

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 Design
Subject(s):	<i>Textile Design</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	DESN1175 Green Design DESN1560 Design for Textiles 1B DESN1561 Design for Textiles 1C DESN1575 Patterns and Culture DESN1633 Colour and the Design Process DESN1820 Design History: 1900 to the Present Day DESN2170 Knitted Fabric Tech for Design DESN2180 Garment Tech for Knitwear DESN2564 Design for Textiles 2A DESN2565 Design for Textiles: Specialism DESN2633 Colour: Art and Science DESN3342 Visual Research & Analysis DESN3343 Critical Studio Journal DESN3566 Design for Textiles 3
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

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

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Clearly a strong support network has formed between the students on the final year of the course. Mix of those who had taken a placement and others who had gone straight through to final year has worked well in this particular year group. Support and advice by the staff team in finding placement opportunities and future employment is to be commended. The majority of the students who had not taken the year out in industry have taken the decision to pursue a graduate internship on graduation to build their experience and help make a decision on career direction. Students are ambitious in terms of going into the textile and fashion retail sector and it was encouraging to see one student set up own business in a competent and professional manner.

The dissertation clearly gives the students opportunities to engage in current research and the resulting submissions clearly evidence an excellent level of support in a diverse range of topics available across the department.

Many students' noted good contact time and support from tutors. Students reflected on their increased confidence in their own practice as a result of their studies. Ability to select modules from across the department clearly enables students to pursue a route through the course tailored to their interests and is subsequently leading to a broad range career opportunities.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.
Staff specific to the delivery of the weave specialism are now in place ready for the 2017/18 academic year

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 Examiners Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?	Y
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y

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

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 programme structure gives students the opportunity to personalise their journey through the course and enables them to pursue a broad range of careers in relation to the textile industry, retail sector and creative arts arena. The re-introduction of weave into the constructed textile route is welcomed and is vital in a region with such a strong heritage in this area. I was pleased to learn that students will be more guided to take technical modules relative to their choice of specialism so providing them with a greater depth of knowledge and skill to underpin their design work. The opportunity to learn making skills (garment), and to develop digital skills as optional modules is to be encouraged and it is evident that students who studied both DESN2170 and DES2180 benefitted from studying these complimentary modules in knitwear.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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Staff research interests have clearly informed the curriculum in a number of ways including: student collaboration with staff on research outputs (external exhibitions), and through staff supervision of the dissertation (DESN3660). It was clear in the dissertation samples, that students' research interests were enhanced through the broad range of research areas and hence the support available in the department. Student practice is underpinned by relevant research relating to their chosen market and product for Design for Textiles (DESN3566) and DESN1560 and DES1561.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<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>The structure of the assessment across the compulsory and optional modules is a balance of both exam, and portfolio/coursework style requirements methods thus providing good opportunity for students to perform to their best across the duration of the programme of study. Assessment criteria are in line with the learning outcomes and the briefs set these out clearly for the student. Feedback is consistent, of a high standard and clearly guides the student to areas for future improvement (e.g. DESN3566, DESN3342, DESN3343). The quality of the feedback provided by the staff team (working in pairs) is constructive and encourages the students to critically evaluate their own progress and success against the marking criteria, and this is provided for all portfolio work at every level of their study. The exam scripts (provided), marked by individual staff in most cases and students have achieved a good level of results in these modules (DESN1575, DESN1175, DESN2170, DESN2180). Where possible a brief comment or mark on the script was helpful in clearly identifying where marks had been attributed, but this was absent in DESN1175 and the students may benefit from a more consistent approach to adding comments.</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
<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>Teaching and assessment is of a high standard and the outcome of the work evidences this. Students were articulate about their chosen concept for their Design project and have good general knowledge of the commercial requirements of the industry. Students in the top banding have shown evidence of excellent materials inquiry leading to innovative design development. There were some good examples of extensive market research being undertaken to identify potential end uses for their design collections. The option to select modules from across the department clearly enables students to pursue a route through the course tailored to their interests and is subsequently leading to a broad</p>		

range career opportunities. The academic standards demonstrated by the students in their research led dissertation is of a high standard and the rigour of the research undertaken in this module puts these graduates in a excellent position to move onto postgraduate study. It has been a challenge for many students however to balance the workload for the dissertation with the needs of their final project, Design for Textiles 3. The pressure to complete the dissertation has unfortunately adversely affected the development of some student design projects (rushing to develop a collection in a couple of weeks), however other students commented on how much they enjoyed this written (research) aspect.

It is understood that the staff team already have plans in place to increase the technical content on the course and to advise students at module selection of the best combination for to develop their expertise and skills (in knit/weave/stitch/digital print). This should enhance the students' understanding of their specialist route and enable them to note technical details for the all the samples they develop in their design projects.

The academic standards demonstrated by the students are comparable to those of other courses in the sector. The design work that the students produce is to a good standard when considering the balance of design and non-design modules unique to this course at Leeds University.

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:

Digital students found some challenges with balancing the conflicting opinions of their two tutors. They would have found it useful to have had combined tutorials with both members of staff or perhaps allocation to one tutor or the other.

I was able to meet the majority of the final Year student group at both the interim and final visit. I am pleased to note that the students were confident and articulate about their design concepts and had a good general knowledge of the commercial requirement of the industry. Students commented positively about the feedback they received from staff and this has clearly supported students both in choosing a placement company and then subsequently helped them to make clear career choices as they approach graduation.

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?	N

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:

Please see earlier comment on the annotation of the examination script for DES1175 Green Design.

All materials relating to the modules were provided in advance and the provision of exam papers and briefs have been readily available. The course team have organised both visits with great efficiency and they have been very supportive in this my first year as their examiner.

I was given the opportunity to meet all the final year students at both the interim and summer visit to the course which enabled me to see their design progression and to witness their personal development (in skills, communication, confidence) over this period. The student attainment at the Awards Board is to be commended with all students achieving First or 2.1 classifications.

Other comments

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

Most students utilise the resources available to them and were complimentary of the support from the whole staff and technician team. It is apparent that there have been some challenges with the digital printing provision provided within the Department this year. The support of the technician was very much appreciated by the students, but it was also noted that there should be additional help provided in this area as there have been significant issues with the quality of printing due to lack of time to sample final ideas and to correct the colour profile on design files. It is suggested that a clearer sign-up system for help with digital files for printing would be helpful as the student's recognised the pressure that the technician is under due to the demand from other courses as well as Textiles. Digital students need to engage with fabric earlier in this study to help understanding of the colour and quality changes that are associated with printing on textile substrates.

Consider opportunities for collaboration (perhaps with other courses) and working more closely across constructed and digital textile groups. Making skills specific to knowledge of garment construction would aid final product development for some students. Introduction of further drawing workshops at beginning of final year could be used to help students develop greater depth of primary imagery for their design projects.