

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 10/07/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies

Subject(s):

BA Fine Art

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Module Code	Module Name
ARTF2001	Studio Practice for Incoming Study Abroad Students
ARTF2040	Studio Work
ARTF3020	Professional Practice
ARTF3060	Dissertation
ARTF3061	Studio Work (Option B)
ARTF3062	Studio Work
ARTF3080	Practice in Context
ARTF3205	Studio Work (60 credits)

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.

In my meetings with final year students in February and in June it was evident that they had a good understanding of the criteria their work was being assessed against and they were clear about the methods being used to assess their work. In my June meeting with the staff marking team I was mostly in agreement with the marks awarded and where I was uncertain about how a mark had been arrived at they were able to give me a full explanation of their assessment process. It was evident from my meeting with the staff that work had been assessed fairly using the marking criteria and that a full range of marks had been used. Staff had also revised their assessment timetable to reflect the increase in students submitting for examination. The use of two marking teams and a moderator to ensure parity allowed for an appropriate amount of time to be given to the examination of each work.

The final degree show in the studio space remains the most appropriate way for students to demonstrate their strengths and weaknesses in their material and conceptual understanding of art. In many ways the final exhibition reflects the ethos of the course whereby students take the lead role in curating both their own work and the final show. It was evident from the placement of work that careful choices had been made indicating that students were working effectively together. In my meeting with students they highlighted the community spirit and the role that staff played in supporting this and noting in particular the Squeeze TV project. This project they stated had been effective in bring all the students together, their only criticism being the timing of the project as it coincided with other deadlines.

It was evident from the range of work on display that students are effectively supported by the teaching and technical team in pursuing the ideas and material processes that matter to them. Of note and in addition to this is the weekly visiting artist programme of talks that clearly impacts on the ways students think and make. The talks give students first-hand knowledge of the different ways artist both practice and support their practice after University. Students also noted the positive value of organised field trips to galleries and to cultural institutions such as Opera North. Students also noted one of group seminars that they found particularly valuable.

The exhibition programme in gallery/project space is also something students highlighted as having a positive impact on the way they supplemented their knowledge of different ways to install and stage work.

The year of study abroad is clearly something students benefit greatly from and is a unique selling point of the programme.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

It was apparent from my discussion with staff and students that in addition to the teaching timetable that is set at the start of the academic year that staff continually reflected on the ways to enhance and animate the programme over the year. In this way enhancements such as the Squeeze TV project and additional studio seminars are focussed and responsive to need. Final year students also noted the mixing up of years in group tutorials as a positive means of introducing new voices into the discussion of their work.

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

There are no matters that require urgent attention before the programme is offered again.

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

The major change that has occurred during my time as external examiner has been the move to new building and a substantial increase in student numbers. The positive benefits of the move include better lighting, the new gallery/project space, 24 hour access and the bringing of all three years under one roof. The increase in student numbers clearly reflect the strength of the course. However, the year by year increase means that the space is no longer big enough to effectively house all students and the course is now severely under staffed. As I have stated above staff are inventive and pro-active in enhancing the learning experience of students and from my yearly discussions with students they have always praised the support they receive from staff. However, this year students did comment that they would have valued and expected more group tutorial sessions. Without enough staff this will be an ongoing problem.

Students on the course are informed and knowledgeable about contemporary practice and this is reflected in the diverse range of work produced. Overall the work is of a high standard although ambition and progression of skills may be restricted in the future if there is not enough space to experiment and stage work or adequate workshop provision to enhance material skills.

During my time as external it has been clear that students are aware of and understand assessment processes and the means of assessing. Every year I have found the assessment process to be fair and transparent. However, the contextual support work and artist statement is an area that I think need work. What students include in their support work seems arbitrary and for an outsider the material in many instances does not provide insight into how students are thinking and progressing their lines of enquiry. Staff are resistant to making this part of the submission too formulaic and over prescriptive which I understand but I do think more guidance could be given to students as to how support materials provide relevant insight.

