

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015-16

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship; Arts Management
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PECI 5105M Creative Work PECI 5204M Theoretical Perspectives PECI 5209M Critical Debates in Culture PECI 5207M Arts Management and Cultural Leadership PECI 5208M Cultural Policy: Models and Debates PECI 5211M Audience Engagement and Impact PECI 5106M Performance and Collaborative Enterprise PECI 5210M Enterprise and Consultancy Practice PECI 5102M Research Project
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

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

N/A

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

N/A

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's Aims and ILOs are appropriate to the achievement of Master's degree qualification in this subject area. The programme provides an excellent balance of theoretical perspectives, research training and practical and vocational aspects. The course aims to produce graduates who will occupy administrative, management and leadership roles in cultural and creative organisations, or work in roles which draw on their skills as creative and cultural entrepreneurs in both public and private sectors, in the fields of creative work, cultural policy, regeneration, and arts and cultural management. It also offers the appropriate means of progression to PhD study.

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 of this programme are of a commensurate standard and scope to similar, competitor programmes in the UK. They have been significantly enhanced this academic year by the broadening of options to allow for further focus on audiences, enterprise and consultancy.

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.*

General comments on taught modules: there is a good breadth of modules available with varied modes of assessment, including pitch presentations, placements, academic essays, critical reflections and business plans. Students also have the opportunity for students to shape research questions around their own interests by devising their own essay and/or research questions.

Comments on specific taught modules:

PECI 5105M Creative Work

This is a focussed, thorough and coherent module, which has recently been revised in terms of content. It now covers all of the broad aspects of cultural labour in a great level of depth. The industry placement is a nice touch to help students to reflect further on the theory and discussions in the classroom. Lots of support is provided for finding a placement. For the reports, the grading looks accurate and feedback is generally a little short but it is clear and constructive. Grades were generally higher for the Project component. Next year, the assessment will change to a 35/65 split, based on recommendations made by predecessor <<>> and I, in consultation with <<>>. This will further improve this module, which has caused some concerns in the past.

PECI 5211M Audience Engagement and Impact

This is a very strong batch of assignments for this new module. The split assignment format is good to test both presentation skills and report writing. The module shows a nice integration of material that is intellectually stimulating but with a practical and vocational aspect. Overall grades for the written report were very high for this module, with plenty of grades in the 70s and 80s. The written feedback is clear, positive and encouraging and has a great format. It is succinct but detailed, with 3 or 4 things to work on. Even those with the highest grades (80 and above) had something to work on. This is excellent practice. Student feedback is excellent with 100 per cent satisfaction. It is excellent to see such a strong module in its first year that has brought the best out of the students.

PECI 5106M Performance and Collaborative Enterprise

I have some concerns about this module. Firstly, I welcome the creative and experimental approach used, which nicely complements other more practical and vocational aspects of the programme. It is also clear from the feedback, which is fulsome and detailed, that the tutor is extremely supportive of the students. However, I have a number of key concerns that I would like to see addressed by the next academic year.

- 1) The module guide is unclear on the content of the module. This is minimal information of the module structure throughout the semester. There are various accompanying and related documents, but these appear on the VLE as separate Word files. As a result, the module information lacks clarity and the key information is dispersed and fragmented across 4/5 documents. For coherence, please consolidate all of these materials into one source document, with some additional revisions to the text to make it clearer and more concrete in terms of detail on the content of the module. For example, one of the learning outcomes states: 'manipulate complex material from varied disciplines that, responding to an identified demand within the cultural industries sector'. This does not make sense.
- 2) There is a list of indicative reading with six texts. I would like to see a longer list of core reading and where books are listed, appropriate chapters and sections highlighted. I fully support creative approaches but as this is a postgraduate module, more engagement with theory is required throughout.
- 3) Part of the assessment is a critical evaluation, yet the written assignments are rather basic in demonstrating an understanding of reflexivity. Therefore, I would like to see more guidance around the topic of reflexivity both in terms of the reading list and embedded into the module structure.
- 4) As external examiner, it is crucial for me to access the students' work for the practical component, which forms 70% of the total mark. Some information was provided on the morning of the board but this was partial and did not provide me with a full sense of the assessment. For example, none of the learning contracts were made available, which seem to be a central element of the groupwork. Please supply complete materials in advance of the next exam board.
- 5) As the practical component forms 70% of the mark, it requires second marking and so I require access to the second markers comments. These were not provided on this occasion. Please provide these in advance of the next exam board.
- 6) The grading for this module appears overly generous. My assessment of the students' written work is that it was mostly descriptive, uncritical, rather superficial and lacking a reflexive voice, all of which are crucial for a critical evaluation. My concerns were substantiated and became increasingly apparent at the exam board meeting, where the individual student profiles demonstrated this very starkly. For example, several students had consistently received grades in the low 50s throughout the course of the degree programme, yet had jumped to 70+ for this module. Whilst I recognise that students can excel in one particular area and this module may have brought out the best in them, there were several of these cases, and some of these were students who were clearly struggling, with borderline fails, resits and plagiarism cases. I would like the marking of this module to be looked at by the programme management, in liaison with the module convenor. I would also like assurance that an experienced second marker will be involved in this module next academic year.

