

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):	<i>Theatre Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons)

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
There are no matters for urgent attention.

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.*

- 1) The ILOs are appropriate to the structure and content of the modules:
- 2) Standards are appropriate for the awards under consideration.

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 programme is entirely compatible with similar programmes at other institutions; in fact, in some components (the organisation and execution of the Practical Essay, for example) the programme exceeds the work done at comparable 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.*

- 1) The course includes a variety of assessment types: essays, exams, analytical performance presentations, and performance work. These methods fit the nature of the subject; and the evidence from the material I have sampled is that the marking is rigorous and careful. On average, I would say that the standard of marking in the subject area is very high.
- 2) As far as I can infer from the course materials, the assessments, and the practical work that I have seen, I would rate the quality of teaching in the subject to be high. Students are expected to read around the subject, and to reflect that reading in their work; they are encouraged to develop academic and creative responses to the assessment tasks; the courses are designed to take students through the key components of the subject area; and the summative judgements on the students' work are rigorously arrived at.

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.*

- 1) The Workshop Theatre should be proud of the work that the students produce: the general standard is comparable to similar institutions, and, at the higher end of the grades awarded, the work that the students produce is quite exceptional.
- 2) At the lower end of the marking range, students show an unwillingness to engage with appropriate secondary texts (the primary material is covered at all levels of assessment). At the higher level, students produce work which would earn respectable grades at MA level. As in the previous year, the student cohort work together as a group very well indeed, and this is to be commended.

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.

Since the previous academic year, the Practical essay has been moved from an individual assessment to an assessment in which students could work in groups: the impact of this was carefully monitored during this year's assessments, and I am satisfied that the students were assessed rigorously and fairly. The Practical Essays remain an example of good practice, both in terms of the range and quality of the work produced, and in terms of the professional standard of work the department requires as standard.

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.

Departmental research is reflected in the range of modules offered: I would recommend that the School of English as a whole should resist the temptation to slim down the range of modules offered to second and third year students; these provide staff with an excellent opportunity to link their research to their teaching, and for students to engage with staff at the leading edge of their disciplines.

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.

The material was sufficient.

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.

I was given appropriate documentation.

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 provided with all draft examination papers; the nature and level of the questions were appropriate.

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?**

I was sent full runs of work from modules; I was therefore able to sample as much as I wanted from each module. I was able to attend all the Practical Essay assessments. The scripts I saw were for the most part clearly marked and annotated.

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

Yes to both questions.

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, to all three questions.

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

I would like to commend the administrative staff in the School of English, who provided me with information about the assessment process throughout the year. It is crucial that the liaison between departmental staff and examiners be as smoothly conducted as possible, and the School of English is exemplary in this regard.

27 February 2016

Dear

Thank you for your helpful report as External Examiner on our BA programme English Literature and Theatre Studies for the 2014-15 session.

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

We are pleased that you consider the standard of our marking to be 'very high' and that the attainment of the top end of the cohort is 'quite exceptional'. So, too, your commendation of the Practical Essay as 'an example of 'good practice' is pleasing to hear – particularly since it has undergone recent changes – as you note.

We note your suggestion (under question 7) that our research is manifest in the range of modules offered and your comment that the School as a whole 'should resist the temptation to slim down the range of options offered'. We aim to maintain a very healthy range of modules while integrating the Final Year Project into our programmes. As you will appreciate, this will give students on programmes in English Language and Literature and English Literature the same opportunity as those you are Externally Examining on QW34

On behalf of the School, I would like to thank you for all your excellent work for us during the last session.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School