

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:	School of Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	MA Applied Theatre and Intervention
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PECI5101M Research Perspectives, PECI5102M Research Project, PECI5601M Applied Theatre Practices, PECI5602M Critical Concepts in Applied Theatre
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

The collation of materials for examination requires urgent attention. I would recommend that the following materials are made available for the EE: module spec, module handbook, assessment briefs, grading criteria, full range of marks and documentation of feedback, second marking, video documentation of performance/practice-based work, module leader report, student feedback and programme committee minutes. In addition, it would be easier to retrieve module information and to assess how students engage with the programme if the EE had access to VLE. In addition, I want to raise a potential challenge for the programme, as it is relatively new. The programme will require strong staff support and personal mentoring for students to excel, particularly for time intensive modules like the MA Research Project. The applied projects may often need one-to-one support and will most likely include off-site visits. These issues should be considered in relation to recruitment and supervision of dissertations/projects.

I want to commend the incoming programme leader for providing me with all of the evidence available. The programme has successfully completed the first year of operation and I'm confident that processes for documenting and archiving module materials and assessments will be effectively put into place.

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?

No

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.*

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award.

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.*

Yes

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.*

Overall, the assessment methods were appropriate to the ILOs. The design and structure of assessment methods illustrated strengths such as providing options for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject through practice-as-research, creative writing or a more traditional academic thesis. The feedback for assessments varied from grademark reports to assessment feedback proformas. Although the assessment feedback proformas contained the learning outcomes, the grademark reports did not necessarily align with the grademark reports. I wondered how assessments were being managed across the programme in terms of consistency between varied marking sheets and otherwise. Additionally, most of the module handbooks did not clearly outline the learning outcomes. I would recommend aligning the learning outcomes and the grading criteria/rubric with the feedback proformas.

There is variation between assessment briefs regarding whether or not time allocation is included for Q&A. Would the questions and time allocation for Q&A be presented to students in advance of the assessments? Are there any requirements concerning number of references or mandatory use of electronic journals for essays/research projects? I did not see the grading criteria and benchmarks for the varied assessments. However, the assessment methods seemed appropriate for their corresponding modules and included: critical analysis and research project proposal (Research Perspectives), presentation and essay (Performance Contexts), lecture demonstration and reflective log (Applied Theatre Practices), presentation and essay (Critical Contexts) and either an essay, lecture or exposition of practical work (Individual Project). I wondered if there was room for more performance-based assessments to include performative presentations, workshops and performances related to applied practices? In addition, as the programme is geared towards professional practice, the use of a wordpress portfolio could also service the student if it was developed to be outward facing to showcase their work towards future employability. How might some of the assessments be used towards furthering their professional development / employability?

PECI 5102M MA Research Project - It might be useful to include further information in the handbook concerning the three pathways between a thesis, a creative writing project and a practice-led thesis. In addition, are students able to transfer from one to the other as a project might develop? The module might benefit from a few initial shared sessions between tutors and the student cohort as project ideas are formed, then to split into programme-specific group sessions. Two of the four projects were based explicitly on more applied practices whilst the other two were more performance-based. I wondered whether or not there was any stipulation concerning the selection of the research topic in regards to the field of study and how it might be interrogated within wider debates. The feedback differed from tutor to tutor and based on the form of assessment. In particular, the feedback often illustrated areas for further improvement.

PECI 5101M Research Perspectives - This module is formative for preparing the student towards the MA Research Project. However, there are noted differences between the kind of feedback provided and it could correlate further with the grading criteria. It might be useful to compare

the feedback from the Research Perspectives module with the MA Research Project module to explore areas that might require further academic support and to refine feedback. Students evidence good writing, composition and referencing skills. Students seemed engaged with the core module materials. However, there were several typos evidenced in the tutor feedback. It might be useful for second markers to double-check feedback to ensure that there are no typos.

PECI 5602M Critical Concepts - This module explores key theories and concepts that underpin Applied Theatre practice. However, I wondered how and why this module stands apart from the Applied Theatre Practices module or the Research Perspectives module. It seems that the material covered in Critical Concepts could be folded into either of the former modules and there could be additional room for applied practices, potentially addressing the need for more supervised workshops that could extend across varied arts practices – music, video, dance, etc. – that could inform and enrich Applied Theatre practices more generally.