PECI 5204M Theoretical Perspectives

This is a big and well organised module that is team-taught. The split assignments ensure that the students engage with a broad base of theory. The feedback on this module varies quite a bit in terms of length and level of detail. I have some further thoughts on this, which can be seen at the end of the report on the final page.

PECI 5207M Arts Management and Cultural Leadership

This is another big and well organised module that is team-taught. Overall, the work is of a decent standard and there is a good range of marks. There are quite a high number of fails. The staff feedback is consistent: clear, succinct, focussed and constructive. Even the weakest students are encouraged through the comments, with clear instructions for improvement.

PECI 5208M Cultural Policy: Models and Debates

This module has a Western focus on cultural policy, which seems slightly limited for a programme with a large majority of Asian students. However, the content itself is sound and there is some excellent work being produced in this module, which shows a sophistication of thinking. This perhaps reflects the student-led nature of this module, which possibly attracts stronger students? The essays are good and the feedback is constructive and clear. Whilst this is a good module with a

policy focus that nicely complements some of the other aspects of the programme, its cohort of three is very small. Whilst students get lots of tutor contact, I do wonder about their classroom experience. It certainly has not diminished the quality of their scholarship but is a question that the programme team may wish to explore. There is also a question of viability, which I have provided more comments on at the end of the report on the final stage.

PECI 5209M Critical Debates in Culture and Place

This is an interesting module. The assignment encourages students to devise their own focus, so it is good to see such a breadth of topics being tackled. There is a good range of work here and a handful of fails. There is a fair bit of variation in the feedback. Failing students in particular require longer and more detailed comments, with clear instruction for improvement. I have provided more thoughts on this at the end of this report.

PECI 5210M Enterprise and Consultancy Practice

It is good to see this new module on the programme. There is a nice mix of theory and practice. The three way split in the assessment is useful for students to develop skills across presentation and pitching, report writing and critical reflection, plus there is the optional teamwork element. This is great for students but labour intensive for staff, especially with the programme already over capacity in terms of staffing. The written work is good and nicely produced. The feedback on the report component is critically constructive and clear. The feedback on the reflective essay requires some attention. Some of this is short and inadequate, at a couple of sentences in length. A handful of assignments only have one sentence, which is purely descriptive. This is not sufficient, especially for struggling students. One student – <<>> – got a top mark of 75% and yet received no written feedback at all. I'd like to see some attention paid to the feedback for the reflective essay in the next cohort. More thoughts on feedback at the end of the report. Overall, this is a strong start for a new module and I look forward to seeing how it develops. Well done to the team.

5102M Research Project

There was an interesting mix of projects and a good range of marks, with no fails. The programme had a dissertation of 82 per cent, which was an ambitious auto-ethnography project, which was awarded the School's prize for the best dissertation. The standard of these assignments is a testament to the teaching on this programme and the level of support provided by academics in the department. This builds on work of a good standard over the last few years.

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.*

Strengths – excellent understanding of theory including complex theory, analysis and grasp of key arguments, from broad-ranging and eclectic reading; general research skills and understanding of importance of methodology, particularly demonstrated by research project; skills of critical reading and thinking; ability to synthesise materials. Confidence in devising self-directed assignments and topics; skills of applying appropriate case studies, and in some cases innovative research methodologies such as auto-ethnography.

Weaknesses – there are some weaknesses in expression in English language, which then leads to lower grades as the level of comprehension is unclear.

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 introduction of the new modules 'PECI 5211M Audience Engagement and Impact' and 'PECI 5210M Enterprise and Consultancy Practice' have further strengthened the programme offer in terms of providing a greater breadth of option modules. Both modules ran this year with no problems. Audience Engagement and Impact was a particular highlight this year, with excellent student feedback and a cohort for the next intake of 50 students, with many from outside of the

school, demonstrating the relevance, appropriateness and wide appeal of the module.

