

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):	Theatre and Performance
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PECI 2101 Strategies for Research PECI 2102 Collaborative Performance PECI 2613 Cultural Flashpoints PECI 3106 Performance Project PECI 3700 Independent Research
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	

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

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?

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 learning outcomes are absolutely appropriate to the programme. The programme is well structured with a clear progression between levels and there are some excellent skills based modules in that prepare students for the independent project based work in the final stage of the programme. I had one query about the relationship between assessment and learning outcomes on the performance project and the extent to which students were being tested on the materials taught. This arose when a student's skills in song writing and musical composition secured a high mark. I was satisfied with the response I received as it was evident that the student had used and developed these skills in ways that were consistent with the learning outcomes.

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 benchmarks for Drama, Dance and Performing Arts (DDP) have been revised for 2015 and as Chair of the panel for the revisions, I was very aware of this framework when I was reviewing the curriculum materials, The main changes reflect developments in media technologies, applied theatre and employability, all of which are areas of considerable strength at Leeds. Learning outcomes need to be clear about the forms of practice based knowledge that are developed and tested, particularly in terms of skills development in performance .

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.*

There are a wide range of assessment methods, as appropriate to the multiple modalities theatre and performance as a subject area. The written work I sampled included reflective portfolios and formative plans (Strategies for Research) as well as project logs, essays and dissertations. I was impressed by the extent to which process is documented and evaluated in both written and practical work. Feedback is detailed and constructive and there was evidence of the full marking range being used, particularly at the top end. Indeed, we agreed that an exceptional dissertation marked at 85 surpassed the standards expected of undergraduate students to the point of being a commendable piece of postgraduate research and awarded the maximum mark of 90. At the lower end, however, there could be more discrimination in marking as there is a tendency to default to a third class banding for work that varied from being conceptually confused or structurally flawed to pieces that were so deficient in content (or collections of associative citation), it was questionable whether an even lower mark was appropriate. Comments need to be matched more clearly to grading criteria. Care needs to be taken that comments reflect marks as there were several instances where the comments appeared to indicate satisfactory standards had been achieved but a mark in the lower 60's had been awarded. I also identified some work marked in the lower 70s where the comments and the quality of writing was competent, rather than excellent. There were several essays where the markers queried over dependence on citation but it needs to be made explicit whether or not the work is regarded as plagiarised. I was satisfied that this had been fully discussed and the marks were appropriate, but the comments needed to be more explicit, flagging concern formally, particularly where this has been evidenced in the originality report on the electronic submission. For example, a marker referred to concern that a 'reference presented as a paraphrase was a verbatim quotation' and to it 'not being clear where extensive quotations started or finished' to a piece marked at 46, while another that was described as a 'collection of citations' that 'in the main ...are referenced' achieved a 30. I would like to see more evidence of moderating processes. I was supplied a grid but the comments of the different markers were not always evident. It is useful to see the different perspectives and how the final mark has been agreed. I would also request consistency in the presentation of examiners packs with module guidelines, the full run of marks and information from the convenor where there are areas of concern for the external to be aware of.

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.*

Students had achieved very well with the majority performing in the upper second or lower first banding on most modules. In the graduating cohort, students awarded Firsts had consistently strong profiles and this consistency in performance across modules is evidence of the rigour within the programme. As ever, for this subject area, there is a tendency for students to perform at a higher level in practical work, although there are not serious discrepancies and the individual research projects at level 3 compared favourably with dissertation work elsewhere. There was one area of weakness that could be addressed through the curriculum and this concerns historical and cultural contexts. Writing about performance rarely made reference to production histories. The 'War Songs' performance project, for example, was clearly informed by contemporary verbatim performance such as *London Road*, but I was surprised not to find references to *Oh What a Lovely War* or the work of Joan Littlewood and no mention of Derek Paget in bibliographies (whose work on verbatim and documentary theatre is was formative to the forms the students were working with). In another example, a student whose work focussed on props, made no reference to the broader scenographic contexts in which their creative practice was situated, a point made by the marker. This felt like something of a blind spot for students that I would encourage the teaching team to illuminate. It would be useful to sample a cross section of work from individual students to get a sense of how they perform across different modules and to have insight into the student assessment experience. Overall, students performance is very good indeed and is certainly consistent with standards elsewhere.

