

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 06/11/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

School of Design

Subject(s):

Design

Programme(s) / Module(s):

MA Design
DESN5150; DESN5152; DESN5153; DESN5109; DESN5154;
DESN5151; DESN5155; DESN5156; DESN5157; DESN5430;
DESN5158; DESN5159

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.

The opportunity for the external examiner to observe student presentations in May of each year works well. It enables the external examiner to become familiar with the students' project themes, their methods and approaches; and motivations. This process also enables the external examiner to appreciate aspects of:

- the learning, teaching and assessment methods of the course in action; how they practically reinforce programme and module descriptions
- constructive student learning, through their self-reflection and supervisory feedback.

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 Programme Leader conducted moderation of Semester 1 marks across all the MA staff teaching as part of the process of mentoring new staff.

Beginning in Semester 1, the specialist English Language support tutors work with the students individually. This guidance helps the student to understand details of important academic practices and regulations at the earliest opportunity in the programme.

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 only

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

For Examiners completing their term of appointment only

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

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

n/a

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's design and structure support the programme aims and the achievement of intended learning outcomes. The programme enables the student to build upon her/his relevant foundations of knowledge and skills (at postgraduate taught level) through subsequent modules in semesters 2 and 3, which give the student choices of study themes according to her/his interests and motivations.

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)

The influence of research on the curriculum is achieved by:

- embedding research methodologies within the curriculum
- integrating research practices into the curriculum. E.g. students undertaking research in teams
- integrating themes drawn from the current research of the course team into student projects

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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<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
n/a		
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>		
n/a		

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>		
<p>The assessment methods are clearly articulated and appropriate to the intended learning outcomes of modules and the programme as a whole. In particular, their design and articulation of specific areas of knowledge and skills supports the process of giving purposeful feedback to students. Student feedback is detailed, comprehensive, constructive, and individualised. This is one of a number of learning and assessment strengths of the programme.</p> <p>The arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards are reliable and conducted thoroughly at all points of the process.</p> <p>The standards of work achieved by the students provides clear evidence of the programme's consistently high quality of learning, teaching and 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
<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>I found the process of reviewing the samples of the students' work rewarding. The students' practical and theoretical engagement with important human-centred design themes and their exploration of participatory design and research methods, in organisations and communities, is highly commendable. Whilst the students' lines of inquiry and approaches are appropriately connected to and informed by staff research, I was greatly impressed by the levels of personal motivation and strong dedication among the students, with regard to the social and educational challenges of their projects.</p> <p>As with last year's cohort, the quality of some of the students' written work is reduced by minor errors (e.g. typographical). I am satisfied that this aspect of the students' work is addressed continuously by the programme leader and course team and based on the samples of work reviewed, I believe that there has been an improvement in this respect over the year. Overall, the students successfully achieve academic standards of writing and presentation in accordance with the programme's design research aims and context.</p>		
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i>		
<p>During this year, adjustments to the student feedback sections of assessment forms have been discussed with the purpose of improving aspects of the consistency of feedback (e.g. the number of points addressed). As I reported last year, and in this report, the quality and helpfulness of student feedback is a strength of the course, so the adjustments referred to here are only in the interest of further building upon that strength.</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:

<i>Subject(s):</i>	<i>Design</i>
<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

Title and Name of Responder:

<i>Position*:</i>	Head of School
<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	<i>AHC, School of Design</i>
<i>Address for communication:</i>	Clothworkers Central Building University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT
<i>Email:</i>	
<i>Telephone:</i>	

**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) must be sent 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

Thank you very much for your support and advice this year.

We were pleased to read that you think the current systems for external examining work well.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We were glad that you approved of the introduction of moderation of all semester one marks and the development of specialist English Language Support. Indeed, in-session English Language support is proving to be very helpful, and it is now available for students throughout both Semester 1 and Semester 2. We are trying to make it available to as many students as possible (currently, 75 from the MA Design alone).

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:

I am pleased to read that you do not feel any matters 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:

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:

Thank you for your comments on the programme structure, and also for confirming that the influence of research in the programme.

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 were delighted to read your comments on the quality of feedback, as we have always aimed at providing constructive, meaningful feedback that can inform students about their areas of strength and needs for improvement within well-defined criteria.

We were also impressed by the motivation and dedication of this cohort of students, which we attribute to their active interest in the diversity of subjects and briefs presented by the programme, and also to the efforts of the MA staff in providing high quality teaching and supervising.

We were also pleased with the quality of students writing, which also reflects the usefulness of in-session English classes they undertook. Regarding typographical errors, despite them being considered a minor issue, we will remember to address them by emphasising the importance of proofreading and using appropriate software to do so.

We do understand and share your concern about the consistency of student feedback forms – particularly regarding the number of points addressed. If, on the one hand, that discrepancy reflected individual needs for improvement – more pronounced in some students than in others – on the other hand, it is natural that it could seem unbalanced. To address this issue, we are now adopting a standard number of comments across all students' feedback.

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 confirming that you were provided with adequate guidance and that you were satisfied with how the boards were conducted. We really appreciated your input and participation.

Other comments

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

Thank you for your advice and support this year – we really appreciate your constructive feedback and comments.