

**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 Performance and Cultural Industries
Subject(s):	MA Performance Design
Programme(s) / Module(s):	PECI 5501M Performance Design Praxis PECI 5502M Critical Concepts Performance Design PECI 5503M Research Perspectives (Performance 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.*  
 Innovative Course Design.  
 Transparency in marking. Clear and concise formative and summative assessment.  
 Three sets of marking criteria tailored to different outputs.  
 Students very well supported by academic and technical staff.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

*Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.*  
 New course so N/A

**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*  
 None

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment**

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Yes
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	N/A
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor? <b>No but I was well advised by the course team.</b>	No

**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?	Yes
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Yes
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Yes
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Yes
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Yes
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>This is a research led programme that involves the students undertaking theoretical and practical components to fulfil all the learning outcomes of the course and these are closely aligned with aims. Although the course is tightly structured there is plenty of scope for students to follow their own path within it, playing to their strengths and previous experience. Students may chose to progress with more emphasis on practical or written outcomes in their final research project and there is the expertise across the course team to support this. Informative subject specific lectures are balanced with the development of analytical and critical skills as well as skills in academic writing. Practical workshops support the praxis module.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>Both research and practice on this course are informed by the skills and research of the staff team who are at the fore front of the field. Research is embedded in the curriculum design and informs all the modules.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	No
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p> <p>As this is a research led MA it is totally appropriate that it could form the basis of future PhD study.</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	No
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p> <p>Performance Design Praxis is a well conceived module with good assessment procedures in place. However I was concerned that the students were perhaps not given enough time to develop some of the requisite practical performance making skills given the relatively short duration of the module. The course team agreed that the module was rather squashed into the first semester and have elongated the module for 2017/2018 to enable the students to have more time to play and experiment as well as extend their skills base.</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	No
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p>		

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Yes
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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>As previously stated I was impressed with the detailed feedback offered by tutors. Students were given clear indicators as to how to improve their assignments. There was evidence that all marks were moderated and the exam board was transparent and fair.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Yes
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Yes
<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>This was the first year of the course with a small cohort of students. I was therefore able to look very closely at all the work of all the students and chart the progress they made over the year. There was a clear progression in their thinking as they encountered the challenges presented by the course evidenced in the high level of research, analytical and critical skills developed over the year. The level achieved by all the students was commensurate with the award of MA and in line with other courses of a similar nature in the sector.</p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i> See above</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?	Yes
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Yes
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Yes
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Yes
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Yes
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Yes
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Yes
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Yes
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Yes
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Yes
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Yes
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Yes
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes

33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Yes
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Yes

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

I was very well supported in my first year as external examiner by the course team and the administration. Thank you. The exam board was well organised, efficient and fair. I was able to make recommendations, hear those of the other external examiners and participate in frank and open discussion with the staff teams in a positive and congenial atmosphere.

#### Other comments

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

This is an impressive course and there is no question that students are achieving a range of research, critical and analytical skills at the appropriate level. As this was such a small cohort I was able to look extensively at all the projects, the feedback from tutors and chart the students' progress over the year. Rigorous attention was paid to developing these skills. This is embedded in the guidelines and structures of the modules and evidenced in the capacity of the students to expand their research base beyond the set texts as well as in the growing fluency and confidence in their writing. I commend a really strong team for their excellent teaching.

I had some questions around Peci 5501M Performance Design Praxis. Given that this is a research driven MA I applaud the emphasis placed on practice as a form of research and knowledge production. I was therefore slightly concerned that the same amount of attention was not given to the development of the practical skills necessary for performance making in relation to that given to research and critical writing skills. In conversation with the course team it became clear that they also felt the students needed more time to play and experiment in order to develop their practical understanding of the scenographic components of theatre and performance. The team concluded this was in part due to the project being somewhat squeezed into the first semester. For the current cohort they have elongated the project into the spring to give the students more time to develop specific skills and for experimentation.

I was able to talk to four current students during my visit. They were all very articulate about their understanding of the course, what they wanted from it and their ambitions on completion. This including working in the industry as well as pursuing further study so there is a clear link to PhD certainly in the perception of some students. All the students were complimentary about the quality of their teaching and the high calibre of the staff in research terms. They also made a point of saying how well they were supported by the technical staff. I am aware this may not be relevant in terms of the 2016/17 report but I can only assume this pertained to the previous cohort as well and is an example of good practice worthy of note.

At the exam board, one of the other external examiners felt the practice based assessment criteria could be improved. I didn't see this myself but I will look at them more closely in relation to the practical projects this year. Overall this is an excellent course, a leader in the field and I look forward to watching it develop over the coming years.

29/11/2017

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School

*School of Performance and Cultural Industries*University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT

\*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

**Completing the School response**

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:gat@leeds.ac.uk). External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

**Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice**

We are pleased that the distinctiveness of research-led provision in this field of study is recognised in the report. We are happy that the course design and delivery has been judged clear and supportive. We also note the confidence expressed in assessment processes.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

N/A

**Response to Matters for Urgent Attention**

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

N/A

**Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

A mentor was not appointed.

**Standards****Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We note the very positive comments about the research-led nature of the programme. We have amended the delivery of PECE 5501M Praxis module for 2017-18 to provide a better learning experience for students.

**Assessment and Feedback****Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We note the very positive comments

### **The Progression and Awards Process**

#### **Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

All positive comments about the arrangements for external examiners and the conduct of the exam board.

### **Other comments**

#### **Response to items included in the 'Other Comments' section of the report**

All assessment criteria will be reviewed during this coming year as part of a School-wide focus on assessment processes.