

**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 Design
Subject(s):	<i>Textile Design</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	DESN1545 Patterns and Culture DESN1560 Design for Textiles 1B DESN1561 Design for Textiles 1C DESN1633 Colour and the Design Process DESN2525 Design for Sports and Performance Clothing DESN2564 Design for Textiles 2A DESN2565 Design for Textiles: Specialisms DESN2640 Design Theory 2 DESN2633 Colour: Art and Science DESN3342 Design for Textiles 3: Visual Research and Analysis DESN3343 Design For Textiles 3: Critical Studio Journal DESN3566 Design for Textiles 3 - Specialisms DESN 3660 Independent Dissertation DESN3635 Computer Aided Design and Professional Design Presentation
	BA

**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*

No

**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*

It has been a pleasure to have held the appointment of external examiner at the University of Leeds for the BA Textile Design. Over the last 4 years I have seen a strong course evolve with the dedication, commitment staff. The success and high level of attainment of graduating cohorts over the years have demonstrated that the knowledge and life skills this degree provides has ensured successful employment of Leeds graduates within the textile and related Industries Worldwide often placing them in a position to gain employment that other BA Textile Design graduates from other HE Institutions would struggle to be relevantly qualified for.

My role in the post has been made easier by the efficiency of academic staff in producing relevant documentation and clarity of assessment material provided with visual material often physically displayed.

The course has evolved over the last four years embracing new trends and technologies with a strong focus on CAD skills especially in presentation work of the Critical Journal and Digital Print specialism but still insisting on the development of traditional skills such as drawing that a designer within the Industry would still require. The programme has evolved with the introduction of small 10 and 20 credit Modules that enable students to personalise and direct some of the learning in order to build upon their interest and strengths thus helping them as graduates to be successful in a rapidly changing world.

Work of the design students in the Final Module 3566 reflected a high standard of commerciality and very viable textile designs but some of the finalised printed textiles may not have been the strongest that the students had designed because of lack of technical support in in-house digital printing due to staff illness with the necessity to send work out to be commercially/externally printed at a set-time point in the year. This limited the fabric base selection which would have provided more creative individualism to be shown in the final show of work and may not have benefited the slower/weaker student due to the time scale put in place for the printing of finished designs but did as a result provide the extra challenge, learning output of formatting a design and colour files for Industry and understanding the challenges this can create. The broadening of the print option last year to include more analogue techniques did not seem to have been built upon this year which is a shame as the other specialisms within the course enable both hand and digital solutions.

I am glad to hear that there has been some capital investment into constructed woven textiles along side knit but this needs to be supported by the appropriate technical and academic staff to ensure that it can be offered to the student cohort as a design viable option. These are areas of textiles that offer good employment prospects both in the UK and abroad.

I was given the opportunity in June to meet with staff that will be delivering the Design History and Theory Modules and welcome the changes they are planning to the modules.

## 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 Learning Outcomes for the Programme BA Textile Design: Year 3 are to the appropriate standard for the award BA (Honours)
- For the three Modules Handbooks that I received as hard copies: DESN 3566: Design for Textiles 3-Specialisms, DESN3342 Visual Research and Analysis and DESN3343 Design For Textiles 3: Critical Studio Journal, the module Intended Learning Outcomes are appropriate standard for the award. These have been clearly laid out and explained in great detail as to what they mean and how they can be achieved. It was good to see consistency in the format, visual appearance of the handbooks and the information provided.

### 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/Objectives and Learning Outcomes of the Module DESN 3566: Design for Textiles 3 specialisms, and DESN3343 Design For Textiles 3: Critical Studio Journal and DESN3342 Visual Research and Analysis meet the expectations of the National Subject benchmark in Art and Design and FHEQ. Although they tend to concentrate more on skills for life-long learning and future employment they are comparable with other BA Honours programmes at other institutions that offer Textile Design as a specialism. There is a concern that too much focus weighting is placed upon the Dissertation Module that is 40 credits compared to the main practice module of 30 credits. The majority of design based courses will have a dissertation of around 20 credits that is linked to the practice in subject matter research which provides a supporting role to the practice of Textile Design.

### 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 required outcomes are very appropriate for a Level 6 (Year 3) practice based module within a textile design subject and are clearly mapped against final year levels of attainment. These are particularly clear in both the DESN 3566: Design for Textiles 3 specialisms, DESN3342 Visual Research and Analysis and DESN 3343 Design for Textiles 3: Critical Journal module handbooks, which very clearly explain the learning outputs and how they can be achieved indicating how the different assessment outputs are linked to learning outcomes.

