

## 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 Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies
Subject(s):	History of Art
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA History of Art: Dissertations MA History of Art Core Course Intangible Heritage, Intangible History Aesthetics and Politics Modernity & the Jews Individual Directed Study The Complete Marilyn Monroe Losing Perspective The Margins of Medieval Art
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

**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](mailto: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*

No urgent matters. This is well established programme that works very well.

**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 ILOs were appropriate to an MA level degree in the humanities. They worked well with the structure and content of the programme and I thought that the standards were also appropriate to this 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.*

FHEQ level 7 states that a student working at this level should have “a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice” – the MA in History of Art at Leeds is clearly equipping students with this level of competence.

**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.*

All of the modules are assessed via a long essay of about 6,000 words. The essay topics are all chosen by the students in consultation with their tutors (the topics have to be signed off by the tutor). This method is clearly appropriate to the ILOs and fosters independent critical thought, sustained argument, self-directed research, and rigorous writing.

**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 they were clearly given adequate opportunity for demonstrating their achievements (which they did). The cohort was excellent with a very high proportion of distinctions and merits awarded.

**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.*

The programme continues to adjust itself to new research and to fine-tune its practices. But it also sustains a bulwark against any changes that would threaten its academic rigor and scholarly excellence.

This year I was hugely impressed by the tutor feedback that was undertaken for the autumn term assignments. It was insistently enthusiastic about the work of the students – really showing them where they were working well - and this must have been exceedingly useful for student morale and confidence. This feedback was also intellectually stimulating, encouraging students to be even more academically ambitious.

I also thought that the module on Marilyn Monroe was an excellent example of a highly-focused project of collaborative research that produced excellent results and gave students a real understanding of extensive close reading practices.

**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.*

I don't think that there is any part of this programme that isn't informed by the research practices of the staff that are delivering the programme.

**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 it was. I've always found it very easy to request information and any request has always been met with a speedy and thorough reply.

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?

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?

It was all made available to me via the VLE and turnitin. Nearly all the scripts were marked and I could read all the feedback that the students received. One module didn't use this method of marking, but these scripts were then quickly emailed to me for me to read along with the marksheets.

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

Yes. As usual the dissertations were mostly of a very high standard with students encouraged to develop their interests and to be intellectually ambitious.

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?

I attended the examinations board which was conducted efficiently, fairly and professionally.

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

N/A



Dear

On behalf of the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, and in particular everyone involved with the MA in History of Art, I would again like to thank you for your continued engagement with this programme, and for the very detailed and constructive examiner's report that you have provided for us to consider.

We are encouraged by your feedback. That our commitment to research-led teaching is recognisable in our approaches both to our seminars and to the framing of assessed work – and most importantly that this has registered itself in the assignments produced by the 2013-14 cohort – is a vital note of support as we continue to develop and safeguard the values of the programme. As was the case last year, I am particularly grateful for your views on the quality of feedback provided, and for your making clear how 'insistently enthusiastic', 'encouraging', and 'intellectually stimulating' it has been. Again, for my colleagues to sustain this kind of input alongside the rapidly growing demands of other commitments remains a difficult balancing act, so I am glad to be able to pass on to them this endorsement, and more broadly to have meaningful and tangible support for maintaining an environment in which this kind of intellectual excellence can continue. Here I have also noted with interest your specific remarks on the need for the programme to sustain itself as 'a bulwark against any changes that would threaten its academic rigour and scholarly excellence'. The point is well-taken.

I am very pleased too that you have been able to signal the helpful and efficient work of my colleagues in the Student Office in providing you with the materials and information required in a timely manner. Given some changes in personnel over the relevant period, with some colleagues stepping into their current roles within the exams process at the eleventh hour, I am very happy to pass on your positive comments to them.

Lastly, and with all who taught on the programme, I am delighted to echo your observation on the particularly high quality of work turned out by 2013-14 cohort.

Many thanks again, and we look forward to discussing the current cohort with you later this year.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School