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
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>The year handbook is clear and concise and provides an appropriate amount of information about assessment criteria and assessment processes. From my yearly discussions with students it was evident that they understood the criteria and methods of assessment. It is also evident that assessment criteria are embedded in the methods of teaching. Overall work produced at Leeds is of a strong quality and is comparable to similar programmes at other institutions.</p>		
13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
<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>It has been evident from my discussion with both staff and students that where appropriate staff use their research expertise to inform their teaching and to design the curriculum. The visiting lecture programme, the gallery projects and the engagement with Documenta where all strong signs of the breadth of engagement with current research developments in art. It was also clear to me that staff would like to further integrate their research through more specialised workshops however due to lack of staff and time they are not fully able to realise this.</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>		
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> <p>The assessment methods are appropriate to the ILOs. Students did note a problem with same April deadlines for submission of different modules. As noted above teaching reflects the criteria students will be assessed against and students assimilate these during their weekly teaching sessions. Students at all the institutions I have worked at question and sometimes dispute how a mark is arrived at and how judgements are made and Leeds students are no</p>		

different. However at my meetings with students they have never voiced any serious complaint in the awarding of marks. Overall assessment and feedback is clearly providing positive support and is reflected in the performance of students.		
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>The programme supports the development of a broad range of work and it is evident that each student is encouraged to engage with contemporary practice. Even with the restricted amount of space and limited workshop provision students produce ambitious work and work that is inventive and critically informed. Even though there is good evidence of students working creatively with materials this is an area that could receive more support through additional teaching and creative skills workshops. Also as noted above documentation is I think a weakness but could be developed not simply to record but to assist with working out of material investigations. That said strong work is produced at Leeds and it compares very favourably to work produced at other similar institutions.</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>		

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

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

BA Fine Art

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Module Code	Module Name
ARTF2001	Studio Practice for Incoming Study Abroad Students
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ARTF3060	Dissertation
ARTF3061	Studio Work (Option B)
ARTF3062	Studio Work
ARTF3080	Practice in Context
ARTF3205	Studio Work (60 credits)

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Programme Leader BA Fine Art

Faculty / School of:

School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies

Address for communication:

University Road
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

We acknowledge the examiner's comments regarding the students understanding of the assessment process and criteria by which their work is evaluated. [it would be good if this understanding could be evidenced in the NSS and we must try to find methods by which this could be facilitated]

The Squeeze TV Project was a highly successful initiative. It is hearting to acknowledge the positive feedback received from all quarters. It is something we will be certainly continuing in the future.

The Visiting Artist Talk continues to be popular and adds an invaluable contribution to the Fine Art pedagogy of the programme. It is extremely important that funding for this can, and should, be maintained, if not increased.

It is also important to acknowledge the pedagogic reasoning behind our decision to allow the students to take charge of their final degree show. This is a strength of the programme and it is good to see its benefits being rewarded.

New projects initiated with other cultural organisations [e.g. Opera North] and local art venues [e.g. the Hepworth] add new dimensions in locating the educational experience within a wider cultural environment and this is something we would be very keen to develop.

Finally the Study Abroad Programme continues to be endorsed as a 'unique selling point' and it is critical that the University does everything possible to maintain its current presence in the uncertain political climate.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We are pleased to see that our response to student needs in our reflective approach to our teaching is recognised. We have always been criticised that this approach has been identified as poor management and it is heartening to have it formally acknowledged as an enhancement to learning.

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:

We are pleased to confirm that there are no matters that require urgent attention.

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 fully acknowledges the issues created by the year on year increase in student numbers, both in terms of studio space and teaching resources. We continue to examine ways in which space can be more efficiently utilised but are obviously restricted by the building itself. The concern raised about staffing levels is being addressed by the School. Unfortunately the cumbersome nature of an institution like the University makes it very difficult to respond effectively to current demands and situations. However staffing levels are being increased and this should provide more opportunities to respond to the student needs.

The concern highlighted with regard to 'supporting material, documentation and artist statements' is being fully discussed by the Fine Art team and is ongoing.

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 acknowledges the endorsement given by the external that the standards and quality of work remain high despite the challenges indicated above. This is, in the main, due to the dedication and resolve of the Fine Art team.

We welcome the observation that staff would like to further integrate their research into the teaching strategy and hope that the increase in staffing will facilitate this opportunity to be realised.

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 concur with the external's observations concerning the need to provide more support in helping students maintain their ambitious and inventive aspirations and it is hoped that the increase in teaching resources may go some way towards this end. However the sustained high level of student intake may limit this initiative?

As mentioned above we are currently examining how to introduce a more cohesive and relevant approach to the notion of 'supporting material' We are putting this in place across the three levels and is ongoing.

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:

The external made positive responses to all questions pertaining to progression and the awards process.

Other comments

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

As this is final year as external, on behalf of the Fine Art team, I would like to thank for generous support and insightful observations over four year term.