

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):	Performance, Culture and Context
Programme(s) / Module(s):		awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)	MA

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.

No matters for urgent attention.

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?

No.

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.*

For the modules I have seen I am happy that the aims and ILOs are commensurate with the level of the award. The students are required to demonstrate the ability to synthesise practice and theory to a level commensurate with masters level study. The programme requires them to acquire and then demonstrate the ability to apply research skills appropriate to the level and to the content of the course. The point was also made at the exam board that further attention might usefully be paid to the opportunities for students to experience the breadth and diversity of research approaches and methodologies potentially available to them within the School at Leeds.

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.*

I am satisfied that the aims and the ILOs of the programme are comparable with standards elsewhere and compare favourably with national benchmarks and FHEQ levels.

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 of the assessment methods is fully appropriate to the module content and the programme aims. The assessment work that I was able to sample indicated that the quality of the teaching is high, and that the teaching also seeks to encourage and develop students in their ability to apply theory to practice and practice to theory.

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 strengths of this course lie in the opportunities for students to examine the theoretical implications of their practice and to interrogate the ways in which their work is underpinned by an understanding of theory and conceptual frameworks. The students are able to demonstrate this through the variety of projects and assignments in the course. If there is a weakness it might be that weaker students tend to constrain themselves within the theoretical positions and approaches provided within the course and do not explore as far as they might beyond what the course directly offers them. This, of course, is equally true of other such courses.

The major projects were all of a very good standard, except for one which appeared to be a short and incomplete submission. This was dealt with satisfactorily at the Exam Board. One student's major project included some confusing referencing which did not correlate with the bibliography provided. The marking did not pick this up, although the overall mark was appropriate. I would recommend care to ensure that referencing is picked up and commented on appropriately – although I accept that this was only one student in an otherwise good cohort.

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.

As a newly appointed external examiner I am not in a position to comment on improvements from the previous 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 that the students benefit significantly from the research culture within the School. Staff engage in traditional research activity as well as practice-based research, and the module design and reading lists are clearly put together so as to allow students to benefit from the staff's expertise.

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 provided with the University's guidance notes for external examiners upon confirmation of my appointment. My roles and responsibilities were made clear in the documentation I received. I was given access to the University's VLE which enabled me to see some of the work remotely.

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.*

During the academic year I was provided with a range of materials relevant to the modules/programme I was examining.

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

Yes. I was provided with all copies of relevant written submissions as well as DVDs of some practical submissions. It would be very helpful in future to be provided with a clear identification of students within practical submissions recorded on DVD so that I can more easily match performance work to marks and feedback sheets.

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

Yes. Staff were very helpful and provided me with all the information that I needed.

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

As far as I could tell, yes. I would welcome an explicit description of the process used by the University.

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.

As was mentioned at the Exam Board, I agree with the External Examiners general statement that it would seem beneficial for the course team to consider how students might get increased benefit from the co-location of the MA courses in the School.

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2010-11

PROGRAMME TITLE	MA Performance, Culture and Context
NAME OF EXAMINER	<<>>

Thank you for your External Examiner Report for the *MA PCC*, 2010-11.

We are pleased you consider the quality of the teaching high and that students benefit significantly from the research culture of the school. We have always encouraged students to develop their ability to apply theory to practice and vice versa and note that you have identified this as a strength. We certainly intend to build upon this approach in future years as the programme matures.

You have highlighted further attention might be paid to enhancing the opportunities for students to experience the breadth and diversity of research approaches available to them in the school. The PGT team has already started to review the content of *Research Perspectives* and *Contemporary Performance Practice* in order to address this. There are also ongoing discussions concerning the structure of the MA programmes and the weighting between semesters. This will increase opportunities for discussion between programmes, widen access to research methodologies across the school and forge interesting interdisciplinary links. We will, of course, share these developments with you as they mature.

You identify weaker students tend to constrain themselves within the theoretical positions and approaches provided by the course and point out their exploration of these is often limited. The programme team will address these concerns when reviewing the module delivery and consider ways in which students might be encouraged to identify key investigations of theory and practice that can stimulate more personal challenge and new learning. The team will further consider the appropriate support mechanisms to facilitate this.

We have noted your comment concerning the need to ensure students appreciate and use the recognized style of referencing and will ensure that we review the guides and study skills support offered to all PGT students. The programme team will also review procedures for assessment and feedback given to students in regards to this issue.

We are in the process of reviewing how we archive practical presentations and hope that in future all practical submissions will be more easily accessed for the purpose of review. Where practicable we hope to be able to arrange live showings of performance work rather than digitized versions.

Once again many thanks for your comments on this programme. We apologise for the delay in forwarding the final report of the previous External Examiner. We are happy to address any business that might arise from the detail of this report now that you have had sight of it.

Signed: Dr Sita Popat, Head of School

Date: 24/01/2012