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.

This is my first year so comparisons with previous years cannot be made. In terms of good practice, however, the Strategies for Research module is an excellent model for preparing students for independent research and clearly played a role in the high quality of IRPs.

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.

This is very evidently a research led curriculum with a good balance between what is needed to provide a balanced diet of critical, historical, practical and professional perspectives with original and innovative specialist initiatives such as the cultural flashpoints module that produced some outstanding work and is some of the best second year work I have experienced. Leeds benefits from a high quality research team and their strengths in areas such as scenography, applied theatre and practice as research more broadly are evident throughout the programme.

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

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.

This was acceptable. I requested additional programme information and this was supplied.

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.

Module Handbooks were supplied and in good order. I felt the need for a programme map as a guide to the curriculum as a whole and this was supplied as a powerpoint delivered to students. I think it would be useful to supply External Examiners with the materials students receive to introduce them to the course as a whole as this enables them to fully understand and engage with the student experience as they navigate the programmes on offer.

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?

n/a

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?

There was a comprehensive range of material sent in advance and available during my visit. I would like to access practical work and to meet students on future visits.

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

This was outstanding with an excellent range of subjects and some very strong field work informing First Class studies.

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?

Administrative arrangements were efficient and professional. The Exam Board was further evidence of the engagement of the staff who are clearly invested in the students. I was absolutely satisfied with the standards achieved and the recommendations.

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

<p>In line with the national benchmark QAA guidelines for Dance, Drama and Performance, the modules considered together offered an appropriate range of assessment forms to suit the subject terrain. There were ample opportunities for students to undertake practical assessments, small group presentations, essay writing and viva examinations. The expected outcomes were clearly listed in the assessment criteria and these appeared again in the feedback sheet to demonstrate achievement in line with the original aims.</p>	<p>The range of assessments has broadened in recent years, as have initiatives to communicate to students how they are marked, now implemented into all modules. We are building on this to make marking processes even more transparent, but more efficient for staff (grademark, recorded feedback etc)</p>
<p>Use of the VLE for learning and teaching materials, assembling comprehensive module reading, information relating to assessment and the majority of teaching documents (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture capture recordings, forms etc)</p>	<p>The School has won praise from the University for its use of the VLE as a central resource for learning, teaching and administrative resources, but also for student/ staff interaction, e.g. as part of the Y3 Performance Project. We will be sure to carry this over to the new virtual learning environment the University is currently developing.</p>
<p>commented very favourably on guidance issued by module tutors for self-directed sessions in the PoP modules, offering a clear pathway to progress their practice towards the practical assessments</p>	<p>Again, this is encouraging – it is our policy to offer choice and freedom in conjunction with structure and targets in relation to practice and this pays off in modules where a strong degree of independent motivation is important, particularly at Level 3. We continue to step up efforts for students to increase their research and reading during private study times for modules.</p>
<p>The final year projects allow students to make best use of their skills by selecting subjects and styles of teaching/assessment that suit their strengths. It is clear that students who are diligent can build on their progress year on year through the feedback and through the structure of the course that is designed to steadily build on knowledge and skills in each strand (Processes of Performance for example).</p>	<p>We are pleased about these encouraging comments re building a pathway for independent practice and research for our students. Learning contracts and specialised tutorial support for students working in small groups are a strong feature in Yrs 2 and 3. Both examiners commented that the practice across all study routes remains at a high standard, at times near-professional. We will do our best to retain this quality.</p>

