

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

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| Faculty / School of: | PVAC/School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies |
| Subject(s): | <i>Arts management and heritage studies</i> |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | ARTF5006M Arts Management Dissertation ARTF5801M Heritage Studies: Key Words ARTF58012M Placements in Context: Policy, Organizations and Practice |
| 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.

- Use of digital tools such as Padlet and blog sites to online space for critical reflection on interpretation
- Support for EFL students, particularly in developing understanding of critical theoretical perspectives and literatures
- Development of curriculum which reaches outside of Western ethical and theoretical frameworks and applies these to heritage studies

Enhancements made from the previous year

The enhancement of Heritage Key Words – this core course supports learning outcomes in critical analysis and theoretical perspectives on heritage through key concepts, as well as practical skills in interpretation and reflection on this process. This year the course unit included the use of digital tools such as padlet to provide students with opportunities to curate and interpret their own case study online through which to explore key concepts.

Furthermore, the Placements in Context course is very well structured and provides students with excellent examples from external organisations of how to understand and critically examine the context for heritage management and development from an organisational perspective, and through experiential learning and reflection on placement.

Matters for Urgent Attention

I recommend looking at marking parity across the modules delivered by the two schools involved (FAHACS & PCI) which represent Heritage Studies and Arts Management topics respectively, and comparing marking rubrics and practices, to check that there is no unfair advantage for students who take different pathways through elective options. I understand that this process is already in place.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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| 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

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

Standards

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| 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 |

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

The programme is designed to support critical and analytical capability and practical skills development relevant to those interested in both heritage studies and arts management. Working across two schools, it provides students with routes through their programme, with sufficient choice to explore their own specialist interests, both within programme structure within these interdisciplinary areas, through elective options, and within the individual course options, through choice of case studies and research topics. It is particularly commendable that the heritage studies units (which I am responsible to as external examiner) provide a clear progression route for students to develop their theoretical and conceptual tools and frameworks, which can be critically applied to contemporary examples, and form the basis of advanced research within the dissertation module. Research training also provides students with appropriate introduction to study skills and methods required for in-depth and original research. There is a very clear indication of this progress resulting in a strong set of dissertations on interesting topics.

Heritage Keywords: clarity and purpose the expectations and routes to learning for students in the handbook. There is clear signposting to reading (including a great explanation of different types of reading) and a programme of lectures and linked activities for discussion and critical reflection.

Placements in context: the workshop and lecture series which sits alongside the placement projects is really well planned and very useful to broader learning, professional development and critical reflection alongside the practical issue of students getting the most out of placements. Guest speakers provide opportunities related to case study examples which pull in the various aspects of placements and their contexts, including governance, operational and strategic planning and delivery, funding and so on. These mainly focus on organisations and environments, rather than individual roles or functions within heritage organisations, so I wondered how this is conveyed on the programme.

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| 13. | Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear? | Y |
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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)

The curriculum includes opportunities for practice-based research, critical reflection (keywords) research on practice (placements) and research dissertations. There is also clear evidence of the inclusion and impact of staff research on programme teaching and learning.

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| 14. | Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD? | N |
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

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| 15. | Does the programme include clinical practice components? | N |
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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

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| 16. | Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)? | N |
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

Assessment and Feedback

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| 17. | Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment? | Y / N |
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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.

Heritage Keywords; This course includes some useful innovations, not least the use of padlet for the digital portfolio in assessment. Assessment is in two parts 1) a portfolio of interpretation applied to a chosen object, building or practice framed by a 1000 word reflective piece. Note that labels also require 100 words each (times 4) so students could be providing assessment of around 6500 words.

2) Essay of 4 – 5000 words based on chosen question. The marks given reflected the ways in which students had brought together a variety of source materials, key issues and concepts through critical engagement and reflection. With the shorter assessment of reflection on the digital portfolio, there is a sense that students are also rewarded for their creativity as well as critical insight – something I endorse.

The links between the two pieces of assessment are inspired – in that they both provided ways to articulate key concepts for heritage studies in short and long form, and in the upper range students built on their previous assessment very well. They also provide a way to link practice to theory, and to bring in further global examples of heritage empowering the students to select and interpret their own choice of case study and demonstrate developing practical skills.

Placements in Context: This is assessed through reflective logs and essays focusing on key aspects of their placement experience. The reflective logs are in general lively and articulate reflections on placement experiences, although I am not clear how they represent the personal development planning required in this element of assessment. The essays show deep critical engagement with relevant literatures and interpretation of placement practices and processes as case studies, whilst supporting students' development of academic writing and the embedding of theory in reflective practice.

I wondered if there could be a template provided for students on developing their personal learning/development plans, to help students with this aspect of the assessment and to frame the expectations for the reflective log as there was some disparity between the ways students approached this.

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| 18. | Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award? | Y |
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| 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>Students are clearly provided with opportunities to develop their critical and theoretical ‘muscles’ on this programme and achieve high standards in relation to their grasp and application of relevant knowledge. I found insightful and original research in both essays and dissertations. This is particularly admirable given the large number of EFL students on the programme and I commend the ways in which the marking of assessment focuses on rewarding evidence of understanding, knowledge, structure and argument, whilst making note of any issues with written expression in English. This empowers students with the confidence to take on complex and difficult approaches to critical heritage studies, which will inform their future research and also their practice, should they enter the sector. It also provides the programme with a unique and distinctive opportunity to explore international case studies, to critically reflect on the dominance of Western literature and research on curricula for cultural management, and explore and bring in other non-Western philosophies and perspectives.</p> | | |
| <p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>My one query concerning assessment when examining the work was that there are processes in place to check where there is marking parity across the course units provided by different schools, so that students are not unfairly disadvantaged by elective choice, and do not get confused by any disparities in marking rubrics or expectations. (I have no concerns about marking parity between first and second markers or through moderation processes within course unit modules). I understand that there are now processes in place to review this by involving staff from both Schools on the programme review team.</p> | | |

The Progression and Awards Process

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| 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 |

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| 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 |
| <i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i> | | |

Other comments

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

This is an extremely thoughtfully constructed and well-led programme which is responsive to student need and reflective of its context and its provenance, despite being only two years old. As it continues to mature, the programme will continue to cement its identity and its curriculum to provide an innovative programme which will have global reach and impact on arts management and the heritage sector.