

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:	School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies
Subject(s):	History of Art
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA in HoA
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:

I was especially impressed with the clear and detailed feedback given in semester one in the Core Course that not only responds directly to the work being assessed for the module but aims to take the students through to the dissertation element, pointing to areas for improvement and further work as well as supporting and encouraging the students. This comment is in fact applicable to all of the modules I viewed, where good practice was exemplified in feedback that was both critical and directed to the specific piece of work as well as more broadly formative and intended to enable the student to progress.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

N/A This is my first year as external.

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, I don't think there are any matters requiring urgent attention.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y (on my request)
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor? [I was initially provided with a mentor for 2016-17 however I did not take up my appointment until 2017-18 and I have not been reconnected with a mentor).	Y – see comment

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	N/A
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	N/A

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/A

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

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

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

My first and overall impression is very positive. I looked at a range of subject modules, including an ambitious and stimulating Core Course. All of the modules are clearly designed to establish a solid foundation in subject knowledge, research skills, and critical thinking. There is a structured process of accumulated knowledge acquisition and assessed tasks that supports the students in assuming research autonomy, clearly guiding them towards the dissertation element. I saw an impressive array of dissertation topics with some very high achievement on display that was appropriately awarded top marks and glowing remarks by two reports in each instance. The ILS, marking criteria, and detailed feedback were equally on display in work of all levels.

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)

Course design is clearly driven by the research expertise of the instructors and it further manifests itself in the advanced level at which the students then undertake their own research. This research is primarily presented in the form of a lengthy essay (7000 words) that enables students to explore the full scope of a topic. The feedback given to the students directly reflects current research in the subjects under examination and encourages future research.

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:

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:

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

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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 in-depth coursework assessment methods are entirely appropriate to the ILOs. Whether in the form of a single 7000 word paper or two shorter papers, the assessment is clearly designed to develop students into competent and independent researchers. Through this graduated process, the work that I saw clearly demonstrated the acquisition of fundamental critical thinking skills, creative and autonomous planning and problem-solving, and the careful written-up communication of conclusions reached. Student performance across the two semesters and culminating in the dissertation, whether of the highest level attainable or in the merit pass category, demonstrated the effectiveness of the assessment.</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>The academic standards demonstrated by the students were entirely commensurate with the intensified ambition and assessment of the MA course and in my experience at other compares very favourably to students on like courses at other institutions. In a cohort of ten or so students, I would expect to see some variation in student capability and degree results. Here, across the board, the performance of the students was appropriately matched to postgraduate level academic standards.</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>I noted that there is little guidance given at Faculty level and no penalty applied to work that is either over or under length. This is a Faculty regulation (or absence of such), not a School assessment feature. The School deals with this very well, it seems to me on first glance, but may wish, however, to take a look at this question with regard to module handbook guidance and coursework assessment.</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?	N/A
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	N/A
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

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:

I enjoyed attending my first Progression and Awards Board, which was enacted fairly and with care to all points requiring discussion. All and any questions I had arising from my examination of the course materials were answered in detail by staff present.

Other comments

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