

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016 – 2017

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Title and Name of Examiner:

Institution:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

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 Progression and Awards Board, to gat@leeds.ac.uk. **All reports should be submitted in Word format to allow the responses to be appended.**

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Guidance to the External Examiner:

This standard report form is in several parts.

Part A summarises information about the programmes being examined. **Where individual modules are listed it is important to link these with a specific programme and award.**

Part B asks some specific questions and provides space for more detailed comments from Examiners. This External Examiner's Report is designed to ensure the University is in line with sector standards; however it is also used to support further enhancement of student education across the institution. It is therefore essential that where External Examiners have presented oral or written reports to the Assessment Board salient details are reiterated within this annual report.

Examiners may, if they wish, structure their report(s) in a different way; however, please address the matters identified in the prompts.

Examiners in the final year of their appointment are asked to give an overview of their opinion on the programme over their full period of acting as external examiner in the box provided, commenting in particular on aspects of development and enhancement.

The report will be considered by the School and the relevant Faculty Taught Student Education Board. It will also be made available to students, with appropriate redactions applied.

Part C provides a formal response to the External Examiner's Report.

Data Protection Act 1998

*Comments in any part of the form relating to a named or identifiable student will become available to that student should (s)he submit a data subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998. **External Examiners are accordingly asked not to identify individual students in their reports. Examiners are also advised not to identify individual members of staff by name.***

If, in addition to this report, you wish to send a confidential note to the Vice-Chancellor on any matter, please feel free to do so.

April 2017

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Design
Subject(s):	<i>Design</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Design
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box.

The students demonstrate an excellent understanding and application of both secondary and primary research methods.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.

The programme has improved the consistent use of second marking across all modules and assignments. The introduction of regular staff/student rep meetings

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 programme has grown again for the new academic year 17/18 from 36 to nearly 50 students I believe. There now only seems to be 2 members of permanent staff attached to the programme delivering all the modules and tutorials. I feel this is untenable and further staff support may be needed if the course's current high standards are to be maintained.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y / N
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y / N
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	N/A
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	N

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

My tenure has covered 3 different programme leaders , and now . The course has evolved during this period and I believe is about to embark on further changes in the coming year. The main change I have witnessed is the increased focus on Design projects with fewer in the area of design management. The range of design topics has also narrowed with an increasing number in visual communications. During my time high standards in teaching and learning and in design outcomes have been maintained with a particular strength in design research. Assessment methods have improved significantly particularly with the application of second marking across all modules as recommended. Another recommendation that has been successfully implemented is the introduction of regular staff student rep meetings. I wish the course well in the future.

Standards

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y
<p>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes. Please see above but in terms of the current course these are all good. I am unable to comment on the new course structure.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<p>Please explain how this is/could be achieved (examples might include: curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research) Mainly through the research methods module.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</p>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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<p><i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: 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.</i></p> <p>The range of assessment methods and their application are commensurate with Masters Design nationally. My only observation would be the relatively high number of distinctions this year. This was clearly an exceptionally strong cohort hence the high number of distinctions. I would however ask the team and the new external examiner to monitor the distribution of marks in future years to ensure that distinction level marks continue to reflect the quality of the work in in terms of master's level benchmarks.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on 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:</i></p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback: See above and below for my detailed comments</i></p>		

The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y

34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i> The boards were very efficiently run.</p>		

Other comments

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

Here are the notes and observations from my 3 visits during 16/17

Term 1

Branding in Context DESN5110

Good use of company set brief and it is noted that the company Elmwood also offered 3 internships. The best project made good use of questionnaire to identify user needs, presented the final concept clearly using animation as well as creating a prototype using Proto iO. There was one fail (possibly a case of bad academic practice) Some innovative design solutions were presented. All work was appropriately second marked. It is clear from the outcomes that this module is not just about branding and perhaps the module title needs to reflect this. It is also noted that 9/20 students had distinction level marks which is a very high proportion.

The students reported that they enjoyed working on the Elmwood brief. However they felt the module and brief were more about service design and that there needed to be more taught content on actual branding.

Digital Design Practice DESN5109

A better spread of marks (6/23 distinction level marks) with no fails. The best students produced a wide range of outcomes including a strong visual identity, Menu, bag, wrapper stickers etc. The poorer students sometimes had a good idea but which was poorly executed. All presentations were second marked and with final design sample second marked.

Students appreciated the use of professional trainers in Illustrator, Photoshop and In Design on this module and hoped this support would be available in term 2..

Information Design DESN5112

The best projects produced professional looking outcomes (Arabic and Mandarin Book redesigns) The animation project received positive feedback from the charity and patients. It is not clear that the two briefs on offer were equivalent in terms of the amount of work required. The number of distinctions was again relatively high. (7/24 distinctions); the work of one student, who was not happy with their mark, was checked and confirmed. Good evidence of second marking.

Students expressed enjoyment with this module.

Research Methods DESN5100

This is an important module as it defines the major project proposal. I believe it is being changed next year. Two students failed the module and these students needed to resubmit their failed proposal. A slightly better distribution of marks with 9/36 achieving distinctions.

Service Design DESN5113

Students had the opportunity to do a RSA competition brief and it is pleasing that the best groups were being encouraged to actually submit to the competition.

When I met the students in term 2 they reported some negative feedback on this module including: unconstructive feedback, too many presentations (weekly) and one student reported some confusion with the lecturer being difficult to talk to.

Clearly given the results this is a strong cohort. However, the team need to be conscious of the overall mark distribution in modules.

Term 2**Negotiated Project Module**

I sat in on one day of presentations. The best students demonstrated a very good knowledge and practice of research methods with some excellent experimentation and design outcomes. The weaker students did not always make their research based design rationale clear or make appropriate design solutions e.g. Sustainable leather fashion project.

Term 3**Reflective Report**

I looked at 6 reports including one fail, one borderline pass, one borderline distinction and one distinction. The second marking was transparent which included a mixture of close agreement and but some clear disagreement. Well designed mark sheets. The literature review chapter needs conclusions (sometimes this is missing). Generally a very good understanding and application of research methods. Students should not really be using Wikipedia as a source but the underlying references if necessary. Final design testing needs to be included or made explicit. (sometimes this is missing). Final design solution sometimes not presented clearly.

Overall on MA Design there were 12 distinctions and one fail in a cohort of 37 students. It is noted that this is a relatively high number of distinctions but that this was a particularly strong cohort. As mentioned above I feel that the team and new external examiner will need to monitor the range of marks and ensure that the overall mark distribution is appropriate given the nature of any future cohort.

Student feedback**Term 1**

The students claimed the Visual Communications room had no local printing facility or working scanner. This was reported back to the team verbally at the time of my visit.

Term2

There was some concern expressed with the Service Design module from term 1. Overall the students were happy and said they were pleased they now had more time to focus on design and testing for their negotiated project. They said they had enjoyed the marketing workshop but said they would benefit from further clarification on the final reflective report and a possible additional workshop on job seeking. They praised Maria the programme leader for being very organised.