

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Design
<i>Subject(s):</i>	<i>Graphic and Communication Design</i>
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	DESN 1250 Fundamentals of Imaging DESN 1415 Introduction to Photography (Digital) DESN 1975 Theory and Research in Graphic Design DESN 1989 Graphic and Communication Media A DESN 1999 Communication and Design Process DESN 2150 Contemporary Digital Media DESN 2415 Photography (Digital) DESN 2730 Principles of Typography DESN 2980 Design Application DESN 2989 Graphic and Communication Media B DESN 3150 Contemporary Moving Image DESN 3720 Contemporary Typography DESN 3725 Information Design DESN 3765 Brand Communications DESN 3770 Contemporary Advertising DESN 3989 Graphic and Communication Media C DESN 3994 Independent Project
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	BA Hons

**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 programme team have continued the development of the assessment feedback process which makes it very clear where learners' strengths and areas for development lie within their module work. The feedback rubrics used are constructively aligned, succinct, clear and are written in appropriate and plain language relevant to the course modules and projects.

The option for the year in industry really seems to benefit those who undertake it. Students come back into final year with a wealth of experience that goes beyond just industry experience and a greater appreciation for the academic experience of University study.

**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 team continue to develop and maintain the currency of the curricula and find engaging ways to facilitate the students' learning and achievement on the various modules.

The introduction of the Risograph printer has allowed some students to explore more materiality in their work and outcomes. It was good to see exploration of hand-made printed documents in the degree show and at the London D&AD New Blood stand. Combined with the expected technical/software/production skills the opportunity to get 'hands-on' with paper, ink and print processes should help students understand the importance of the tactile.

### 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

N/A

### For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiners Handbook?	Y / N
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School 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 / 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 a 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

There have been no major or significant changes since my previous year's visit. I can confirm that the team continue to develop and strengthen their capacity to support students' learning as a team. The members of the programme team seem to function well and offer students a wide array of diverse support and approaches to the subject that aligns with the diversity of individual student goals and ambitions.

### 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.

The structure of the programme, aims and ILOS are sound and supportive to the development of a competent and industry aligned design practice. The 1st year introduces learners to a range of technical, practical and cognitive skills required to study at degree level and related to graphic design practice. 2nd year continues this with more emphasis on industry practice. The option to take a year in industry is a valuable one for those who can take the opportunity. Final year allows the students to develop a portfolio of projects that enable focus on personal ambitions and directions, building upon the previous levels and year in industry experiences.

One slight concern that could be looked into is that a number of 2nd year modules have continuing modules in final year, (e.g. DESN 2730 Principles of Typography and DESN 3720 Contemporary Typography) where to do the final year module you have to have done the 2nd year module, with the work completed in 2nd year supporting and feeding into the final year corresponding module. There is a possible issue of the negative impact that the length of time away from University study for those students who opt to take the year in industry. The same issue occurs with the dissertation module. Students undertake preparation and research in year 2 and pick it up again in final year. For the industry placement students the gap could make it difficult for the work to be picked up again etc.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<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>The curriculum is informed by the ongoing research, scholarly activity and professional practice of the academic team. Many of the projects set require students to research current industry design practice and contextual issues relating to clients and intended audiences. Several modules require students to utilise design research methods which are employed by leading design companies such as IDEO and other service design organisations. All the academic team are involved in some kind of research – the breadth of which is useful for the students to experience and know about.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p> <p>N/A</p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p> <p>N/A</p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p> <p>N/A</p>		

### 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 approach to the setting of assignments, learning support, formative and summative assessment and feedback are very thoroughly considered and handled. The sample of work I had the pleasure of looking through on each module was appropriately graded and fed back upon. The work, especially those achieving above 70%, was impressive and demonstrated effective learning support had been provided.</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>Students on this course produce very thorough work, especially those who achieve 60% and above. It doesn't just end with the production of designed outcomes and proposals but they are often required to produce evaluations and reflective reports on them also to unearth and highlight areas for further development and the effectiveness of their proposals. This is good to see as it is not a common practice on the graphic design courses that I am familiar with. Many of the students achieving grades at over 70% are producing work that is of industry standard.</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 would say the thoroughness and diligence of the programme teams' approach to assessment is a particular area of strength and should be commended.</p>		

## The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiners 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
<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**

It was a pleasure to undertake my role as external examiner for the 2nd year. I had the opportunity to meet students and see a very wide range of work. I am a 'fan' of the programme teams' approach to the subject, which is very broad and informed by interesting and emerging areas of professional practice. I would say a student who engages with this programme would leave the course very prepared for life after study, not just for design practice but for many other fields also.