The quality of teaching and dedication of the design teaching staff on these modules is reflected in the level of work and reflected in the student performance especially in the Design for Textiles 3 specialism: DESSN 3566 with a cohort this year of achieving: Nine, Firsts, Seventeen, 2:1's and Three, 2:2's. I felt the grades awarded were generally fair for the level of attainment achieved I had a small concern that that the higher grades awarded for Structured: Knit and Embroidery specialisms were rather high in comparison with those of print with one grade of 80 being awarded to a knit student.

### 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.*

- The students on the course demonstrated high performance levels across the cohort, with the majority above a 2:1. This year there were more First Class degrees awarded and the design work assessed was of a comparable standard to that of other Universities that offer purely design based degrees although the quantity produced is less due to the amount of time allocated to the study of this module. In comparison to other Universities where the Design Module credits tend to be of a weighting of 40 credits.
- The cohort of students studying on the BA Textile design programme are given the opportunity through elective Module selection to fine-tune the areas of specialism that they wish to graduate with, this provides students with a unique opportunity to tailor their learning experience and skill base for future employment prospects within the Fashion and Textile Industries.

### 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

NA

**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 and implementation of assessment feedback forms in 2015 that are consistent in their format for both semester 1 and the final feedback for all the design modules should provide students with a clear overview of where they are sitting in terms of summative assessment and this year the print specialism tutor provided a very thorough final formative feedback and overview of their work in the sections allocated for personal remarks on the students development and performance.

**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.*

I met with a few design and cultural theory staff informally to discuss their current research. It was noted that as some have been concentrating on either researching for or completing a PhD their research and time has been focused on this for the last two years of being an External Examiner at the University of Leeds. Having achieved this qualification I understand the demands upon time especially at the later stages but in attaining such an academic achievement and the experience of being a student again be it at Post-graduate level tends to ensure that the intense research carried out during this period can have a positive effect on the building of curriculum and methods of learning and teaching within a course and programme.  
Having been informed in previous years of staff research I am very aware of how important this is and its influence on curriculum development and its delivery especially relating to digital print technology and colour, design theory and dissertation modules.

**8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

NA

**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**

NA

**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.*

I was given all the material I needed in order to act effectively in my role as external examiner with creative design work on display and exam papers in appropriate piles with documentation. Two areas had been set aside for me to look at the work in private.

The opportunity to meet with final year students in small groups in February and individually at the final June visit enabled me to see student progression and development over the academic year. Although the meetings were very short I found the opportunity rewarding as I could see development of the student's skills, confidence and knowledge over the year. These meetings were very well organised to a tight timetable with very good attendance by the individual students with time was set aside for breaks and note taking throughout the day.

The absence of the correct Exam papers for DESN1545 Patterns and Culture was soon rectified and a full set annotated set and grades for the cohort was provided.

**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.*

For the programme and Modules I looked at I received all the necessary documentation from the course team.

**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?**

Yes I was provided with draft examination papers in good time and given an opportunity to comment on the standard and level of exam questions being set.

The level and the nature of the questions were appropriate and in June 2016 I was able to look at a sample of completed/assessed papers and Re-sit papers were sent out for comment later in July.

As mentioned in my report last year 2015 due to the subject matter in DESN1545 Patterns and Culture and DESN2640 Design Theory 2 and the necessity to draw diagrams and illustrations as part of the exam paper I do question whether this is the best method of assessment for this theory module as some strong students seemed to run out of time during the exam session and not complete all the necessary questions thus affecting their grade. May be a different form of assessment such as course-work/essays could be put in place to replace these exam papers that could provide a fairer form of assessment for some students that struggle in exam situations.

**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?**

I was given the opportunity to meet with the Textile design students in small groups in February and individually June 2015 and view other supporting work, which I found very beneficial and could understand what the aspirations of the students upon graduating were and where the modules studied on the course would help their achieve their goals. I was given copies all supporting Feedback forms from the teaching staff delivering on the Module DESN 3566 Design for Textiles: Specialism, which should have added clarity to the marks awarded. The feedback for the digital print specialism was very concise and clear with an indication of a grade for the different module assessment criteria but at the time of external examining, the feedback for structure students was not on a parity level with just bullet points being used for formative feedback and no summative grades entered for the different module criteria on the Module feedback sheets. As such it was difficult to see where and how the student had achieved their final grade for this module. I hope that this was rectified by the time the students had received feedback after the exam board.

