

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:	Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies
Subject(s):	Cultural Studies
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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

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?

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

My term as external examiner for the BA Cultural Studies has been extended for an extra year. Last year I summed up my experience of the award and also my sense of how it has changed and improved since I have had tenure of the external examining position. I don't have a great deal to add on these matters this year, but I will revisit my comments here and extend them in line with my impressions this year.

The BA Cultural Studies at Leeds provides an excellent, coherent and fairly comprehensive review of Cultural Theory, its application and the various cultural, political and material contexts in which this has and does take place. Teaching, marking and feedback are all of a very high quality. Students are clearly and meticulously introduced to various Cultural Studies traditions and are helped to engage with, understand and apply ideas from them in a thoughtful and constructive fashion.

Last year I commented in some detail on how I thought that assessment instruments might be varied and improved to both broaden students' creative and digital abilities and also increase their engagement with external cultural life and work. I see some improvements in this area this year. Last year I also indicated that I thought that some of the more purely theoretical content of Cultural Studies modules might be better contextualised or applied to include reference to culture in actuality (rather than implicitly, or in theory, or in a solely social or political context). I'm not sure how many changes have been made in this regard. However, I'm aware that a new award is currently being validated in Cultural and Media Studies and it may be the case that some relevant changes are being made here.

I am pleased to see that academic staff are increasingly using the full range of marks (including marks of 80 and above) in assessment grading. The increased use of worksheets on the VLE is also encouraging.

Overall, I am impressed as usual by the Cultural Studies BA at Leeds University. I continue to have confidence in its delivery and teaching.

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 programme aims and outcomes were commensurate with the level of the award and corresponded with good quality BA level study. The structure of the programme is appropriate and allows for comprehensive and logical study of the subject. Content is appropriate.

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. The award compared well with equivalent national qualifications and the FHEQ requirements.

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.*

Assessment methods are rigorous. The quality of teaching and learning is commendably high.

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

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.

I comment on changes to and enhancement of the programme above.

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.

Research in the school is prolific and of very high quality. The course and the students clearly benefit from this. Research instructs teaching in a clear way.

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

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

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?

Yes

Other comments

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

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9LJ



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

24th June 2015.

Dear

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you in my capacity as the quite recently nominated Programme Manager for Cultural Studies. It has been brought to my notice that you did not receive a response to your External Examiner's Report that was duly and thankfully received on 3rd July 2014. We apologise for the delay in responding to it.

We note your suggestion that our modules might engage more with contemporary theories and practices. This issue was also raised in this year's exam board by our new External Examiner, who too appreciated the depth and theoretical rigour of our teaching, but also queried whether our overall provision might not incorporate more recent material, so as to speak more immediately to students about live issues. We take this proposal on board, whilst also drawing your attention to how the programme is also being reconfigured, as from next year, as Cultural & Media Studies, as a way, not only of boosting student recruitment, but also as precisely as a means of revisiting our provision. Indeed, there have been many innovations over the year with new "with" degrees being launched: e.g. Fine Art & Contemporary Cultural Theory and History of Art & Cultural Studies. These initiatives will provide us with further exciting opportunities to reconfigure ourselves.

We have continued to venture more across the full range of marks, extending beyond what was a tacit cap of around 76. As you pointed out, given that we now mark 0-100, there is now no reason, or indeed justification, for not going higher. Indeed, we might even be prejudicing our top students' chances of getting scholarships by not granting higher grades. This point was also made this year so we will continue to bear it in mind.

We appreciate these constructive points that you make, and also welcome your positive comments about our provision and its delivery.

Once again, thank you for being our External Examiner and we hope that our paths will cross again sometime in the future!

Yours sincerely,