PECI 5601M Applied Theatre Practices - This module provides an overview of varied Applied Theatre practices and aims to develop facilitation skills. The reflective logs demonstrated a range of writing styles using varied formats. In the module guide, it indicates that students can document their learning process through blogging, vlogging, Padlet, sketch books, note books or a combination of methods to inform the reflective log and to provide evidence for it. How might the marking be informed by the documentation alongside the reflective log? Unlike other marking sheets, the module leader provided comments throughout the reflective log itself, but there wasn't a culminating paragraph of feedback for the assessment overall. This module is core to the stated aims of the programme to link with organisations and to develop placements and internships. The programme catalogue notes that the programme's focus on intervention signals a distinctiveness that separates it from other applied theatre programmes. I'd be interested to find out more how intervention is defined and applied in relation to this module.

PECI 5104M Individual Project – This module allows the student to choose between three different assessment formats including: essay, lecture demonstration and exposition of practical work. I wondered how these students are being supervised or guided on a weekly basis between the variation of assessments. The module handbook provides a clear overview of sessions in addition to a learning contract between the student and supervisor.

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.*

There was some indication of formative assessments for some modules, but not others. I would recommend ensuring that there is parity across the programme. In addition, some modules included due dates with the deadline times. I wasn't able to see the full range of materials across the programme, but it seemed that the students were able to satisfactorily demonstrate their achievement of learning objectives.

The final marks for MA Research Project ranged from 54 to 58. The marks indicate that the students achieved satisfactory work. How might the students be further supported to achieve a higher standard? Since there was a small student cohort of four students during the 2014-2015 academic year, how will the students be further supported as the numbers increase? It seems that there are some basic assumptions about how performance can be used within community contexts that could be more rigorously debated within the research projects. For instance, one thesis is entitled 'How can the use of verbatim theatre bring empowerment to refugees and asylum seekers?' It seems that an awareness of larger debates within Applied Performance and additional supervisory guidance could have directed the research question towards a more

nuanced engagement with the subject. It would be useful to receive the assessment briefs for each of the three assessment pathways.

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.

N/A

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.

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, I received information about my role as External Examiner and my letter of invitation noted that I would be contacted by an acting External Examiner who would serve as a mentor.

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 received programme handbooks and samples of student work with corresponding feedback. I was provided with the programme catalogue for MA ATI and postgraduate handbook for PCI with Dropbox subfolders that contained: PECE 5101M Research Perspectives (module handbook, CW1 critique assignments, but CW2 missing. PECE 5102M Research Project (module handbook, one out of two CW components) PECE 5104M Individual Project (module handbook, gradesheet, feedback sheets, and one sample of a presentation submission) PECE 5304M Performance Contexts (module handbook, CW1 presentation and CW2 essay for two students. PECE 560M Applied Theatre Practices (module handbook, gradesheet, CW1 lecture demonstration and CW2 essay, PECE 5602M Critical Concepts (module handbook, CW1 Presentation and CW2 Essay, gradesheet and samples of 2 students work). The documentation for the modules was not consistent and one of two components was often missing alongside gradesheets and module leader reports.

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?**

No, I did not receive draft examination papers/assessments since I was invited to serve as the External Examiner before the Autumn 2016 board.

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?

No, I was not provided with the full range of materials. However, I would state that I was able to evaluate the standard of student work with the samples of assessments that I did receive and scripts were clearly marked and annotated.

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

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?

Yes

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

Overall Feedback

Thank you for inviting me to serve as the External Examiner for the MA Applied Theatre and Intervention programme at the University of Leeds. I congratulate the staff for successfully completing the first year of operation, amidst some programmatic difficulties and commend recruitment efforts in achieving a cohort of sixteen students in the second year!

