

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):	<i>Performance Culture and Context</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Programme: Performance Culture and Context/Modules: Performance Contexts, Contemporary Performance Practice, Research Perspectives, Research Projects, Individual Projects
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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?

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

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 standards of the course and the programmes Aims and ILOs are completely commensurate with the level of the 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.*

I can confirm that the Aims and the ILOs of this programme meet the expectations of the national benchmark statements where relevant. The course is comparable with provision at other institutions in these respects.

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.*

In general I was very happy with design and structure of the assessment methods. The course successfully blends theory and practice in both delivery and assessment, and from my discussions with the current cohort, this is a valued feature of the course.

Along with one other examiner, I did have some minor concerns that within the research perspectives module, students on the WPP pathway appear to be given a task which whilst at an appropriate level and suitable for their course, is not easily comparable with the task set for the PCC pathway. I must assert that I do not perceive this as in anyway an issue of standards, simply that the two tasks take such different approaches to the aims of the module that it is not easy to compare them or to compare the kinds of knowledge and understanding that the students are demonstrating. I would advise the course team that this is probably fairly easily rectifiable – and probably simply reflects the need for some further discussion between tutors to ensure a common understanding of the ways in which the tasks relate to the module ILOs.

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 general the cohort examined were a strong group and some of the work sampled demonstrated excellent research skills, accomplished academic writing skills and an imaginative and informed approach to performance practice.

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.

Reviewing notes from my previous report and the School's response to my comments, I am pleased to note that most of the issues have been addressed. I would note that there continues to be an issue with access to recordings of practical assessed work. Hopefully this can be resolved for this year.

I met with a group of the students this year and was very impressed by their commitment to the course and by their positivity about the whole experience of the course. They appreciate the benefits of a course that combines theory and practice, and see the challenges this raises as positive for their practice and their personal progress.

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.

The course team includes staff with an impressive knowledge of practice and theory in the sector. Student access to this expertise is to some extent evidenced in the subject matter of some of their assignments and projects. The quality of research expertise clearly and positively informs the teaching on the research modules within the programme. Students are actively encouraged to develop and support their practice through research in a number of forms.

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

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.*

I have been given access to a wide range of materials, including module briefing documents, samples of student work, assessment feedback sheets and some video material. I would like to request that in future I am given advance notice of suitable performance events in case I am able to attend. This is important in relation to the sampling of practical work. If visits are not possible to arrange, please ensure that work is available on DVD.

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. I received copies of the programme handbook, as well as individual module and assignment briefs. This were all complete with the relevant data and information for the students to be able to meet the module requirements. There were some variations in format for the feedback sheets that were provided with the samples of work. The best examples included an indication that the marks had been moderated, or that double marking had taken place, and I would commend this as good practice. It was also useful as an external examiner when evidence was provided as to the marks allocated by each internal marker and the outcome of the moderation process to agree the final mark. Whilst such information should not be on the marksheet returned to the student it is valuable confirmation of process.

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?

There are no formal examinations, so I was not sent copies of exam questions or papers. From the samples of work I have seen I would say that the assignment briefs set were appropriate for the subject and the level of the course.

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?

I saw a wide range of samples, across most module components. As indicated above, I would like to see a wider range of practical work if this can be arranged. I had lengthy discussion with members of the course team over the difficulties of assessing the work of students for whom English is a second language, in the early weeks of their course. This is a complex issue and I am confident that the course team are fully alert to the issues that arise in such situations. I would however advise that the team should investigate whether formative, rather than summative assessment might be more valuable for such students in this early stage. It would also be beneficial to review support offered – perhaps looking at pre-sessional support and at good practice in other parts of the University. I did have some concerns about the number of borderline marks (e.g. 59 or 60) for some modules. I understand that these usually effectively disappear within the module calculations, but I think care needs to be taken to ensure that such marks are not simply avoiding the responsibility to make a final decision on the overall quality of the work. I am happy that the course team are alert to this.

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

The final projects I sampled demonstrated that students had engaged with appropriate subjects and been assessed appropriately and fairly.

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?

I was able to attend the Exam Board, which was conducted with commendable openness and attention to detail. I am satisfied with the recommendations of the board, which were all made in line with the regulations and in the best interest of the student body.

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

To the best of my knowledge, yes.

Other comments

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

I would like to request that samples from the core research modules are sent to each of the relevant examiners as well as to the examiner with responsibility for the module, so that discussion can be had between the examiners in relation to the subject appropriateness of the students' work.

SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

ACADEMIC SESSION 2011-12

PROGRAMME TITLE	MA Performance, Culture, Context
NAME OF EXAMINER	<>
<p>We thank <> for <> External Examiner's Report, <> continued support of the MA Performance, Culture and Context and the invaluable guidance that <> shares with the programme team. It is good to read that the programme design and structure of assessment make evident our work to refine the blending of theory and practice in our delivery.</p> <p>The programme team were pleased to arrange for <> to meet with the current cohort. The feedback from the meeting was positive, with the students acknowledged that they were already engaged in a range of investigations of theory in practice and vice versa. This is a valued feature of the delivery of the programme and one that the team continues to develop.</p> <p>The cohort who completed their programme this session produced some excellent results in work that was imaginative and critically astute. It is positive for us to see the range and depth of their endeavour that is evident in their work. The scope of interests shown by the students reinforces the value that the team feels in securing the stability of the programme in the school portfolio.</p> <p>We note <> comment about the documentation of practice and we continue to strive to enhance our facility in capturing the richness of students' live performance. Invitations to live performance assessments will always be arranged and where this is not possible digital recordings will be made. We have introduced specific taught sessions that address modes of documentation and have provided a range of web based learning resources for students to use during their work processes. For future cohorts, we will encourage students to submit digitised versions of their presentations and creative practice.</p> <p>Research Perspectives</p> <p>We note <> minor concern about the comparability in assessment tasks within this module for the various MA programmes and we will review the design of assignments for future cohorts. <> advice about other cross-programme diagnostic formative assessment will be carried forward as part of the learning and teaching review during this session, particularly in relation to writing and study skills for students whose first language is not English.</p>	
Signed: <>	
Date: 31 st January 2013	