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 research activities are clearly evident in the programme and support the learning objectives and delivery strategies relevant to the programme's mission. Academic staff members are active and publishing in their fields, and are proactively creating a culture of research-led teaching, introducing the students to cutting edge research and the latest aspects of academic enquiry.

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 am new in post and have been in this role for six months. During this time, I have had contact and communication with <<>>, my predecessor. We met over the summer of 2016 with the Programme Director <<>>, to make some joint recommendations to address some of the issues with the module 'PECI5105M Creative Work', which are now beginning to be implemented and will be further addressed in subsequent years.

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.

The VLE provided partial access to relevant materials. However, some of the materials for the practical group work component for the module 'PECI 5106M Performance and Collaborative Enterprise' were not available until the morning of the board and these were only partial. Also, where assignments require a second marker, such as the above named module, I would like to see the second markers comments in full in advance of the board. These were not available for this module and I would like to request this for future exam boards.

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. Materials were available through the VLE and also via the programme staff.

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 was not provided with questions in advance but I presume <<>> agreed these prior to my appointment.

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 – everything was available on the VLE and the materials were clearly marked and identifiable.

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

There was an interesting choice of subjects, reflecting the breadth of the field. The standard was good with a breadth of marks and no fails. One student from this programme received the highest score in

the school for her thesis at 82 per cent. The first and second feedback is fulsome, clear and constructive, and the grading appropriate.

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 – satisfactory arrangements, attendance and recommendations, and lots of contact from <<>>, who has been very helpful throughout.

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

Yes, everything was handled in accordance with protocol and to a professional standard.

Other comments

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

The programme overall and the individual modules look in good shape (aside from the earlier comments in section 3). There is a nice mix of modules with a breadth of content. There is broad range of assessment methods, which is good to see as it offers students the opportunity to work on reflective pieces, placements, creative evaluations and groupwork, presentations, business plans and reports, not just standardised academic essays.

I have two key points to make regarding written marking feedback and resources.

Marking/Feedback:

There is a lot of variation in staff approaches to writing marking feedback in terms of content, tone, style, length and level of detail. Whilst this is to be expected from a large teaching team, there needs to be a conversation about this. Some tutors are writing a lot of feedback (e.g. over 800 words), whilst others are writing minimal feedback, as I have detailed in section 3 above, consisting of one or two sentences, which can often be purely descriptive (e.g. 'you firstly explore...') or asking a single question (e.g. 'I'm wondering why you didn't include...'). One assignment received no feedback at all. In particular, weaker students that are getting grades in the low 50s require more instructive and fulsome feedback. There are also a handful of instances where tutors note their personal position (e.g. 'you know that I have utmost respect for those studying in a second language...'). This emotive and personal opinion has no place in the written feedback and so I'd like to remind those colleagues to apply the marking criteria as a dispassionate framework and use the criteria as a cue for comments, if necessary.

Whilst I am not requesting that all feedback is uniform and identical, I would like to invite the School to have a conversation about the appropriate length, style, format and tone etc and agree on some elements of best practice to provide guidance for all staff members. There is some excellent practice in the School in terms of the format and style of feedback on the modules Peci 5211M and Peci 5207M, which consists of one or two short and succinct paragraphs, followed by 1-4 things to work on. This is not onerous for staff and takes away the need to write long feedback, and means that key information is distilled into clear points for students to digest and reflect upon. I am encouraging the School to look at this approach and consider whether it might be used as a model for best practice that can be rolled out.

As a final note on marking, I would like to recommend that supervisors do not act as first marker for the Research Project. This is due to working intensively with particular students over a longer period of time, which could potentially impact on their ability to be impartial when marking. I should note that the written assignments that I inspected were marked accurately and fairly, but this recommendation is standard practice within other institutions.

Resources:

My final comment relates to resources. In particular, some modules have small numbers of 3 or 4 students (eg. Creative Work and Cultural Policy: Models and Debates), which is tremendous in terms of student/staff ratio, but I wonder about the student experience, especially for Cultural Policy: Models and Debates, which is 'student-led' in terms of its organisation and running. Its total success or total failure therefore hinges on the composition of the cohort and the ability and character of the individual students. This year, the cohort of three comprised excellent students, which was reflected in the final grades, but this has the potential to go very wrong. Whilst the breadth of the module choices is a key strength of the

programme, I wonder about the viability of these small modules, especially for a teaching team that is already over-stretched and under-resourced. This is, by no means, a suggestion to abolish these small modules, but perhaps a conversation about minimum numbers on modules might be useful, which is common practice within competitor institutions. Connected to this is a cap on numbers at the higher end, as I'm aware that the new module PEGI 5211M has 50 students already enrolled, with some students from outside of PCI. Whilst this provides valuable income for the School, it will inevitably place pressure on particular members of staff and if not managed properly, could adversely impact on the student experience in relation to seminar group sizes etc. Again, this is not a plea for uniformity. I am merely highlighting issues of sustainability and some comparative consideration of modules with 3 students and modules with 50 students.