<p>singled out the modules Strategies for Research and Independent Research Project for praise – the former ‘an excellent model for preparing students for independent research’ which clearly played a part in some very high level of achievement in the latter, IRP. also stated that the strongest IRP project were of publishable quality.</p>	<p>This achievement is that of the whole school and of the leader of both modules, Both modules have been carefully honed and have had improvements implemented year on year. Learning and assessment methods now feel solidly connected across both modules and students have benefited from staff’s commitment to these processes.</p>
<p>Strengths in research-led teaching: ‘This is very evidently a research led curriculum with a good balance between what is needed to provide a balanced diet of critical, historical, practical and professional perspectives with original and innovative specialist initiatives such as the cultural flashpoints module that produced some outstanding work and is some of the best second year work I have experienced. Leeds benefits from a high quality research team and their strengths in areas such as scenography, applied theatre and practice as research more broadly are evident throughout the programme.</p>	<p>This is a great motivation for staff and rewards the commitment to deliver and expand research-led teaching as we set out on the first year of the 2015 version of Theatre & Performance and plan new module options at L2 and 3.</p>
<p>In some modules e.g. Performer Training, the 1st marker and 2nd marker comments and marks were recorded clearly through email exchange provided to external. However there is still inconsistency in this and a simple form to show any discrepancies and how they have been resolved would help standardise this process.</p>	<p>This has been taken on board and there will be a template to record marker comments or correspondence along with existing ones, which record marks. Action: team</p>
<p>Both Externals: It would be beneficial for course and feedback scrutiny to be invited at least once a year to a practical assessment. This was also suggested last year but did not happen.</p>	<p>We agree that it would be invaluable for us if the External Examiners could see assessed practice. This is in progress, the Exam Officer having sought views on the best dates to invite and for 15/16.</p>
<p>Both Externals: There was some inconsistency in some modules between the mark awarded the written comments given in feedback for the student. Since staff use the assessment criteria and the level descriptors that are given to students it would be worth just checking that the wording used in these match the mark awarded.</p>	<p>This was mentioned at the first staff development day of 2015/16 and more discussion will take place across modules, particularly the IRP, where there is a lot of staff interaction around synchronising marking processes.</p>

<p>There was some inconsistency in the range of scripts/practical assessments sent to me. For instance with one course I was sent mainly 1st class work. It would be helpful if this could be standardised so that I saw samples of top, middle and bottom marks plus all fails. However, I was able to access other work through the VLE and I did do this for the course referred to above. There were no issues in the marking consistency and feedback.</p>	<p>We will issue guidelines around the standardisation of samples sent to Examiners – they should always include work from a range of marks and there should be consistency around the contents of samples in general. / programme managers/ module leaders</p>
<p>There was one area of weakness that could be addressed through the curriculum and this concerns historical and cultural contexts. Writing about performance rarely made reference to production histories</p>	<p>This has been discussed at the Curriculum Development Group and will be tabled again as we move forward with planning for new module options. all staff</p>
<p>Head of School:</p>	
<p>Programme Director:</p>	
<p>Date:</p>	<p>11th Nov 2015</p>

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 Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	Theatre and Performance
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PEC1: 2501, 2680, 2506, 2503, 2507, 3501
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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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 areas that need urgent attention prior to the programme being run next year. Minor improvements are suggested later on in the report.

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?

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

- 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 programme aims and ILOS were appropriate for the levels of the award and expectations for each year group. As stated last year, these learning aims are presented in a clear way for students and show how the expectations for yearly progression are mapped into the detail of each course.
- 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.*

As stated last year, the programmes are commensurate with the current national benchmarking and with standards of other similar institutions with which I am familiar. The expectations of students are appropriate at each level and students seem to respond well to the high degree of learning development and professionalism expected of them. The use of new technology in learning is continuing to increase as appropriate to each module and grounded in practical and conceptual rationales rather than as a hasty addition.

The programme continues to have strengths in combining theoretical/practical learning with an outward focus on application through community and industry contacts. Given the challenging job market this remains an important and commendable aspect of the programme at Leeds.

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.*

In line with the national benchmark QAA guidelines for Dance, Drama and Performance, the modules considered together offered an appropriate range of assessment forms to suit the subject terrain. There were ample opportunities for students to undertake practical assessments, small group presentations, essay writing and viva examinations. The expected outcomes were clearly listed in the assessment criteria and these appeared again in the feedback sheet to demonstrate achievement in line with the original aims.

