

**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:	Performance & Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in Writing for Performance and Publication
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	<p>Modules examined:</p> <p>Semester 1</p> <p>(1) Story Workshop</p> <p>(2) Writing for Theatre &amp; Radio</p> <p>(3) (Monitoring only) Research Perspectives</p> <p>Semester 2</p> <p>(4) Individual Project</p> <p>(5) Writing for Film &amp; Television</p> <p>(6) Research Project</p>

**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*

Consideration should be given to the issue of staffing resources following the rapid expansion of the MA Writing for Performance and Publication programme. Attention should be given to moving towards gender equity in staffing as the programme builds.

**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 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 was not generally of the highest standard, neither was it especially weak. A sound middle-ground group with one or two outstanding students.

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.*

The changes to the Research Perspectives module seem to be progressing in its application to this MA programme. A further year should see it well embedded.

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 research element of these MA modules is generally of a high standard – certainly better than one might find on some comparable programmes elsewhere. Achieving a balance between this and the encouragement of creative individuality may be an issue. Some of these students seemed a little theory-bound; there is a danger that this might restrict artistic ambition.

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

I have just been appointed as a mentor. I will comment on this next year.

## 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.*

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. Some early hard-copy papers went astray but this was put right efficiently closer to the time.

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

Yes. It appears the staff give careful advice.

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. I attended the Board which was efficient and balanced. The conduct of the Board and its sound discussion and recommendations were impressive.

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

This is my second year as external examiner and I continue to be impressed by the conduct of this MA. Though the standard of this year's work was not by and large exceptional, this was clearly a mainly diligent set of MA students whose abilities had been well-guided by the very dedicated staff. (Of the papers I saw there was, however, one outstanding student whose work would have been regarded as of the highest level in any institution I have contact with). The traditional rigour of the research element in the Leeds MA was once again apparent, and is a strength which marks this course out. It does, however, lead me to one thought: Whereas this research emphasis does nothing but good for the more confident students, it did seem that this year's middling students may – for a Creative course – have been a little too much in thrall to theory and as a result lacking in adventure. There is a delicate balance to be achieved here, and I would suggest that consideration be given to formally encouraging students in the early stages of the MA to embrace with confidence the full freedoms which the creative modules do offer. From the positivity I have witnessed in the staff, I am sure that the expressions of such freedoms would not go unnoticed and unappreciated in the marking. I was given the opportunity to have a private conversation with two MA students this year and can confirm that they were very pleased with the course and the way the modules are taught. The two areas where they would have liked an improvement both relate to staff resources. These students would both have liked more module choices, They also pointed out that there was a clear shortage of female teachers, and they would like to see that addressed.

**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:	2015-16

Comment:	Response / Action:
Consideration should be given to the issue of staffing resources following the rapid expansion of the MA Writing for Performance and Publication programme.	Immediate action has been taken in the 2016-17 session to address this issue, with seven additional temporary tutors taken on to supplement existing staff. Discussions are already underway with a view to expanding the programme team next year (e.g. with a part-time teaching fellow) assuming that recruitment numbers remain at the same or similar level.
Attention should be given to moving towards gender equity in staffing as the programme builds.	Six of this year's temporary tutors are women, meaning that the gender imbalance that has previously existed is not a problem this year. While this is a short-term solution, it has opened up opportunities for a number of talented women to contribute to the programme, and we would hope to employ some if not all of them in some capacity going forward. The programme will endeavour to support and encourage diversity in any future recruitment processes.
The changes to the Research Perspectives module seem to be progressing in its application to this MA programme. A further year should see it well embedded.	The new Research Perspectives module (5405M) does indeed appear to be a success with both staff and students. We will monitor student evaluations and review the module in order to make further modifications, if necessary, in 2017-18.
The research element of these MA modules is generally of a high standard – certainly better than one might find on some comparable programmes elsewhere. Achieving a balance between this and the encouragement of creative individuality may be an issue. Some of these students seemed a little theory-bound; there is a danger that this might restrict artistic ambition...it did seem that this year's	We're extremely pleased that the hard work we've put into developing the research component of the programme has been recognised, while agreeing entirely that over-analysis or excessive theorising can stymie creativity. We continue to strive to find the right balance, for

<p>middling students may – for a Creative course – have been a little too much in thrall to theory and as a result lacking in adventure.</p>	<p>each individual as well as the cohort as a whole. We are constantly adapting our teaching approaches in response to different students' needs in a quest to find what most inspires and motivates them to achieve their best work.</p>
<p>I would suggest that consideration be given to formally encouraging students in the early stages of the MA to embrace with confidence the full freedoms which the creative modules do offer.</p>	<p>The Story Workshop module (5402M) is designed as a creatively-led introduction to the programme, and there's a wide range of creative opportunities on Writing for Theatre and Radio (5403M), which is also taken in Semester One. The expanded teaching teams have brought greater variety of approach and expertise, and a new dynamism to these modules. We are confident that this -plus the more creative writing-orientated Research Perspectives module - is producing a more exciting and imaginative start to the programme, and we will monitor students' work to see whether it results in a greater degree of expressiveness across the cohort.</p>
<p>I was given the opportunity to have a private conversation with two MA students this year and can confirm that they were very pleased with the course and the way the modules are taught...These students would both have liked more module choices.</p>	<p>It is gratifying to know that students (these ones at least) feel positively about the programme. The growth in recruitment (a rise of more than 100% in 2016-17), if sustained, might well open the door to the introduction of new modules. This development is very much one that we'll keep in mind. However, there's a balance to be struck between widening choice and coherent programme design. There's a limit to the number of new options you can introduce before the programme loses its core definition or the cohesion of each year group. We are keen at this stage to preserve the essential characteristics of the MA as a programme in creative writing with an emphasis in playwriting and screenwriting, with the option to concentrate on one or the other, or to combine the two.</p>
<p>Head of School:</p>	
<p>Programme Director:</p>	
<p>Date:</p>	<p>28.01.17.</p>