All work looked had been assessed at the right assessment level. I am confident that the standard of work is in keeping with national assessment standards comparable with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

With written assignments for the large modules that have a cohort of students from different disciplines studying upon it, for example would have been good to be provided with a spread-sheet of numbers of students on module, the spread of marks and course studying upon.

The Colour Art and Science DESN 2633 Module has a very large cohort studying upon it and the number of scripts provided in June was very limited only a high and middle range script, there was also no evidence of examples of feedback provided. Module Colour and the Design process DESN 1633 consisted of two written assignments while I understand the challenge of providing a large quantity of relevant feedback for a large cohort the feedback that was provided although extensive was a standard response of what the assignment should have consisted of but very short specific commentary except for annotated text.

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

Yes. This year I did not receive hard copies of the dissertations but only in digital formats that made reading and comparison between dissertations difficult but understand that most dissertations are now submitted through Turnitin and often hard copies are not available.

I was sent a wide choice of design student dissertations from different supervisors and markers to comment upon and they were of a good standard but I was of the understanding that was being addressed with the introduction of two new Research Methodology Modules in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year Dissertation 2014-2015 but this seems to have had little impact on the dissertations I was given as a sample this year as there was little parity in their format .

**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 administrative arrangements were on the whole satisfactory for the whole process. I was able to attend the Board of Examiners meeting, which was run in a professional manner, and held the day after looking at assessment procedures and meeting with the final year students, which negated the need for a third visit which happened in 2015. This year the Board was run efficiently dealing with just the BA Textile Design Degree awards and progression and was I was satisfied with the recommendations of the Board and further communications involving re-sits and classifications.

**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**

Dear <<>>

I am writing to express my thanks both for your recent report and for your supportive suggestions and comments during your term as external examiner for the Textile Design programme.

I was delighted to read your comments on the evolution of the course and the dedication of the staff and would particularly like to thank you for highlighting that *"The course has evolved over the last four years embracing new trends and technologies with a strong focus on CAD skills especially in presentation work of the Critical Journal and Digital Print specialism"*. Although the modules across the Textile Design programme have evolved in part to student feedback, the Textile Design industry continues to regard high levels of visual acuity and as such drawing/visual research has remained a core aspect of the teaching.

I would now like to respond to some of the specific comments you made about the programme.

You expressed a concern that *'too much focus weighting is placed upon the Dissertation Module that is 40 credits compared to the main practice module of 30 credits. The majority of design based courses will have a dissertation of around 20 credits that is linked to the practice in subject matter research which provides a supporting role to the practice of Textile Design'*. We thank you for these comments. The dissertation module is consistently weighted across all honours programmes in the University as a distinctive element of the Leeds Curriculum, but your comments about the desirability of linking practice and writing mirror conversations which we are also having within the School

You also noted that *"the higher grades awarded for Structured: Knit and Embroidery specialisms were rather high in comparison with those of print"*. We have reflected upon your comments and in addition to the ongoing and continuous double/benchmarking across the 2 pathways of digital and structured, we will aim to allow more time for this across programme bench marking in order to reach detailed consensus across the two pathway marks. We will also endeavour to roll out the good feedback practice you noted in the print specialism across the whole cohort.

You raised some concerns about the method of assessment for two of our modules *"As mentioned in my report last year 2015 due to the subject matter in DESN1545 Patterns and Culture and DESN2640 Design Theory 2 and the necessity to draw diagrams and illustrations as part of the exam paper I do question whether this is the best method of assessment for this theory module as some strong students seemed to run out of time during the exam session and not complete all the necessary questions thus affecting their grade. May be a different form of assessment such as course-work/essays could be put in place to replace these exam papers that could provide a fairer form of assessment for some students that struggle in exam situations."* Thank you for these comments which have received our serious attention. Although both of these modules were compulsory for Textile

students at the start of your term as external examiner from 201617 both are optional, which means that students who struggle in exams could select an alternative module. I can confirm that the school-wide modules are currently being reviewed and the School is in the process of mapping assessment to ensure that it is effective and fair: we will consider your comments when making decisions about how to proceed.

You also asked us to consider carefully how best to provide feedback to the large cohorts who study optional modules such as DESN1633 and DESN2633. Again we will take these comments into consideration when reviewing our assessment strategy.

You noted the varied form of dissertations and expressed surprise that the introduction of Research Methods modules at Level 2 had not led to greater consistency. Thank you for this observation, we are currently proposing changes to the Level 2 modules and will bear your comments in mind as we address this.

In closing I would like to reiterate my thanks for the valuable work you have done as our external examiner. You have given us much to think about and your support has been truly appreciated.

Yours sincerely