

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 12/11/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Faculty AHC, School of Design
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Design
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	MA Design DESN5150; DESN5152; DESN5153; DESN5109; DESN5154; DESN5151; DESN5155; DESN5156; DESN5157; DESN5430; DESN5158; DESN5159
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	MA

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

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Good practice: The design of the programme successfully enables the students to address contemporary contexts and issues in the design field and the design research community. It does this by applying a research-based pedagogy, through which students work in research teams (Research Assistants) supervised by their tutors (Principle Investigator). This approach is applied holistically throughout the programme, and one of its important benefits is that the students, and the programme's research community as a whole, can work collaboratively on large and complex projects.

Innovation: The practical application of a research-based approach, with tutors bringing their 'real-life' research and industry connections into the programme, enables the students to formulate and negotiate innovative projects. They can choose from a wide range of stimulating and inspiring projects and bring their own perspectives to their chosen project.

Enhancements made from the previous year

This is my first academic year as External Examiner.

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?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	n/a

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
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n/a		
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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 design and structure of the programme is excellent. The compulsory modules in the first semester enable the students to establish a foundation of relevant knowledge, understanding, study and research tools, from which they then begin, in the second semester, to choose to focus on a particular area of interest (choice of an option module). A further choice, between a more practice-based or more research-based assignment, is available to the students in their third / final semester.

In particular, the Research Methods for Design module rigorously establishes a benchmark of standards in terms of design research and Master's level study methods and skills. This is very effective in establishing a consistent level of practical and theoretical knowledge across the group.

Student feedback for this module, as with all other modules, is detailed, constructive, specific and individualised. At this stage (e.g. Research Methods for Design), feedback focuses on the methods the student should work on improving, helping to establish the foundation of knowledge and skills, mentioned above. This early stage of the programme is also instrumental in building team-working methods and skills: the students work in research teams, taking on different individual project tasks and then sharing their findings and ideas with their group.

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)

This is a major strength of the programme. Please see comments above, 'points of innovation or good practice' and question 12.

In addition, the programme's graduates have the opportunity to undertake research (research publications) with their specialist tutor.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	NA
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

The programme provides the student with excellent training for further research at PhD level.

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	NA
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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

n/a

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	NA
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here: n/a		

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 assessment methods fit the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) very well. In particular, they are designed according to the research-based pedagogy of the programme. For example, as appropriate to certain projects, methods take into account how the student works as a member of a research team, with individual tasks and contributions to the group and group work being clearly defined as a part of the arrangements for assessment.</p> <p>The relationships of the modules' and the programme's ILOs to assessment criteria are clearly articulated and followed through in student feedback. I attended student presentations (10.05.2018) and this provided a good opportunity to observe the process of tutors giving students initial feedback. As with the samples of written feedback that I reviewed, the feedback on the students' presentations was constructive and related to the assessment criteria.</p> <p>Overall, student feedback is comprehensive, and as mentioned above, constructive, detailed and individualised. The design of the feedback forms is very good. Their design supports this key aspect of student learning very effectively.</p> <p>The arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards are clear and appropriate.</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>As indicated by the overall performance of the students, with all students achieving a pass mark and the majority with marks in two of the high marking bands (60-69; 70-79), the quality of learning, teaching and assessment is very good. The students are from different parts of the world and diverse educational backgrounds, and for the majority, English is their second language. The quality of the students' written and oral presentation work shows some minor errors (e.g. typographical), but generally the work demonstrates high academic standards in accordance with the programme's design research aims and context.</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 information provided by the University of Leeds, the MA Design Programme Leader and colleagues has been very helpful during this first year of appointment as external examiner: documents are clear, concise and informative. Briefings by the Programme Leader have also been very informative and timely.</p> <p>The dynamic nature of MA Design, with students working on current research- and practice-informed projects is impressive. The leadership of the programme is excellent. It is organised precisely, whilst maintaining an overview of its aims and a commitment to ensuring the quality of the student experience. All of the students are supported and challenged to achieve their best work.</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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>None.</p>		

Other comments

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

None.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Design

MA Design

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

MA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

AHC School of Design

Address for communication:

School of Design
Clothworkers Central
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 qat@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

I was very pleased to receive positive comments and feedback regarding how the MA Design programme successfully applies a research-based pedagogy enabling students to work collaboratively in research teams and contribute to the programme's research community as a whole. Moreover, the very positive feedback in relation to the programme's innovative approach of having supervisors bringing their 'real-life' research and industry connections into the programme in order to enable the students to formulate and negotiate innovative projects.

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:

No matters of urgent attention were listed, which is very reassuring.

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:

received all the information needed in an efficient and timely fashion, which also contributed to a positive experience in first year as external examiner in our School. Likewise, was a delight to work with: very professional, thorough, available when we needed, and always submitting feedback promptly.

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:

I was very pleased to know that considers the design and structure of the programme to be excellent. Specifically, how compulsory modules in the first semester establish a strong foundation for Semester 2

at all levels (design thinking, design software and research skills). The benefit of students only needing to focus on a particular area of interest in Semester 2, to mature their knowledge and interests and then be able apply those skills. Finally in Semester 3, students can choose a more practice-based or more research-based project, as suitable to their career prospects.

I was delighted to read that ‘the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching’ is clear, which is something that the Programme Leader has worked hard to establish since fully re-structuring the programme 2 years ago.

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:

Very pleased and reassured that recognises the assessment methods in the MA Design to fit very well with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and how the feedback given to students is comprehensive, constructive, detailed and individualised. Moreover, that the quality of learning, teaching and assessment is very good across the entire MA, which then resulted in an overall performance where the majority of students finished the programme with marks in two of the high marking bands (60-69; 70-79).

In addition, it’s very reassuring and rewarding that the quality of the students' written and oral presentation work in general demonstrates high academic standards in accordance with the programme's design research aims and context. We have been working hard to be an inclusive School and make sure our many PGT international students have the necessary and excellent support in terms of English and academic skills. Therefore, it is very good to see that this investment and effort has made a positive impact.

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:

No comments were made.

Other comments

Response to items included in the ‘Other Comments’ section of the report

No comments were made.