

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015**

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

Faculty / School of:	Music
Subject(s):	Music
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA Music, BMus Music, BA Music with Enterprise

**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*

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?*

I was asked if I wanted to see the previous reports beforehand or afterwards; I chose to see them afterwards.

**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 ILO and structure and content of the programmes are appropriate for the programme. The programmes provide a clear progression from first to final year, with several imaginatively conceived modules that support student learning and development.
- The standards are appropriate for the awards, with a good range of marks being awarded.

### 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.

### 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.*

- The assessment methods are well designed in the majority of components of the degree, as are the arrangements of the marking of modules and classification of awards. Including three points for improvement on feedback sheets is good practice and could be encouraged across all modules. On the whole comments provided in feedback relate closely to marks: it was striking that students getting lower marks tend to get very helpful, constructive feedback, while high-achieving students sometimes received detailed criticism with only a few statements of praise towards the end (and of course a high mark). A little more encouragement might make them consider postgraduate study more seriously.

I have three suggestions with regard to arrangements for assessment:

1. In composition more guidelines and feedback could be provided for the commentary element of the Level 2 and 3 modules.
2. That all composition students have their works performed and recorded, if facilities allow.
3. That the Faculty reviews the practice of having the accompanist for recitals also being an examiner. It is an important part of the module that the students' progress through the year is monitored and perhaps factored in to the final mark. However, for the accompanist also to be an examiner of the final recital could potentially advantage or disadvantage particular students, depending on their working relationship.

- The quality of teaching and learning is high. In terms of assessment methods it was apparent, particularly in final year modules such as Composition, that feedback in the first semester could dramatically improve student submissions in the second semester.

### 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.*

- There were some outstanding final-year submissions in composition, dissertation, aesthetics, and music psychology, which suggest that there are some exceptional students among the cohort. It was evident from discussion at the board, and from correspondence through the year, that appropriate support had been provided for those students who were finding the course more challenging, for whatever reason. Incidentally I was also pleased to see that students whose work had improved between years were being recognised through commendations by the exam board.

### 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.*

It is my first year examining so I am not in a position to comment on this.

### 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.*

Many of the specialist courses reflect staff research interests, which includes practice-based research. It is clear that teaching and learning encourages students to pursue independent research into topics in which they are interested, which are very wide-ranging (there were some particularly strong projects in popular music analysis, psychology, and composition). Adapting the analysis curriculum to include techniques for classical and popular repertoire makes sense, as it will suit the student body and is in keeping with developments in the field.

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 and any queries I had were dealt with swiftly.

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. For some courses it would have been helpful to have work from both semesters. Annotations on scripts were not visible via the VLE, but the feedback typically was detailed.

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

Yes and 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?

I was able to attend the meeting and was satisfied with the recommendations of the board. The administrative arrangements were handled very well, with queries being answered quickly and clearly, and the administrators were very well prepared.

The support from the Education Service Officer and the Faculty's Exams Officer (and IT Services) has been excellent throughout.

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

Mitigating circumstances were handled in the meeting, with staff contributing to discussion. As mentioned below, I am unused to students being referred to by name in boards.

#### Other comments

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

It is standard practice in other institutions where I have either taught or been external examiner to maintain student anonymity until the very end of the final exam board. I was surprised to see that at Leeds student names were revealed quite early in the feedback process, and that the exam board was done using names. In a relatively small department with specialist and practical options it is, of course, impossible to retain complete anonymity, but I think the principle of it is important to ensure parity and to make it clear to the students that everyone is being treated fairly (to be clear, I do not doubt that this is the case in the Faculty of Music as things stand). If the current VLE system does not allow for anonymity to be maintained I strongly recommend that this is something that is reviewed by the University.



29/07/2015

Dear

Many thanks for your report on the 2014-15 session of our undergraduate Music programmes. We are grateful for your input into the examination process, and very appreciative of your positive responses to both the quality of our programme and our students, and to the management of the examinations.

I have responded below to the points raised in your report. This response, as well as your advice and recommendations, will be discussed in the following School Teaching and Student Education Committee (STSEC).

- Your report raised the issue of maintaining student anonymity until the end of the final exam board. University policy requires anonymous marking — which is implemented by the School of Music — but does not stipulate that exam boards maintain that anonymity. We feel that the anonymity at the exam board is unnecessary since the process of classification is quite mechanical: there are clear processes for applying academic discretion that do not offer room for personal bias. Nevertheless, it is possible for Banner (student information management system) to show SIDs rather than names, and we will discuss this at the next STSEC.
- We appreciate your comments regarding feedback to students, your positive comments on our feedback, and the advice that high-achieving students would benefit from greater encouragement than simply receiving high marks. The comments on feedback will be circulated to staff as suggestions of best practice.
- Composition commentaries: In previous years, we have used teaching sessions to expand on the guidelines in the handbook where relevant, but there is room for greater clarity. The composition module handbook (for each level) will be updated to give more guidelines on what is expected in the commentary, and model commentaries will be provided for students.
- Performing student compositions: while this would certainly be useful for the students, unfortunately we do not have the facilities to perform all student compositions. However, more is being done to encourage composers and performers to work together; a new LUUMS composers' ensemble is being formed for next year, and we will trial more composer/performer clinics.

**School of Music**

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- Performance assessment arrangements: arrangements for assessment of performance will be changing for 2015-16; we have already been considering changes to performance assessment within the school and these align with the suggestions in your report.
- We appreciate your positive comments regarding the blending of popular and classical styles in the analysis module.

With best wishes,

Head of School

Director of Student Education

Examinations Officer