This is a tightly structured course that is taught consistently at a high level as demonstrated by the overall student achievement and exceptional levels the best students are able to achieve. The course materials that I was given and that I accessed through the VLE are detailed and clear with a good range of supporting resources and texts signalled for each course.

I was particularly impressed this year with the way that staff helped students to structure their self-directed sessions in POP3 and 4. Weekly suggestions for useful tasks and collaborative processes were offered as a means towards generating best practice in non-tutor led time. There is no doubt that this would contribute to good time management and successful use of rehearsal time as students moved into making their own performances.

Last year I noted the excellent contract process established with students as they undertake their final year of Processes of Performance module. It was good to see this continuing and with a more detailed element on ethical responsibilities. This type of document should prove useful for students in understanding the types of expectations they will encounter in later professional work.

Suggestions: There was some inconsistency in some modules between the mark awarded the written comments given in feedback for the student. Since staff use the assessment criteria and the level descriptors that are given to students it would be worth just checking that the wording used in these match the mark awarded.

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.*

The standard of work achieved by students in 2nd and final year of the programmes was generally high with several excellent first class awards given and most achieving final marks within the upper second classification.

The span of marks across the modules I saw was usually broad, showing staff confidence in using the full range of marks.

Bunching of grades when modules contain sizably weighted group assessments was avoided through the use of individual moderating methods to assess each student's process and performance within the group. For instance, in PEC1 2503 one student ended up with a mark in a higher classification than the rest of the group. The reason for this was clearly evident in the assessment materials and feedback comments supplied to me.

Feedback given to students was detailed and clearly related to the assessment criteria with a few exceptions as outlined above. Emphasis was placed on giving students specific suggestions for improvement and when I looked at online marking (PEC1 2506) there even more helpful comments to support student development. As last year, even the best assessments included helpful comments on how to extend research and writing skills to improve further.

I did not notice specific weaknesses in the cohort of students. Rather, they seemed to be achieving differently according to their preferred mode of assessment as would be expected on a course of this kind. The final year projects allow students to make best use of their skills by selecting subjects and styles of teaching/assessment that suit their strengths. It is clear that students who are diligent can build on their progress year on year through the feedback and through the structure of the course that is designed to steadily build on knowledge and skills in each strand (Processes of Performance for example).

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

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.

In response to last year's suggestions I noted that:

1. The selecting of strands from the larger courses (Processes of Performance) for external scrutiny worked very well and could be continued next year.

2. The sending of material on DVD and/or zipped files also worked very well and lessened the load on the external visit days. We suggested that this could be done for POP 4 even though it would only be a week before the exam board.
3. There did not seem to be the same issue as last year re border marks, with staff making clear decisions on class rather than use the 59, 69 border marks.
4. In some modules e.g. Performer Training, the 1st marker and 2nd marker comments and marks were recorded clearly through email exchange provided to external. However there is still inconsistency in this and a simple form to show any discrepancies and how they have been resolved would help standardise this process.
5. It would be beneficial for course and feedback scrutiny to be invited at least once a year to a practical assessment. This was also suggested last year but did not happen.

Comments of good practice are recorded above in answers to Q3 and Q4.

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.

Since this is a research active department, all the levels of teaching I looked at have been influenced by tutors research knowledge and activities. This aspect of curriculum design is embedded into the structure of the programme and is evident through the detailed and relevant bibliographies and resources suggested for each module.

In terms of methodology also, the course benefits from research active staff disseminating their distinctive methods of studying performance and theatre. Practice as Research continues to be debated so it is important that students understand how their range of assessment forms are a part of this larger discourse. The loop between practical research and text based research is made very clear within this programme and reinforced in the feedback to students.

It is clear from the final year projects in POP5 that students have been very well prepared to undertake self-directed research in both written and practical forms. Staff have high expectations of the level that students can achieve and are able to support their success in part through directing learning towards current initiatives in professional practice. In the strands I considered this year from POP5, it was a pleasure to see the degree of confidence students had in their practical projects arising in no small degree from the physical and theoretical research undertaken.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

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

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 there was sufficient guidance and as this was my second year I was already familiar with such guidance.