The incoming programme leader organized module materials through Dropbox and provided a coherent overview of available documentation. Due to programmatic issues beyond her control, not all of the materials were available for review. Although I was able to retrieve some information about each module from the module handbook and the module leader comments on assessments, the module leader report was missing from most of the module folders. However, the Applied Theatre Practices module included a module leader report that indicated 100% student satisfaction. The organisation and delivery of this module seemed to be extremely effective, particularly in relation to developing facilitation skills and working with partner organisations. It could be useful to have further discussions between tutors to explore best practices and how to encourage this level of engagement across the programme. The assessment briefs were not available for most of the modules, so it was difficult to measure how well students did in relation to the work required. In general, the marking seemed fair, although there were some marks within the Research Project module that differed widely from first to second marker. The programme offers several options, but the options focused on performance based modules and I wondered if any further options could be explored to emphasis the hybrid and interdisciplinary nature of Applied Performance with the possibility for students to take modules in International Development, Health, etc. The optional Performance Contexts currently taught out on the MA PCC for 2016/16 module that provides a wider application of frameworks including intercultural performance and ethnographic research methods that I think would be important to include within the core subject area for ATI as well.

The catalogue for the MA Applied Theatre and Intervention notes that the programme is unique based on links with organisations, placements and internships. These opportunities could be made explicit within the catalogue and module handbooks and potentially could be integrated further into the MA Research Project and varied modules overall. The programme provides an opportunity to work with local organisations and to secure placements and internships. This could be made implicit throughout the programme and specific to each module. In addition, the focus on intervention could be threaded throughout the modules instead of being addressed primarily in the Critical Concepts module. As the programme grows, I would be curious to know how students will receive additional tutorial support or otherwise. How might partner organisations serve as mentors or develop the learning process further to extend the learner experience towards

employability? I look forward to the development of the programme into an increasingly rich, nuanced and rewarding programme that stretches our knowledge and understanding of Applied Theatre.

FACULTY OF PERFORMANCE, VISUAL ARTS and COMMUNICATIONS

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT: SCHOOL RESPONSE

School:	School of Performance and Cultural Industries
Programme(s):	MA Applied Theatre & Intervention
External Examiner:	
Academic Session:	15/16

Comment:	Response / Action:
<p>Quality Assurance: The collation of materials for examination requires urgent attention.</p>	<p>The EE action point relating to access of materials highlights the difficult circumstances of the first cycle of this degree programme, its management and the subsequent administration challenges. The team faced unexpected personnel changes and resultingly, the programme administration needed attention after the hire of new staff member.</p> <p>The EE's request to retrieve module information and to assess how students engage with the programme was related to lack of access to the VLE.</p> <p>As this was a new EE appointment made immediately prior to the exam board, there was not sufficient time for the team to give access to the VLE. However, in lieu of that, the Programme Manager () collated as many of the documents as were possible, making them available on a shared dropbox folder.</p> <p>This administrative delay as well as the unanticipated staff changes meant an unfortunate set of circumstances related to availability of materials which will not be an issue going forward. There are already much more transparent reporting mechanisms, and there will be full access to the VLE for the EE.</p>
<p>Assessment and Feedback: Aligning the learning outcomes and the grading criteria/rubric with the feedback proformas</p>	<p>This kind of alignment has been made much more evident in the 2016/17 modules and will be a priority for the team when revising modules for the next academic year in 2017/18.</p>
<p>Assessment and feedback: Aligning some assessments with professional profile: How might some</p>	<p>In its first 2 years the programme has had two very different semester structures, and the PM is seeking to change the</p>

<p>of the assessments be used towards furthering their professional development / employability? (eg: portfolio)</p>	<p>weighting of how professional practice is perceived across the programme. This will not change any of the programmatic structures or assessment weightings but seeks to ensure professional practical work is maintained throughout both semester 1 and 2 in a long and thin module design.</p> <p>The minor amendment of the Applied theatre Practices PECEI 5601 module that will be discussed by STSEC for 2017/18 allows for a much more professionally aligned practice.</p> <p>Individual Project PECEI 5104 assessments: in 2016/17 students will be encouraged to produce outcomes that are indicative of professional status (portfolios/ work packs/ websites/ or other outward facing specific outcomes).</p>
<p>Module administration and Assessment and Feedback: Varied assessment briefs: Need to ensure briefs include grading criteria and benchmarks</p>	<p>The PM notes the need for clearer assessment briefs. In addition to the module guide, there is always a prompt sheet that adds to the assignment brief that is posted in the VLE.</p> <p>This is followed up by a whole-group feedback sheet in which the marker collates the most common feedback that were repeated across the cohort as a means of giving areas of improvement that are more general to everyone. Specific areas for improvement, questions and feedback are still represented for each person.</p>
<p>Supporting Teaching and Learning: The programme will require strong staff support and personal mentoring for students to excel (Research project PECEI 5101 and Individual Project PECEI 5104)</p> <p>The applied projects may often need one-to-one support and will most likely include off-site visits.</p>	<p>The EE acknowledged the big shift from 2 FT and 2 PT students in the first year of the programme to 16 incoming students (of which 4 PT) in the 2016/17 cohort. This is a strength and of course has required responsive leadership about allocating staff and the support of teaching and learning. I am pleased to say this has been managed successfully.</p> <p>The EE's comment to ensure that Research Project and Individual Project are adequately resourced with supervision has already been actioned in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The PM is serving as a module shadow leader for both modules for the ATI cohort. This means that she is responsible for the specific additional time and administration requirements that attend to the needs of community engaged and off-site work. 2. In the 2016/17 year, the HOS has already allocated additional supervision from experts for both Individual Project and Research project to ensure that students and staff workload allocations are matched up with the intensive support necessary to

