

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

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

Faculty / School of:	School of Modern Languages
Subject(s):	<i>World Cinema/Film Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MODL1030 Introduction to World Cinema 1 MODL1040 Introduction to World Cinema 2 MODL1050 Introduction to Audio Visual Culture MODL2230 Film Noir to Asia Extreme MODL3230 Cinema in the Digital Age MODL3020 Dissertation
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons)

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**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 Quality Assurance**
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 – Fourth and final year of appointment.

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

I have been pleased to engage with a collegial and responsible set of colleagues who have been willing to listen to and engage with my constructive feedback. The issue of close textual screen analysis is now one that is fully embedded at key stages of the curriculum at years 1 and 2 via apt close sequence analyses. With the introduction of the new cornerstone course MODL1050 and with plans in place to rename the programme to Film Studies and revise the level 1 core courses in terms of thematic blocks and content, this is evidence of the team not resting on their laurels but in fact responding to and moving with the times in a very positive way. However, there is still some work to be done in terms of teaching and cohering core subject analytical skills across ICS and World Cinema/Film Studies and I elaborate on this further in the final comments section on page 6 below.

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.*

Another positive year (my 4th and final one at Leeds as External Examiner) with a wide range of grades achieved across all modules. Where appropriate the penalty system (as clearly indicated on the essay submission sheet) has also been applied and fairly used. From the evidence of assessments that I have seen and discussions with teaching staff, there appear to be high levels of teaching and interaction amongst staff and students pertaining to subject study matters. The learning outcomes and assessments are clear and the standards are more than appropriate for 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.*

Yes. From the evidence of work that I have seen, communications with staff over email and discussions in person, the subject benchmarks are all being met in line with competitor institutions.

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.*

There is a good range of assessment methods in use and these are all more than satisfactory. The use of the moderator for each unit is an excellent quality control procedure and he/she is doing their job well in each case, not least in providing a clear written trail of where marks have been adjusted up or down, and clear reasons given as to why.

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.*

Yes. There is a range of assessments and a good variety of testing questions at the appropriate levels from years 1 to 3. This year with 2 students proceeding to dissertations in the final year there were two strong and solid pieces of work at 65% and 70% respectively.

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.

There is a sustained and continued through-line noticeable across all modules where the programme is brought together through a committed focus on questioning, interrogating and analysing all cinemas through a polycentric framework. This year I was able to again access on campus the on-line Blackboard system that staff and students are using and this also confirms my point here. The introduction of the cornerstone course MODL1050 and the close sequence analyses on course units at level 2 are also effective enhancements.

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.

As from my previous three years – all tenured staff teaching on this programme are active researchers publishing at national and international levels. From the course handbooks, reading lists and essays and exams, there was evidence of staff engaging not only with their own work in the field, but also as their own work dialogues and critiques established orthodoxies in the fields of film studies and world cinema. There is also opportunity for early career colleagues to make an active contribution to the teaching and assessment of the courses on offer.

8. **Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. **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

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. **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. I received all material in good time and my comments and feedback were all taken up collegially.

11. **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.

12. 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.

13. 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. This year with 2 students proceeding to dissertations in the final year there were two strong and solid marks and work at 65% and 70%.

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

Yes.

15. 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.

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

This must have taken place at another meeting as we did not formally raise this or discuss this at the Exam Board – i.e. to my knowledge it was not the business of this Board to discuss and take decisions on mitigating circumstances via medical evidence.

Other comments

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

I have one main comment to make in my outgoing year and it follows on from my previous year's discussions, comments and observations. The following point was raised and discussed with staff at the exam board and is based on my observations and reading of material relating to the student cohort from this year and previous years. The comment below has been made before by myself but this year it takes on a sense of urgency as, as I understand it from discussions with the teaching team, the ICS students made a formal complaint about marks they received from the MODL3230 Digital Cinema course. This was due to a perception on their part that they had been unfairly marked or penalised for not having undertaken adequate close textual analysis in the course assessments. I looked over the course materials, assessments, marks and feedback comments and how the marks were adjusted in some cases, and am happy to record that the teaching and learning quality assurance procedures at Leeds have been followed and more to the point that the marks and comments are apt.

In the light of this formal complaint and to possibly avoid a similar situation from occurring again (not least in the NSS culture and students spreading comments about the course through social media sites and word of mouth – which sometimes can be unfair/disgruntled comments due to the low mark that has been awarded), I would like to note and recommend:

1. That the issue of dealing with close textual film analysis alongside social and cultural studies contextualisation and analyses of the films, especially as the students' progress from years 1 to 3 in both ICS and World Cinema/Film Studies, does need dealing with now through a concerted effort across ICS and World Cinema.
2. I fully appreciate that the students on the degree programme are working between being based in and choosing modules from across Modern Languages and also the Institute for

Communication Studies. However, I still have a sense that not all students are taught or grounded in a core introduction to film studies analysis in the same way, and if they are, they seem to forget to apply these important analytical skills as they move from years 1 to 3.

3. This should now be a timely opportunity for World Cinema/Film Studies and ICS colleagues to sit around the table and have formal minuted meetings to discuss and agree a common ground approach to one or two of the core units that should usefully help all students in this matter.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the teaching and administration team on a successful fourth year in terms of the delivery of the programme, collegial and professional communication between each other and myself, and as always a ready willingness to be attentive to and take on board useful points from our collective work and discussions.

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

02 March 2015

Ref.: Reply to External Examiner's Report

Dear

Thank you very much indeed for your detailed and overall positive report on the 2013-14 performance of the JH World Cinemas programme. We are pleased to hear that overall you are satisfied with our programme design, and that you have found evidence of excellent teaching and results in our students' assessment portfolios. Equally as rewarding is your identification of robust film scholarship behind our research-led provision, and our transparent and professional marking procedures.

It is also reassuring to hear that you are satisfied with action taken in response to your comments last year. We are nonetheless thankful for the various further comments and suggestions for improvement that you have made, and which I would like to address here:

ICS / CWC analytical skills gap:

Last year we acted on your comments about the gap between the close textual analysis skills of our internal students and those of ICS students (who can take our modules as programme options rather than electives) by constructively aligning these skills with the module assessment methods. Although this has yielded some positive results many of the ICS students received lower marks for their assessments this year, which prompted a group of finalists to complain about the marking. We, ICS and you, upheld the grades awarded but as you point out the fact that this issue was raised makes clear the core problem has not been adequately resolved. To that end you suggested that CWC and ICS colleagues meet to discuss a common approach, and I am happy to report that this is now underway. I have already had one meeting with my counterpart in ICS to discuss the provision and expectations on both side, and ways that these can be aligned more closely. Discussion included the possibility of amendments to the final year module, and the ways in which close textual analysis is emphasised in ICS modules. A second meeting is due to be held later this month, at which we will determine firm action points. In the meantime, we will be providing extra information about close textual

analysis to all students at the start of the 2014-15 session, and will continue to embed this skill in the individual session learning outcomes.

Thank you again for your detailed appraisal of our programme, and should you need any further clarification or information, please do not hesitate to contact me as per details above. As this report marks the end of your time with us at Leeds I would also like to thank you on behalf of the CWC team for your thorough engagement with our programme, your insightful comments, and your guidance. It has been a pleasure to work with you.

Yours truly,

World Cinemas Subject Leader