

# The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

### Part A: General Information

#### Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	
Subject(s):	<i>Music</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Critical & Applied Musicology MA Computer Music MMus Critical and Experimental Composition MMus Performance
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA, MMus

#### 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

n/a

#### 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.*

All Learning Outcomes, Programme Aims, and standards were appropriate, clear, and of a comparable standard to other UK universities.
- 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
- 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 quality of teaching is clearly very high, as evidenced by the academic achievements of the majority of the students. There was a wide range of appropriate assessment methods, as one would expect from degrees and modules of a highly differentiated nature. The range of marks was also appropriately wide.

**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.

Yes, the submission briefs were clearly designed to allow the students to excel in their area of specialisation. Strengths and weaknesses of the various cohorts were no different from any other institution offering comparable programmes.

**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.*

My recommendation to use USB sticks instead of CDROMs was implemented—thanks for this; most helpful  
 My request that folder names include course names not just numbers was also fulfilled; this made finding work/marks much easier—many thanks  
 Performance programme notes were more consistently aimed at a general audience—though of course difference of cohort here might have made the difference, nevertheless I believe there was an improvement this year

**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.*

Staff teaching on the modules I oversaw are experts in their field. Their research obviously has an impact on the module specialisations, as is reasonable and to be expected. I had a strong sense of students engaging with staff research on courses where this was appropriate.

**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, no problem here

**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 to all

**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 wasn't provided with drafts (and I'm not sure in the context of the programmes I oversaw that this would be necessary) but all 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 and yes.

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

Yes and yes.

**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?**

Absolutely, yes. Everything ran very smoothly and efficiently.

**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**

There is an incredible breadth and depth of work being undertaken in these programmes. The modules are well laid out and thought out, with enough detail to focus the students but enough freedom to allow a personal focus.

As last year, there is truly excellent, detailed, expert feedback being given across the range of submissions/programmes.

Some points for consideration:

1. In the handbooks' Criteria for Pass sections, would it be worth aligning and making explicit the standards detailed with Roman numerals i-iv with the numeral grade bands given on the feedback sheets?
2. It would be great if the recital recordings could be trimmed (e.g. <<>> music started at at 3:50, with only ambient noise up until that point).
3. I also detected clicks/distortions across most of the recordings, especially during loud passages. I'm not sure if these recordings are released to the students for promotional/other use, but if so then it's a shame that distortions mar these significant records of achievement.
4. It would be great if all written submissions were available via turnitin (e.g. Computer Music Project Report MUSS5660M) so that I could view these in advance of coming to Leeds.
5. Not every mark sheet had the 2nd marker's mark: I would appreciate seeing these where possible.
6. Whilst looking at MUSS5337M (Applied Performance Studies) I wondered if there would be any benefit from having separate marks for the performance and written reviews?
7. If I'm not mistaken and haven't overlooked something, I have the impression that not all feedback was available. It would be great if it were all available next year, as this is an ever more important topic across UK academia.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

7th December 2016

Dear                      and                      and

Many thanks for your respective reports on the 2015-16 session of the taught postgraduate programmes for: Critical and Applied Musicology, Critical and Experimental Composition, Computer Music, and Performance; Music and Management; and Applied Psychology of Music.

Thank you again for the work you each put into reviewing student work from these programmes and for attending the Assessment and Classification Board. Thank you also for the encouraging words that recurred across all of your reports about the pedagogic value of these programmes, their comparability with programmes offered by other institutions, and our responses to comments from your previous reports. Given efforts that we have taken in the last year to evaluate and develop our assessment and feedback practices via teaching enhancement projects, it was particularly pleasing to read your comments about the consistency and rigour in our assessment processes and the quality of feedback that you audited. Equally, given our recent appointment of a new Assessment Lead, it was encouraging to read about your satisfaction with the arrangements surrounding your visits to Leeds and concerning the professionalism and efficiency with which you each felt the Assessment Board was conducted.

Please find below our responses to specific points raised within the individual reports:

- We will continue to encourage students on the Music and Management course to engage with theory when designing and reflecting upon the practical dimension of their project work.
- We will explore options about making feedback and coursework submissions available in the same computer space in so far as this is practicable given the functionality of the wider University systems that are utilised at Leeds (e.g. BlackBoard and the Citrix Receiver).
- We will remind staff to be careful to ensure that feedback sheets consistently demonstrate a transparent relationship between the final numerical mark assigned to a piece of work and the ticks that are placed against each criterion on which that work is assessed.
- Whilst too late to implement for the coming session, for 2017-18 we will revise our Dissertation handbook to more closely articulate how the assessment criteria listed relate to those presented on the feedback sheets, and the national descriptors for M-level study listed further down the same page in the handbook.
- Our technical teams have agreed to look into editing the beginning and end of recital recordings to remove superfluous content either side of the performances. They have also

advised that the software being used to capture these performances has received recent upgrades, which should help to minimise clicking and other such distortions.

- Whilst the large file sizes associated with the Computer Music Project Report present challenges with regard to submitting this assignment electronically, our music technology teams are continuing to explore and consider options that might make such electronic submission feasible in the future.
- We will continue to encourage staff to submit *all* feedback in sufficient time for this to be made available to the external examiners and to be clear when making their entries on mark sheets to indicate both original marks in the case of double marking, or to more clearly identify when check marking / auditing has occurred rather than double marking.
- The module team agrees that the feedback sheet template for 'MUSS5337M Applied Performance Studies' would benefit from some revisions, particularly surrounding the representation of the interim reflective writing tasks. However, it is felt that separating the marks for the performance and written reflection would somewhat take the emphasis away from the self-reflective components, which underpin the central pedagogical rationale for the module design.

As you are aware, this year we are collating our responses to the external examiner reports for our taught postgraduate programmes in line with practice elsewhere in the University. Therefore, if you have any comments on the different approach reflected by this response letter and how this addresses the points raised in your reports, we would be very grateful to receive this feedback.

Best wishes,

Head of School

Assessment Lead

Director of Student Education