of the module. We feel this will make the module more representative of the broader range of cultural policy issues evident both in research and practice, and therefore enhance students' future employability in this field.
- **Creative work:** We were pleased to receive the favourable comments about the reflective log on this module, but also take on board the lack of clarity regarding the primary aim of the module and the apparent issues that students had in responding to the assessment brief. This issue has now been rectified – it was due to a timing issue of when changes to an assessment could be implemented, leading to a discrepancy between the instructions in the module handbook and the actual assessment task set.
- **Culture & Development:** We were delighted to read <> comments regarding the positive engagement of our students with the case study material and will continue to take a case-study, problem-based-learning approach in this module.

Other Comments:

We look forward to working with <> over the next few years to refresh and strengthen the programme and to continue to develop the pathways discussed above.

Signed: <>

Date: 29th January 2013