

# 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:	
Subject(s):	<i>English (Workshop Theatre)</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	English Literature and Theatre Studies
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

Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box. Once again, I'd like to commend the processes and outcomes of the Practical Essay module. The team have worked to refine both the delivery and the assessment of this module, and the current iteration is very successful. In fact, it's a model that other universities might wish to consider.

#### 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 scope of one of the modules (Opposition Theatre) has broadened out from its previous version, which was a conventional module on political theatre, to include a larger variety of oppositional performance practices and theories.

#### 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

#### 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
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	N/A

7.	Have you acted as a External Examiner Mentor?	N
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*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.*

In general I have been very happy with the standard of teaching and assessment in the Workshop theatre. The staff have worked hard to ensure that the modules are well designed, and that the assessments fit both the learning criteria and the module content. It is hard in courses of this nature to strike an appropriate balance between practice and theoretical work, and to devise assessments that usefully blend the two; the Workshop Theatre staff have managed to do this successfully- both in individual modules and across the programme. The changes I have noted have tended to work toward refining the teaching and assessment of individual modules. In particular, I have been impressed by the staff's continual refinement of the Practical Essay. The students now have ample space in which to reflect not only on the critical underpinnings of their performances, but also to reflect on the process of developing that performance.

In general, marking has been robust and feedback has been diagnostic; I have only rarely encountered modules where the feedback provided needed to be more expansive, and in those cases I have discussed the matter with the team, and they've taken my comments on board.

Year on year, in general, the course has consistently allowed students to produce strong, interesting and intelligent work; and the team are to be commended for this.

## 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 overall is well designed to lead students from foundational study of the field through to work which is very advanced in their third year. They are given a firm grounding in the academic study of drama in the first year, and are then given access to a wide range of different styles and approaches, which they can then use and refine in the Practical Essay.

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)*

In particular, this year, the module Opposition Theatre has reflected both a developing staff research interest in resistant modes of performance, and a wider set of debates within performance studies about the relation between performer and audience.

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
<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>		
I have commented above on the mixture of practical and theoretical work in the various modules; the team have got the balance between these modes about right. My experience of the marking process is that it is robust. The award of classifications is well handled. In general, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods on the course is very high.		
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>		
The students are capable of producing excellent work in a variety of assessment modes; their performance is comparable to that of students at other Russell Group institutions.		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		

### 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**

This year there was one exception to the generally strong run of modules that I assessed. I was asked to look at work from the optional module Puppetry Arts; and although I wouldn't question the marks awarded, I found it very difficult to grasp the central issue that the module examined. I was sometimes unclear as to the philosophical focus of the module, which seemed rather diffuse; and I was not sure, sometimes, of the relation between the texts chosen for analysis and the idea of puppetry, or puppetry in practice. There did not seem to be a strong fit between the module information provided to me and the questions set for students to answer; it was hard to establish, from the material and the assessments, what the core concerns of the module were. Students produced good work; but that work did not seem to illuminate the central concerns of the module in the way that work on other modules did.

I have been informed that the module won't run again, as the staff member involved is no longer at the University of Leeds, so I'm raising these concerns here, rather than in the main body of the report. The module is an anomaly, and I have no reason to assume that the problem will recur.

Head of School  
School of English  
The University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

15 August 2017

Dear

I am writing to thank you for your examiner's report and your contribution to the quality evaluation of the BA in English Literature and Theatre Studies. I note with pleasure your commendation of the Practical Essay (processes and outcomes) and your sense that, as an example of good practice, it represents a model that other institutions might consider. That is extremely heartening for the Workshop Theatre team in particular. I note, too, your confirmation of enhancements successfully made to 'Opposition Theatre', and the ways in which this module in particular reflected, this year, both staff research interests and broader debates about the relation between performer and audience. It is gratifying that there are no matters identified for urgent remedial attention although I thank you for your detailed comments about the Puppetry option module. Your sense of there having been imprecise information for students regarding the content, aims and intellectual rationale of this module is extremely valuable, as is your suspicion that the relationship between the texts for study and puppetry in practice was not immediately evident. It is especially troubling when clarity about assessments in relation to the questions posed by a module is lacking. Due to staff change it is unlikely that this module will be offered again – however, the broader principles of clarity and coherence at the level of module design and assessment are ones that the School would not wish to jeopardise in the future.

I am content that you have observed improvements in the programme, which you judge to be well designed, over the period of your appointment, and that the School has responded to your comments and recommendations during the term of your appointment. It is especially helpful to have your confirmation that refinements have been made in the area of the teaching and assessment of individual modules, with the Practical Essay evidently a good example of the team's response to external scrutiny and advice.

Your acknowledgement that the correct balance has been struck between practical and theoretical work continues to add to the School's confidence about this well-established programme. Thank you for your comments on the high quality of teaching. Following the receipt of your report, your commendations will be passed to the team, the strengths of which are reflected in your sense of students who produce a high standard of interesting and intelligent work.

Personally, I am delighted that you have judged the marking overall to be robust, and the classification of awards to have been fair and well-handled. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to you for the care and integrity which you have employed in the period of your appointment. The School has been the beneficiary and I have enjoyed working with you,

Yours sincerely,

Head of School