

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 & Cultural Studies
Subject(s):	MA in Fine Art & MFA Programmes
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All modules that constitute the programme
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA and MFA

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

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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

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 programme ILOs and course structure are appropriate for taught postgraduate level in this discipline. Students embark on a rigorous programme of research and learning that is independently structured and supported by close supervision as well as complimentary elective modules. This culminated in a Degree Show - a presentation of each student's original contribution to research in the field of contemporary art practice.

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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.*

The aims and ILOs align with the FHEQ M Level and QCF Level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is equal to Level 7 of the EAF, the European subject benchmark. The aims and ILOs compare favourably with other European HEIs of repute in this field.

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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.*

Design and structure of assessment methods:

Staff have revised the marking process by working with a smaller group of assessors and agreeing all grades prior to their documentation. I now only see the final results as requested.

Each grade awarded is now accompanied with written feedback that explains to the student how they met their ILOs. This applies to all assessed work submitted: written and practical.

The quality of teaching, learning

The practical and theoretical work of students on this programme continues to be of a very high standard and is indicative both of the quality of teaching and of the students' peer learning. Students on the programme are ambitious and really apply themselves well.

The students praised the staff and the amount of contact they have with them.

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.*

Academic Standards:

The standards were as high as comparable courses in other HEIs at Level 7.

Strengths and Weaknesses:

The students are from a variety of backgrounds and engage with different study modes (full / part-time). The programme benefits from having students that are actively engaged in the Yorkshire art scene - they provide a vital peer learning component for International students. The programme has a distinctive character that draws upon Leeds developed art infrastructure.

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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.

Programme Aims and ILOs have benefited from revision since my last report.

Tutorials were clearly timetabled and gaps in tutorials were not evident this year.

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.

There is a clear engagement with theory on this programme at a level that is, arguably, above par for MFAs. This is something that the School of Fine Art is internationally known for.

Students also show a strong interest in publishing and printed matter - something that reflects the research interests of staff and the profile of the School of Fine Art.

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

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

No

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 and 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, I saw all of the work examined.

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

Yes, a very high standard here.

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

Issues with timetabling seem to have been resolved.

Students are also beginning to find accessing facilities more straightforward - an issue that will be resolved when they move into new studios next year.

I think that the programme could benefit from a formal KE / memorandum of agreement with a gallery or arts organisation in Leeds (e.g. Axis) to ensure that students have a least one substantial interim opportunity to show their work and for professional development. Such an arrangement would raise the profile of the programme and lead to other opportunities for staff and students alike.

There is a desire to link the programme with other MFAs in Europe and establish a European masters. This would be a valuable development to take forward.



2 February 2015

Dear

Thank you for your clear and concise report for the MA in Fine Art and MFA programmes for the 2013-14 session.

The School is extremely pleased by the students' positive response to the quality of teaching and amount of contact that they received during their time on the programme. We are also encouraged by your comments regarding the high standard of student work produced, indicative of the teaching methodologies and peer group learning which this practice-based course affords.

As you state, the revisions made to the programme arising from student comments during the 2012-13 session have been appropriately applied and made significant differences to the running of the course and student experience. The simplification of marking from a team to a first and second marker system has benefited both students and staff regarding coherent feedback and time management and, similarly, the provision of feedback for the final exhibition allows everyone a period of reflection after what is often a stressful and exhaustive period of production and installation.

With the decision to hold the final exhibition in September rather than July, the opportunity to partake in 'FAIR' at The Talbot Rice Gallery in April 2014 was instrumental and timely in the development of the professional practice skills necessary for the production of a gallery standard public exhibition as illustrated by the interim installation in Edinburgh itself as well as the degree show in Leeds. Whilst the Talbot Rice event was a one-off, an equivalent interim exhibition is planned to take place during semester 2, allowing students the chance to experience at first hand the issues of planning, execution and presentation to an external audience. The School has recently signed memorandums of agreement with two of the region's major arts institutions, The Hepworth and The Tetley, but with the city now having three Masters level, fine art-type degree programmes, it is difficult for either or any of the city's other arts institutions to offer degree show space to one programme but not the other.

From September 2015 [redacted] will take over the role of MAFA Programme Director and is currently holding discussions with the Fine Art teaching staff around alternative modes of engagement between our students and national and international bodies, arts groups and exchange programmes as a way of making it distinct from our competitors, reflective of potential applicants' needs as practicing artists in a multi-disciplinary environment and responsive to staff research areas.

Thank you once again for your positive report and we look forward to seeing you at the interim visit in the Spring.

Yours Sincerely,

Head of School