

**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:	School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies
Subject(s):	History of Art
Programme(s) / Module(s):	History of Art
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](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

**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 entirely appropriate for the individual modules and the structure and content of the programme overall, as were the standards 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.*

The Aims and ILOs for the programme clearly relate to the national benchmark document for Art History and in my experience are certainly comparable to equivalent programmes in other 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.*

Extremely good practice is evident in the design and structure of assessments across the programme. A wide range of level-appropriate methods of assessment are employed. The VLE is used to excellent effect, most especially I observed in relation to core modules. Students throughout the programme are very well supported and given a range of opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. In the majority of cases the marking of modules (both in second marking and moderating) demonstrates a clear, shared understanding of awards classification. The sample moderating process for taught modules appears to work well, and for the most part marks are only moved slightly within the same classification. Any discrepancies are duly noted and third markers brought into play where required. In relation to the Dissertation module which requires input from across the teaching team, I did wonder if a cross-team moderation process might be a productive practice to confirm a common interpretation of marking categories.

While I did note variation in amount of feedback in some areas, in general the quality of this is very good indeed and excellent in several instances where extremely detailed comments give students a very clear understanding of the mark awarded and what would be required to achieve a higher mark.

**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.*

In my experience of other institutions the students on this programme achieve justifiably very well. The high proportion of 1sts and 2.1s and the overall standard demonstrated by a considerable number of final year students suggests obvious potential for further postgraduate study. It was pleasing to see supportive comments to that effect in marker feedback where appropriate.

As noted previously, students are supported and enabled to develop skills and abilities across areas of critical theory and empirical research and to develop confidently as independent researchers. I noted no overall cohort weaknesses.

**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.*

No particular changes to programme(s) or modules this year. There are however many examples of continuing good practice and I would especially commend the use of the VLE for innovative forms of assessment and in many cases meticulous commentary and feedback.

**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.*

Students on this programme undoubtedly benefit from the breadth of the research expertise amongst the teaching staff. The modules are virtually all up to date in terms of content, critical engagement and literature and are clearly informed by ongoing staff research activity.

**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 sufficient material.

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, and any queries were addressed quickly.

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?

I was sent and commented upon draft examination papers. The questions were appropriate and my few queries were addressed.

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?

This year I was not sent in advance a sample of semester two exam papers. I was able to see these on my visit however, and I'm ensured they will be sent in good time next year.

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

See my comments on dissertation assessment above. As noted, the overall standard of the dissertations is very high. In future years it will be pleasing to see more than the one candidate achieve a mark of 80 or above, as was the case this year. The classification distinction between 'outstanding' and 'excellent' is usually, but not always entirely quite apparent from the written feedback.

The range of topics chosen was indeed appropriate and it was a rewarding experience as an external to view such an impressive selection of subjects cutting across historical periods, case studies and current critical and theoretical material. The dissertations of the highest standard invariably had very specific research questions or issues to be addressed, the focus and structure remained clear throughout, and the presentation was often of a professional standard. Above all they demonstrate the quality of the research-led teaching and in many cases the high level of the students' ambition and independent reflection.

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?

These administrative arrangements and the operations of the Board were all conducted properly and without problems

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

The Art History academic and administrative team should be commended for the standard and delivery of their programme. In what are nationally challenging times for programmes such as this one, the plans to be put into operation for re-designing the provision for 2016 are timely and well-considered and I look forward to seeing the results of these.

School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies

University of Leeds  
Old Mining Building, Leeds LS2 9JT



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Dear

Many thanks; for agreeing to act as our external, for making the process as smooth as possible, and for your report. Here I am formally replying to your report, but my thanks for all your activity should also be noted.

I am pleased that the Art History programme in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies compares well with other programmes. It is absolutely our aim to provide the best programme we can while maintaining the distinctive offer that Art History at the University of Leeds has become internationally known for. I am pleased that you note that we meet with national benchmarks. I also note your comments that the range of assessment allows students full scope to engage with the programme and that our support and guidance was of a high standard. It is certainly an area that we will continue to monitor with vigilance.

I am glad that the standard of student work corresponds with the highest standard, and this was particularly evident in the dissertation. It is an area that we feel modestly proud about, and although the work is always the student's own, members of staff really do engage with the process. As to the mix of modules, I agree that we do try to cover a broad range of art historical themes and areas, although it may be that we will have to work on the sustainability of some of these. As you note, national pressures on recruitment are set to become challenging and we have a continued commitment to monitoring our programme in the light of these changes.

I look forward to another year of high quality delivery across our teaching provision and hopefully the maintenance of standards to allow another report such as this.

Many thanks for all your time and attention, it is genuinely appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Acting Head of School