

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:	English
Subject(s):	MA in Theatre and Global Development
Programme(s) / Module(s):	ENGL 5523M Uses of Theatre ENGL 5563M Making Theatre in the Community Final Dissertations
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.

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?

Yes

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

As flagged in my remarks last year and emphasised at the Board, it is essential that the reflexive Praxis which forms the spine of the MA as a whole is rigorously framed so as to be both effective in its own right and – crucially – to extend the ideological component that distinguishes this degree by means of a well set up placement. The theoretical argument has to be extended by practical means. The essays setting this framing up (ENGL 5523M) are the touchstone whereby the candidate then navigates what can be a practical placement experience (ENGL 5563M) that often stretches, confounds and even contradicts expectations. It is the measure of the best writing out of this Praxis that ideological clarity and its counterpart in detailed practical preparation can make good of challenging experiences in the field, every bit as much as it does of “successful” workshops that affirm pre-decided aims and aspirations.

This is a very exacting pedagogical journey to frame (intellectually) and to manage (practically) and at the top end of the work this year, as with last, it elicits very fine writing indeed. The dissertations at their best show how Praxis itself is a language, opening up knowledges that can be accessed in no other way and bringing documentation generated through workshops in community settings to the demanding task of evidencing clearly the research questions tracked through each iteration of the practice-based cycle.

I applaud both the framing and management of the programme of work this year, building as it does on the strengths I first highlighted in 2013/14. Often the individual student's journey from a higher initial mark for the first theoretical essay, through a lower mark for the placement-based practice, culminates in a really rigorous dissertation and this set of framings, testings and iterations are what distinguish the programme as a whole. I applaud its rigour, its consistency and its flexibility equally and - most of all - the modelling of an authentic practice-base research cycle, with assessment checks and balances (including reports from the placement hosts) that do justice to its necessary complexity.

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.*
- Learning Outcomes are articulated clearly and with a flexibility that allows for a wide range of placement experiences.
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 way that the reporting from placement partners is set alongside the academic feedback is notably well managed and articulated.
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.*
- This is a weaker cohort than the previous academic year overall and it would appear to be the challenging nature of the placements in ENGL 5563M that tests the cohort rigorously in the professional domain. This is a core feature of the MA and - given its overarching aim to bring the candidate to a clear sense of their own voice in Praxis - it is the carrying through of the individual intellectual project into a community setting that requires assessment schema to test ideology and practice *working together*. The difficulty in gaining a Distinction is a necessary one and this year that difficulty has proven to be tough but fair.
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 would commend the placement management and assessment in particular as well as the overall architecture of the programme.
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.*
- As above. The programme is taught from the research specialisms of staff (as and when applicable) and its structure enables the student to draw on their expertise in formulating their own research questions.
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: an impressive range of topics.

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?

Very satisfied.

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

As before I have found this a most rewarding professional task and one that enables me to experience best practice in the work of colleagues as it plays out in the detailed management of a complex programme. The programme is quite unique and it is an honour to be able to examine it in this role.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

12 February 2016

Dear

Thank you for your report as External Examiner on our MA programme in Theatre and Global Development.

Your report has now been considered by the School's Taught Student Education Committee and I have incorporated that committee's response into my comments here.

We note your praise for the way the programme mixes different kinds of practice and challenge as a necessary aspect of its success.

We also take note your view that this year's cohort was seemingly weaker than in previous years, but are reassured by your sense that their assessment was rigorous and in keeping with the challenges appropriate to this programme.

We welcome your strong sense of the importance of the placements to this programme. It would be only right for us to point out, however, that we had some serious difficulties with regard to their management last session; and so it would be helpful to discuss this when you are next here in Leeds. We are very pleased that you perceived the assessments associated with the placements to be worthy of commendation.

On behalf of the School, I would like thank you for all your helpful work for us over the last session.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School