

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 14/01/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies

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

MA

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.

This looks to have been another very successful year with a strong, mixed cohort of students. The results and the quality of the work and ideas therein demonstrate the effectiveness and rigour of the teaching and learning environment and the quality of the teachers.

Continued academic rigour with an emphasis on innovative thinking, critical analysis and new ideas based on reading, research and experiential learning. What was particularly evident was how the experience of museums and cultural spaces was encouraged – lift your eyes from the books awhile... to see contemporary practice in context and scrutinise their efficacy.

This was clearly a strong, mixed cohort of students bringing to bear their own interests, experiences and backgrounds to the subjects and being encouraged to develop their ideas within both the theory and practice.

Again a varied international contingent which brings a richness and diversity of approaches, interests and perspectives which are clearly encouraged and developed and opportunities for them to explore ideas within their home contexts were embraced. More to do on this, but a marked change from previous years.

There is a continued emphasis on developing a range of skills and disciplines from the deeply theoretical to highly practical. Students leaving the course do so equipped with the skills to become effective researchers or effective museum professionals. They leave with an excellent grounding in the theory and critical thinking, as well as practical skills in mounting exhibitions, developing briefs and working collaboratively.

I continue to be impressed with the balance achieved with what is a short period of study, and how much is demanded of and thereafter achieved by candidates.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

This year, some changes to the modules and teaching staff have demonstrated a move away from the shackles of the traditional western model. This year I could see some student given the freedom to explore their topics beyond transitional museological philosophies and western experience, which is excellent. It brings a diversity of ideas and experience which will only make for a richer learning experience.

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
Nothing urgent.

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 / 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 an 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.

This MA course continues to be a top flight course in what is quite a crowded field. There is a good range of curriculum content which is rigorous, demanding and versatile. Clearly founded in research which permeates throughout. Clear programme, clear objectives and expected outcomes and a very clear message to each participant of the expectations of their behaviour and engagement. You put in the effort, you will gain the rewards. This is both empowering and a challenge to the students – gives them the responsibility for their own success and all the tools necessary to achieve that. There may be an argument for there being a bit of 'hand holding' but I am of the opinion that programme leads are not setting puzzles, but creating a landscape for students to take responsibly for their learning, and to thrive.

There was a bit of difference between the difference module packs in terms of detail, so a look at consistency there might be helpful, but the materials provided are very good, directive as they need to be but also gives room for personal interest and investigation. There is a good choice of modules and within those the opportunity to develop individual interests and themes and to work with researchers or practitioners. The range of activities – lectures, visits, private study and group work gives a broad base for learning and similarly the assessments test a good range of useful disciplines.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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<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 influence of research in the course programmes is abundant and rich. Drawing on the high quality research expertise of the teaching staff, but also creating an environment where students are encouraged to see that research, new ideas or new analyses play just as big a role in their learning as the teaching. This is hugely valuable and I believe creates more rounded professionals.</p> <p>Drawing on the expertise and experience of external contributors is also notable, bringing diversity, ideas, new contexts. It also brings a freshness to the curriculum and keeps it at the leading edge. Drawing from practitioners, new researchers and established academics provides a depth and richness.</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>		
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>Each module is very clearly structured and thought out: the content, modes of teaching and learning and assessments are well aligned and expectations are very clear.</p> <p>This is no sausage factory – every candidate needs to demonstrate depth of understanding, critical thinking, a versatility in communication skills, individual and collaborative working and self-discipline and, of course, self-drive.</p> <p>Marking frameworks are transparent, marking is fair, thorough and every opportunity is given for candidates to achieve, should they put in the work.</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>		

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>		
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 ever, a range of performance – some really excellent students whom I am expecting to see fly in their respective fields in the future and some more poor performers. However, I don't see a problem here – it is about personal application. Those who haven't applied themselves sufficiently were consistently poor. Some who started weaker you could see progress as their understanding developed and confidence and interest grew. Those who did apply themselves, you can see flourished and were able to develop ideas to advance levels, which was great to see and quite absorbing at times.</p> <p>English as a second language seems to have been addressed well this year, no particular problems with language in evidence, so that support must be working very well.</p>		

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

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

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:

As in previous years the process for Progression and Awards was organised very well. We were given ample information on which to base our assessments, in fact we had access to all the course materials and assessments, so it was easy to choose a good range of work.

I would say however the VLE is not an easy system to use if you are only accessing it once a year. I am sure with regular use it becomes second nature, but for this sort of work, unsupported familiarisation was challenging and required dedication!

Other comments

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

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Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School

*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

We thank the external for their kind comments acknowledging the hard work we've put in as a team to deliver an effective, engaged and intellectually challenging course to our students. Ensuring an effective balance between theory and practice, and drawing on the varied international backgrounds of our cohort are key parts of this environment. These are ongoing areas, and we will strive to further integrate approaches to the international in our course. For instance, the recently appointed _____, whose curatorial work is in global contexts, will become more involved in our teaching, offering an option module for next year.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Moving beyond a traditional western approach to museology, allowing students the freedom to explore transglobal approaches has remained a key aim over several years. We continue to develop approaches. For instance, _____ work on the Bradford's National Museum project, examining the museum's links to global cultures represented in the city, is feeding into teaching. Similarly, _____ is developing work with Indonesian artists and art organisations that could lead to future opportunities, and _____ project with the Nigerian National Museum may also lead to future impact on our teaching.

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:

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:

N/A

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:

We thank the external for their comments and recognition of the high standard the course attains. We do aim to empower and challenge students to take responsibility for their learning and to develop the skills they need to survive in the workplace, offering them a range of activities to enable this. Our teaching is research-led, and the input of external museum professionals is highly valued. As a team we are attentive to the specific learning needs and career aspirations of individual students and always try to address these specifically.

We have worked with the School office to ensure uniformity across module handbooks, so will continue to address this and ensure that the information students are provided with remains not only detailed and interesting but also consistent.

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:

We have put in work to ensure that English language support for non-native speakers is improved; we will continue to develop this further. has consulted closely with language support officer to produce classes directly based around readings students will use in class; this approach has been valued by students and will continue in the future.

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:

Thank you for recognising the ordered and clear manner that progression and awards is processed.

We acknowledge the nature of the VLE isn't always the easiest for outsiders – and thank the external examiner for their patience in dealing with its idiosyncrasies. We are very willing to offer help with navigating through the system, please do contact us in the future if there are issues.

Other comments

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