This leads onto a more general point about resources. Numbers of students across the School have doubled and numbers for CCE have increased by almost 50%. Whilst the cohort has grown, the teaching team has not, and this term, this has been a particular issue due to staff illness, including the absence of the Programme Director. Therefore, I would like the School management to consider expanding the teaching team. It is typical for university senior management teams to agree to this but only in light of increased numbers first, but the School already has the students, and now requires the staff to match the size of the cohort, in order to ensure sustainability, staff wellbeing and to maintain a positive student experience.

6 November 2016

FACULTY OF ARTS HUMANITIES AND CULTURES
EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT: SCHOOL RESPONSE

School:	PCI
Programme(s):	MA Culture Creativity and Entrepreneurship
External Examiner:	<<>>
Academic Session:	2015-16

Comment:	Response / Action:
The programme provides an excellent balance of theoretical perspectives, research training and practical and vocational aspects.	This is great to hear! We developed and introduced new option modules last year to focus on hitherto neglected areas such as audience research, creative enterprise and consultancy.
The written feedback [for Audience Engagement and Impact] is clear, positive and encouraging and has a great format. It is succinct but detailed, with 3 or 4 things to work on. Even those with the highest grades (80 and above) had something to work on. This is excellent practice. Student feedback is excellent with 100 per cent satisfaction. It is excellent to see such a strong module in its first year that has brought the best out of the students.	Thanks – this is a pro forma for feedback that we will aim to roll out across the programme so that we have a more consistent approach.
Problems with Performance and Collaborative Enterprise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module documentation • Minimal reading list • Overly descriptive reflective writing • Availability of practical work for moderation • Transparency of 2nd marking • High marking 	I understand that these issues are being addressed by our DSE in discussion with the module manager. As Acting Programme Manager, I will follow-up on this process and aim to implement the suggested changes (at least regarding module documentation and second marking) by the start of Semester 2, when the module will run again.
[Cultural Policy: Models and Debates] has a Western focus on cultural policy, which seems slightly limited for a programme with a large majority of Asian students. However, the content itself is sound and there is some excellent work being produced in this module, which shows a sophistication of thinking.	This module won't run this academic year due to the module leader being on research leave. But we will certainly take this on board in the future development of the module.
The three way split in the assessment [for Enterprise and Consultancy Practice] is useful for students to develop skills across presentation and pitching, report writing and critical reflection, plus there is the optional teamwork element. This is great for students but labour intensive for staff, especially with the programme already over capacity in terms of staffing.	I totally agree. We will review this with an aim to reduce the assessments to two for the next academic year.
There is a lot of variation in staff approaches to writing marking feedback in terms of content, tone, style, length and level of detail. Whilst this is to be expected from a	See above – we do need to address this and will standardise this as a matter of

large teaching team, there needs to be a conversation about this.	urgency. The variation this year was partly due to staff illness.
I would like to recommend that supervisors do not act as first marker for the Research Project. This is due to working intensively with particular students over a longer period of time, which could potentially impact on their ability to be impartial when marking. I should note that the written assignments that I inspected were marked accurately and fairly, but this recommendation is standard practice within other institutions.	I totally agree and will raise this with both the DSE and the module manager. This is something I am keen to adopt on CCE as soon as possible.
I wonder about the viability of the small modules, especially for a teaching team that is already over-stretched and under-resourced. This is, by no means, a suggestion to abolish these small modules, but perhaps a conversation about minimum numbers on modules might be useful, which is common practice within competitor institutions.	We consider enrolment on option modules on an ad hoc basis and sometimes decide to run another module to give students as much optionality as possible. But as numbers increase this does seem to be a sensible suggestion, thanks!
Numbers of students across the School have doubled and numbers for CCE have increased by almost 50%. Whilst the cohort has grown, the teaching team has not, and this term, this has been a particular issue due to staff illness, including the absence of the Programme Director. Therefore, I would like the School management to consider expanding the teaching team. It is typical for university senior management teams to agree to this but only in light of increased numbers first, but the School already has the students, and now requires the staff to match the size of the cohort, in order to ensure sustainability, staff wellbeing and to maintain a positive student experience.	This is something that is currently under review and I am in discussion with the Head of School with a review to developing the programme team.
Head of School:	
Programme Director:	
Date:	