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.

On the whole this was all sent to me or made accessible at my visit in forms that were easy to follow and all in good order. The zipped files and DVDs etc. were helpful in providing a good range of material, not just the written work.

Suggestions for next year as mentioned: send out POP4 earlier when marked prior to the exam board. Stay with the method of selecting strands from POP courses to track through the degree.

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?

N/A no timed exams.

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?

There was some inconsistency in the range of scripts/practical assessments sent to me. For instance with one course I was sent mainly 1st class work. It would be helpful if this could be standardised so that I saw samples of top, middle and bottom marks plus all fails. However, I was able to access other work through the VLE and I did do this for the course referred to above. There were no issues in the marking consistency and feedback.

For POP4 it was hard to assess specific students in relation to their feedback because I didn't know who they were in the DVD recording of the large practical group. This could be solved through external coming to see practical work or through indicating which student in the practical assessment ties into the feedback sheets provided.

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

N/A I did not look at dissertations.

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 this was all done most efficiently and in a more streamlined way than last year. Everything went very smoothly and all was clear. I was at the exam board and I was satisfied with the care and attention given to slightly anomalous cases.

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

This was dealt with thoroughly prior to the exam board and therefore at the board it was only necessary to summarise the necessary adjustments for mitigating circumstances and medical evidence. This was a very good change as it speeded up the board and ensured confidentiality for students concerned.

Other comments

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

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

School:	PCI	
Programme(s):	BA (Hons) Theatre & Performance	
External Examiner:		
Academic Session:	2014/15	
Comment:	Response / Action:	
<p>As stated last year, the programmes are commensurate with the current national benchmarking and with standards of other similar institutions with which I am familiar. The expectations of students are appropriate at each level and students seem to respond well to the high degree of learning development and professionalism expected of them. The use of new technology in learning is continuing to increase as appropriate to each module and grounded in practical and conceptual rationales rather than as a hasty addition.</p> <p>was the Chair of the panel for the revisions and noted in her report that was 'very aware of this framework when I was reviewing the curriculum materials, The main changes reflect developments in media technologies, applied theatre and employability, all of which are areas of considerable strength at Leeds.'</p>	<p>We are delighted with the externals' comments about the overall functionality of our programme in relation to national benchmarking standards, particularly with regard to established strengths.</p>	
<p>The programme continues to have strengths in combining theoretical/practical learning with an outward focus on application through community and industry contacts. Given the challenging job market this remains an important and commendable aspect of the programme at Leeds</p>	<p>While 'praxis' and industry focus have been at the core of the programme from the outset, we have managed to make the links between student learning and employability stronger in recent years and will continue to drive this agenda.</p>	

<p>In line with the national benchmark QAA guidelines for Dance, Drama and Performance, the modules considered together offered an appropriate range of assessment forms to suit the subject terrain. There were ample opportunities for students to undertake practical assessments, small group presentations, essay writing and viva examinations. The expected outcomes were clearly listed in the assessment criteria and these appeared again in the feedback sheet to demonstrate achievement in line with the original aims.</p>	<p>The range of assessments has broadened in recent years, as have initiatives to communicate to students how they are marked, now implemented into all modules. We are building on this to make marking processes even more transparent, but more efficient for staff (grademark, recorded feedback etc)</p>
<p>Use of the VLE for learning and teaching materials, assembling comprehensive module reading, information relating to assessment and the majority of teaching documents (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture capture recordings, forms etc)</p>	<p>The School has won praise from the University for its use of the VLE as a central resource for learning, teaching and administrative resources, but also for student/ staff interaction, e.g. as part of the Y3 Performance Project. We will be sure to carry this over to the new virtual learning environment the University is currently developing.</p>
<p>commented very favourably on guidance issued by module tutors for self-directed sessions in the PoP modules, offering a clear pathway to progress their practice towards the practical assessments</p>	<p>Again, this is encouraging – it is our policy to offer choice and freedom in conjunction with structure and targets in relation to practice and this pays off in modules where a strong degree of independent motivation is important, particularly at Level 3. We continue to step up efforts for students to increase their research and reading during private study times for modules.</p>
<p>The final year projects allow students to make best use of their skills by selecting subjects and styles of teaching/assessment that suit their strengths. It is clear that students who are diligent can build on their progress year on year through the feedback and through the structure of the course that is designed to steadily build on knowledge and skills in each strand (Processes of Performance for example).</p>	<p>We are pleased about these encouraging comments re building a pathway for independent practice and research for our students. Learning contracts and specialised tutorial support for students working in small groups are a strong feature in Yrs 2 and 3. Both examiners commented that the practice across all study routes remains at a high standard, at times near-professional. We will do our best to retain this quality.</p>