	<p>plan and deliver successful projects that are also good learning experiences.</p> <p>3. The expansion of the teaching/ supervision team for these two modules leaves a little more time for additional support from the PM related to ensuring access to wider training and student support needs.</p>
<p>Curriculum Development: Developing the satisfaction, integration of practical work and guest practitioners on the Applied Theatre Practices module PECE 5601: worth reflecting on best practices and how to encourage this level of engagement across the programme</p>	<p>Upon reflection, this feedback from the EE and the structure of the MA will be reflected in a module amendment to be brought into place for 2017/18 (mentioned above): It will be amended to ensure that the practical rigour and engagement with professional practices should continue across the whole year, rather than 1 semester, allowing the development of a robust portfolio of practice with much more opportunity to reflect than was in the initial 1-semester module structure.</p> <p>I would also like to see the MA cohort contribute to and have access to attending, professional development opportunities that I hope to be spearheading as ATI PM.</p>
<p>Curriculum development: Wider focus on issues such as interculturalism, ethnographic practices and key debates in adjacent fields (used in Applied Theatre Scholarship)</p>	<p>Though the EE feedback clearly related to the outgoing PCC course (Performance Contexts PECE 5304M, no longer on the books), the requirement indicates the need for contextual rigour.</p> <p>This has already been integrated in the curriculum overview I did upon entering the role of PM in September 2016. The Critical Concepts PECE 5602 module thus now includes informing discourses from refugee studies, criminology, health and wellbeing, sociology and social policy as well as the core debates within the sub-discipline.</p>
<p>Curriculum development: Ensuring all assignments (especially Research Project) are situated within debates on Applied Theatre more generally and Interventions in particular.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff allocation: (As discussed above in the comment about support of teaching and learning) This is an area we can continue to work on to ensure there are appropriate colleagues who are able to supervise socially engaged work on the wider team. 2. Preparation via the Research Perspectives Module (PECE 5101M): in 2015/16 the module was much more constructed around generic research methods skills. The PM re-wrote the module to firstly introduce the core research methodologies, but aimed to generate curriculum content that accurately responds to the applied theatre field. (For example, assignment one is a critique of a specific approach to research methods used within 2 examples of applied theatre research) 3. The PM recognises the need to foreground Interventions

	debates more particularly and this can be done with some additional attention to curriculum in the Critical Concepts module in semester 1.
Quality Assurance/ Module Administration: Consistency of availability of records/ documentation for modules for external examiner	Module reports were not always available. This can be explained due to the delicate issues around staffing and the EE's lack of access to the VLE. Since September 2016, all module reviews and records are being maintained accurately, and this will be of utmost importance for the EE.
Programme administration: Developing clearer guidelines related to partner organisations, internships and employability (in modules and across the programme)	This is an important opportunity for the MA ATI to inform the good practice in the school, and the PM is working on ensuring that there are codes of conduct. Memoranda of agreement and the development of robust reporting in modules that are outward facing. This is an opportunity to build on successes elsewhere in the UG programme, for example; but more can be done to ensure that there are clear guidelines about expectations and deliverables that include details related to ethics, professionalism in the field, and best practice.
Head of School:	
Programme Director:	
Date:	01/02/2017