

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 21/08/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Music

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All music undergraduate degrees

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.

Good practice and innovation in monitoring and adapting courses: for example, the introduction of new components in modules such as Music in Context caters to student needs in terms of developing their research skills (in this instance, a poster was replaced with a literature review).

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

There have been tweaks to the programme over the past year, most of which (as mentioned above) serve to support students' educational needs. Adaptations to modules – such as marking some elements non-compulsory or reducing/altering the manner of assessments was all done with great care.

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 Examiner Handbook?	Y / N
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses 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?	Y
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	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

I have very much enjoyed serving as external examiner and have learnt a great deal from observing practices in the School of Music. I am also confident that teaching and assessment is being undertaken with due rigour and with a flexible and generous attitude, to enable students to achieve their best. The programme includes elements which are almost unique to British degrees in music – notably the year in industry and the placements in schools – which make it a vibrant and attractive course. Colleagues have responded to suggestions I have made over the year with care, adopted recommendations and accepted or challenged them as they felt to be suitable, which I have been happy with.

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 is well designed to facilitate students both improving their skills in a wide range of areas and of developing individual interests.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
-----	---	-------

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)

Staff research interests are reflected in the topics they teach. At the same time more advanced student are encouraged to develop their own specialist interests, which seems entirely fitting. Students on the integrated masters programme in particular demonstrate an engagement with research projects at a higher level.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
-----	--	---

Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
-----	--	---

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
-----	--	---

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 / N
<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>A wide variety of types of assessment are offered through the degree programmes as are appropriate. I was struck with the diligence with which feedback was provided, with almost all markers offering comparably lengthy and detailed comments with clear instructions for how to make improvements. With that in mind, it seemed a little strange that there were not more students who did strikingly better in later assignments on a module, having received helpful suggestions for how to do better in the earlier ones. That may just be the nature of the various assignments, however.</p> <p>Although I understand why this was the case this year, I still feel uncomfortable with not everything being dealt with anonymously in exam boards and it is something it would be wise to monitor closely to ensure that students are being treated fairly at all stages of 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>There were a range of results from very high downwards, in keeping with a diverse student body, and at a level comparable to similar institutions around the country.</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>The number of students with mitigating circumstances seemed very high: all cases were handled sensitively and appropriately but nonetheless the sheer volume was striking and I wondered whether there was a structural reason for that.</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?	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

Thanks very much to the administration team and to colleagues in music for making my experience as an external examiner so positive.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Music

Programme(s) / Module(s):

All undergraduate programmes

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BA / BMus

Title and Name of Responder:

Dr David Ireland

Position*:

Assessment Lead

Faculty / School of:

School of Music

Address for communication:

School of Music, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT.

Email:

Telephone:

*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. 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

The School of Music has been engaging in systematic review of our undergraduate programmes in recent years, paying particular attention to how academic and employability skills are embedded throughout, and how modules at earlier years of study prepare students for higher year modules from a skills-perspective. We have taken care to consider these matters from a programme-level perspective. The example of the adaptations to the Music in Context modules represents one such example of this process (and further similar developments have been made to some of our core level 1 modules). As such, it is especially encouraging that the examiner has highlighted these programme development activities as an area of good practice.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

As my comments above note, the areas of programme and module development that the examiner has identified as enhancements reflect sustained and strategic activity to enhance the School's taught provision and the recognition of these efforts is appreciated.

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:

The School of Music is very grateful to _____ for thorough, constructive, and encouraging comments during _____ tenure as external examiner. It has been a rewarding and informative experience to engage with _____ suggestions for developing areas of our practice, and to receive _____ supportive comments about areas of good practice and innovation in our programmes.

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:

The School attracts a lot of its students due to the breadth and flexibility that is present in our course design. This allows students to experience a broad range of musical topics and staff research interests before they specialise in higher years of study. Engagement with both research methods and experience in engaging in research as participants are particularly emphasised in the music psychology MArts & BA course, as the examiner highlights. However, the School has a rich history of students engaging in each other's work as participants in a broader sense (e.g. performers agreeing to be recorded by music technology students, or working with composers as they develop new works), which resonates with the sense of community that students often cite as being a particularly positive facet of their time at Leeds.

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:

The examiner's observations about the detail of our feedback, and also the lack of students who appear to score more highly on later assignments following this feedback, chimes with comments made by one of our taught postgraduate external examiners last November. The School is currently undertaking activity to evaluate different models of feedback provision (e.g. plenary feedback on formative assignments) and to ensure greater consistency in provision of feedback. As part of these activities, we will continue to consider how to promote greater student engagement with, and understanding of, feedback to try and develop further in this area.

As the examiner notes, due to the exceptional circumstances this year, the classification board was not conducted anonymously. However, we have successfully adopted anonymous classification boards in previous years and intend to continue with this model going forward. The School discussed conducting the entire board anonymously in previous years and felt that it was advantageous from a pastoral perspective to keep module marks discussions de-anonymised, precisely to deal with factors such as mitigating circumstances in the manner that the examiner praises in report. There were a particularly high number of mitigating circumstances cases this year and it is challenging to ascertain whether there may be any specific reasons for this or whether this is reflective of broader sector-wide trends. We will continue to monitor this situation closely.

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:

N/A

Other comments

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

On behalf of the School of Music, I would again like to reiterate our thanks for for work as external examiner. We too have found working with to be a highly positive experience and wish all the best in future undertakings.