

# 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:	Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	Performance Design
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Modules: PECI 2401 Image-based Performance PECI 2403 Design Presentation PECI 3401 Scenographic Scheme
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*

None

#### 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*

I completed my term of four years as external examiner in 2013-14. For 2014-15 (and 2015-16) I was invited to undertake an additional two years as external examiner on the Performance Design modules, as these modules are being phased out in the new curriculum. My report this year, then, is concerned with only three Performance Design modules.

#### 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.*

As I only reviewed Performance Design modules in 2014-15, my overview of the programme was limited. However, as in past years, the programme aims and ILOs appeared well matched to the content and structure of the individual modules I moderated. The structure and content of the programme is coherent, offering clear pathways for students' progression. It encourages and supports increasing complexity and independence in students' thinking and practice.

Standards for the award and award elements that I moderated are set at appropriate levels, with clear descriptors.

**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 of the programmes were in line with similar programmes in other institutions and national subject benchmarks.

**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 modules I moderated use a range of assessment methods, reflecting the diverse content and structure of modules. This is entirely appropriate and maps onto the spectrum of skills and knowledge that students are expected to demonstrate – including skills and knowledge in visual and oral presentation, digital and other technologies, collaborative practice, and writing. The range of assessment methods and the skills and knowledge these reflect are, I believe, one of the programme's significant strengths, allowing students with different aptitudes and interests to flourish and to extend their expertise. This diversity also has the potential to equip students with both subject-specific knowledge/expertise and an excellent range of transferrable skills.

Staff are attentive to the need to continuously revise and extend modes of assessment, to prepare students for post-university careers and to meet benchmarks and trends in theatre/performance scholarship.

Programme and Module Handbooks, together with information on the VLE, provide clear descriptions of what is entailed in the varied modes of assessment used in the programme-specific and shared modules that I moderated. This supports students in adapting to the range of different criteria the programme demands.

Assessment is clearly carried out rigorously, with widespread evidence of double-marking, moderation and team marking. In the work I sampled, written feedback was generally full, specific and constructive, giving students clear direction on their performance and advice on how to improve and develop in the future. This year I noticed the inclusion (particularly at level two) of a section of feedback where specific pointers are given on areas for improvement. This seems particularly helpful.

**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.*

As in previous years, I found the content, design and delivery of the Performance Design modules (PECI 2401 Image-based Performance, PECI 2403 Design Presentation and PECI 3401 Scenographic Scheme) to be of a high standard. The two second and one third year module provide a valuable and distinctive approach towards the study of theatre and performance, offering students an opportunity to consider theatre and performance from a scenographic perspective. The three modules see students successfully interweaving material, spatial and conceptual 'thinking' – as director/designers. This approach echoes current interest in theatre and performance studies on the other-than-human aspects of theatre and performance.

The work I viewed from the second year module, Image-based Performance, PCI2014 showed evidence of focused and innovative enquiry through practical experimentation with materials and technologies. The strongest work demonstrated an ability to synthesise image and text in complex and effective ways, producing some sophisticated 'image-essays' that interwove knowledge and understanding of visual and spatial theory, contemporary scenography/visual art and devising practices. The strongest projects showed students' locating their studies convincingly within a wider context of contemporary practice and theory.

The work on the second year module, Design Presentation, PCI2403 provides an appropriate preparation for the third year module Scenographic Scheme. Both these modules show evidence of students working effectively across a range of media and engaging with different assessment modes. The modules offer opportunities for students to develop valuable transferable skills: visual communication, oral presentation and 'pitching' skills, digital skills and 'material' thinking, ('thinking' and learning through hands-on interaction with physical materials and technologies).

In the third year module, Scenographic Scheme PCI3401, students are evidently encouraged to engage with an expanded field of theatre and performance, recognising the need for scenographic students to be able to work across a range of disciplines and to apply their skills and knowledge in different contexts.

**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.*

See response to question 4.