<p>singled out the modules Strategies for Research and Independent Research Project for praise – the former ‘an excellent model for preparing students for independent research’ which clearly played a part in some very high level of achievement in the latter, IRP. also stated that the strongest IRP project were of publishable quality.</p>	<p>This achievement is that of the whole school and of the leader of both modules, Both modules have been carefully honed and have had improvements implemented year on year. Learning and assessment methods now feel solidly connected across both modules and students have benefited from staff’s commitment to these processes.</p>
<p>Strengths in research-led teaching: ‘This is very evidently a research led curriculum with a good balance between what is needed to provide a balanced diet of critical, historical, practical and professional perspectives with original and innovative specialist initiatives such as the cultural flashpoints module that produced some outstanding work and is some of the best second year work I have experienced. Leeds benefits from a high quality research team and their strengths in areas such as scenography, applied theatre and practice as research more broadly are evident throughout the programme.</p>	<p>This is a great motivation for staff and rewards the commitment to deliver and expand research-led teaching as we set out on the first year of the 2015 version of Theatre & Performance and plan new module options at L2 and 3.</p>
<p>In some modules e.g. Performer Training, the 1st marker and 2nd marker comments and marks were recorded clearly through email exchange provided to external. However there is still inconsistency in this and a simple form to show any discrepancies and how they have been resolved would help standardise this process.</p>	<p>This has been taken on board and there will be a template to record marker comments or correspondence along with existing ones, which record marks. Action: team</p>
<p>Both Externals: It would be beneficial for course and feedback scrutiny to be invited at least once a year to a practical assessment. This was also suggested last year but did not happen.</p>	<p>We agree that it would be invaluable for us if the External Examiners could see assessed practice. This is in progress, the Exam Officer having sought views on the best dates to invite and for 15/16.</p>
<p>Both Externals: There was some inconsistency in some modules between the mark awarded the written comments given in feedback for the student. Since staff use the assessment criteria and the level descriptors that are given to students it would be worth just checking that the wording used in these match the mark awarded.</p>	<p>This was mentioned at the first staff development day of 2015/16 and more discussion will take place across modules, particularly the IRP, where there is a lot of staff interaction around synchronising marking processes.</p>

<p>There was some inconsistency in the range of scripts/practical assessments sent to me. For instance with one course I was sent mainly 1st class work. It would be helpful if this could be standardised so that I saw samples of top, middle and bottom marks plus all fails. However, I was able to access other work through the VLE and I did do this for the course referred to above. There were no issues in the marking consistency and feedback.</p>	<p>We will issue guidelines around the standardisation of samples sent to Examiners – they should always include work from a range of marks and there should be consistency around the contents of samples in general. PK/ programme managers/ module leaders</p>
<p>There was one area of weakness that could be addressed through the curriculum and this concerns historical and cultural contexts. Writing about performance rarely made reference to production histories</p>	<p>This has been discussed at the Curriculum Development Group and will be tabled again as we move forward with planning for new module options. all staff</p>
<p>Head of School:</p>	
<p>Programme Director:</p>	
<p>Date:</p>	<p>11th Nov 2015</p>