

**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 & Cultural Industries

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MA in Writing for Performance and Publication

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

Modules examined:

Semester 1

- (1) Story Workshop
- (2) Writing for Theatre & Radio
- (3) (Monitoring only) Research Perspectives

Semester 2

- (4) Individual Project
- (5) Writing for Film & Television
- (6) Research Project

**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*

**. Completion of the review of the shared Research Perspectives module (This review is already underway and I am confident the re-modelling suggested will address the issues raised).**

**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*

## 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 programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are commensurate with the level of the award, and standards are appropriate.**

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 do meet national subject area comparisons**

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 assessment methods and degree classification of this programme are in line with expectations. Student performance indicates that teaching learning and assessment on this programme are very good.**

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.*

**From the work submitted, students did appear to have been given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs. This cohort achieved an appropriate range of outcomes, and were particularly strong at the upper end of the range.**

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 am a new External Examiner, so changes/improvements are difficult to judge. For areas of good practice, see below.**

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.*

**The influence of research on the approach of this MA programme is clearly evident. The latter part of the Research Perspectives module feeds well into the 60-credit Research Project. These projects formed the strongest element in the MA.**

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

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.*

It 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.*

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?

Papers were provided and 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?

Yes.

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

Yes on both counts.

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?

The arrangements were excellent.

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

There was little need for this, but what I saw gave me confidence for future occurrences.

Other comments

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

From what I have observed as a first-time external examiner there is much to be commended in the way this MA is conducted. The achievements of the better students in this cohort demonstrated considerable promise, and the polish they brought to their Research Project work suggests that they have been expertly guided, and their talents carefully nurtured, by a very committed academic staff team. At the same time, there was evidence of good guidance and encouragement to those students whose work was less advanced. There is a wide range of facility with English language proficiency in these submissions, particularly in the Writing for Film and TV module, which in this cohort attracted several students for whom English is not their first language. This is difficult to manage in a module which also attracts high-achieving students with professional aspirations and may require close monitoring as the programme grows. I was impressed by the detail and subtlety of the written academic feedback to the submitted work, and the staff should be commended for this. Their students benefit from clear and wise critique and advice. It is apparent that much time, thought and effort has gone into these feedback responses, and I would urge staff to continue this excellent practice. More broadly, the research-into-story emphasis of the programme leads to some well-structured creative work and – at their best – some fine critical essays. However, this may have some cost (at least, in this cohort) in a lack of adventure in form, especially in the prose submissions. Since the MA does include prose in its remit, I would recommend that consideration be given to expanding the excellent but small staff base to include a prose specialist.

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

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| School:            | Performance and Cultural Industries        |
| Programme(s):      | MA Writing for Performance and Publication |
| External Examiner: |  |
| Academic Session:  | 2014-15                                    |

| Comment:   | Response / Action:  |
|--|---|
| <p>“Completion of the review of the shared Research Perspectives module (needs urgent attention)...I am confident the re-modelling suggested will address the issues raised.”</p>  | <p>As the Examiner’s Report rightly points out, this review is already underway under the leadership of the School’s Director of Education in liaison with the MA Programme Directors, with a view to having changes in place for the 2016-17 session. The aim of the review is to develop an introductory research experience more relevant to the specialist needs of the School’s different MA programmes, in place of the generic module currently offered.</p> |
| <p>“The influence of research on the approach of this MA programme is clearly evident. The latter part of the Research Perspectives module feeds well into the 60-credit Research Project. These projects formed the strongest element in the MA.”</p>   | <p>We are very pleased that the Report acknowledges the excellent work done on the programme in the area of research. Obviously, these comments will be borne in mind during the review of Research Perspectives to ensure that the existing second component of the module offered to MA WPP students is retained, if not enhanced, in the reforms to be made.</p>   |
| <p>“...there is much to be commended in the way this MA is conducted. The achievements of the better students in this cohort demonstrated considerable promise, and the polish they brought to their Research Project work suggests that they have been expertly guided, and their talents carefully nurtured, by a very committed academic staff team. At the same time, there was evidence of good guidance and encouragement to those students whose work was less advanced.”</p> | <p>We are grateful to the Examiner for his comments on the quality and commitment of the teaching. We are particularly pleased to see the recognition given to the work with the weaker students, as well as those achieving the highest grades.</p>  |
| <p>“There is a wide range of facility with English language proficiency in these submissions, particularly in the Writing for Film and TV module, which in this cohort attracted several students for whom English is not their first language. This is difficult to manage in a module which also attracts high-achieving students with professional aspirations and may require close monitoring as the programme grows.”</p>  | <p>We are very much aware of this problem, particularly on the Film and TV option, which is available to students from the School of Media and Communication. We have dealt with it in 2015-16 by making it clear to students that Film and TV is a very difficult module to take without a nuanced understanding of conversational English. While this has reduced numbers from Media and</p>  |

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|  | Communication taking the module, it has confined it to those with a more realistic chance of being able to write fluent dialogue. The results will be monitored to see what difference this makes.   |
| “I was impressed by the detail and subtlety of the written academic feedback to the submitted work, and the staff should be commended for this. Their students benefit from clear and wise critique and advice. It is apparent that much time, thought and effort has gone into these feedback responses, and I would urge staff to continue this excellent practice.”   | We are grateful to the Examiner for acknowledging the care and effort that goes into feedback. We have every intention of continuing to provide students with this service.  |
| “...the research-into-story emphasis of the programme leads to some well-structured creative work and – at their best – some fine critical essays. However, this may have some cost (at least, in this cohort) in a lack adventure in form, especially in the prose submissions. Since the MA does include prose in its remit, I would recommend that consideration be given to expanding the excellent but small staff base to include a prose specialist.” | We take strong note of these comments, and agree that the addition of a prose specialist to the teaching would be highly desirable as and when resources allow. In the past, we have been able to offer prose mentoring to individual students on Research Project, and this is something that we may be able to consider on an occasional basis, subject to need. |
| Head of School:  |  |
| Programme Director:  |  |
| Date:  | January 4 2016   |