**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 clear evidence of the influence of staff research interests in all aspects of the Performance Design modules. This is evident in the overall ethos of these modules, where scenography is approached as generative and innovative methodology for the study of theatre and performance rather than as a set of craft skills, or as tied to one aspect of theatre and performance. The research interests of staff in scenography in an expanded field (for example, the overlap of scenography and installation, scenography and non-linguistic 'communication', the scenography of so-called immersive theatre) is evident in the modules I viewed, and in the enthusiasm and expertise the staff bring to their teaching.

**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.*

As in previous years, guidance regarding the role of the external examiner is clear and accessible. I felt well equipped to carry out my duties effectively as external examiner.

**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. I was given full and timely access to all relevant module handbooks, assessment criteria and other supporting material.

**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?**

As the modules I reviewed are practice-based, I was not provided with examination questions. However, I was given full access to module assessments and briefing. The assessment tasks are appropriate and clearly explained to students.

**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 given access to the majority of student work in the modules I moderated. I felt very confident that I had viewed sufficient material to evaluate the standard of student work and the assessment procedures. The written feedback on students work is clear, detailed and generally specific. The inclusion (particularly at level two) of a section of feedback where specific pointers are given on areas for improvement seems particularly helpful.

The marking appeared rigorous and equitable throughout.

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

n/a

**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. I was unable to attend the exam board this year, due to commitments at my own institution. However, I was able to see the profiles of students whose modules I had moderated and I am confident that all procedures were robust and that the recommendations were fair. In the four years previously that I attended the exam board it was run with efficiency and transparency.

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

Yes. I was made aware of any relevant mitigating circumstances and procedures to deal with them appeared fair and robust.

**Other comments**

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

I enjoyed having the opportunity to view Performance Design work at the University of Leeds for another year. I hope that elements of the distinctive scenographic approach towards the study of theatre and performance offered at the University of Leeds can be carried through into the revised undergraduate programme and into the new Masters programme in Performance Design. The strength of this distinctive approach is that it extends beyond narrow definitions of and vocational approaches towards performance design. It encourages and equips students to approach theatre from a non-human-centric perspective (echoing current debates in theatre and performance studies) and to develop a range of practical and conceptual skills that can be applied in a wide range of contexts.

**FACULTY OF PERFORMANCE, VISUAL ARTS and COMMUNICATIONS**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT: SCHOOL RESPONSE**

School:	PCI
Programme(s):	Performance Design BA
External Examiner:	
Academic Session:	2014-15

Comment:	Response / Action:
<p>There is clear evidence of the influence of staff research interests in all aspects of the Performance Design modules. This is evident in the overall ethos of these modules, where scenography is approached as generative and innovative methodology for the study of theatre and performance rather than as a set of craft skills, or as tied to one aspect of theatre and performance.</p>	<p>We are pleased that this is evident through student work. This ethos has underpinned the Performance Design programme from the start.</p>
<p>As in previous years, I found the content, design and delivery of the Performance Design modules (PECI 2401 Image-based Performance, PECI 2403 Design Presentation and PECI 3401 Scenographic Scheme) to be of a high standard. The two second and one third year module provide a valuable and distinctive approach towards the study of theatre and performance, offering students an opportunity to consider theatre and performance from a scenographic perspective.</p> <p>The range of assessment methods and the skills and knowledge these reflect are, I believe, one of the programme's significant strengths, allowing students with different aptitudes and interests to flourish and to extend their expertise.</p>	<p>We are pleased that the external examiner notes continued high standards in the Performance Design curriculum and in the ways that is assessed.</p>
<p>I hope that elements of the distinctive scenographic approach towards the study of theatre and performance offered at the University of Leeds can be carried through into the revised undergraduate programme and into the new Masters programme in Performance Design.</p>	<p>We continue to look for ways to ensure that the new Theatre &amp; Performance programme can reflect and address scenography as a way of making and thinking about performance.</p>
Head of School:	
Programme Director:	
Date:	9 Nov 2015