

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of
Examiner:

Faculty / School
of:

Subject(s):

Programme(s) /
Module(s):

Faculty Performance, Visual Arts and Comms.

Art and Design

18399	DESN1440	Studio Practice 1A	20	1
18398	DESN1441	Studio Practice 1B	20	2
18441	DESN1705	Drawing 1A	10	1
19951	DESN1705	Drawing 1A	10	2
19952	DESN1706	Drawing 1B	10	1
18442	DESN1706	Drawing 1B	10	2
32313	DESN1815	Mat Cult and Mass Consumption	20	2
32588	DESN2405	Contempory Art &Memory	10	2
18394	DESN2440	Studio Practice 2A	20	1
18393	DESN2441	Studio Practice 2B	20	2
32572	DESN2465	Class, Taste and Society.	10	1
33851	DESN2705	Cutt edge: Coll as reconfig	10	1
33852	DESN2705	Cutt edge: Coll as reconfigure	10	2
32576	DESN3405	Contemporary Art and Place	20	1
18402	DESN3440	Studio Practice 3A	30	1
18403	DESN3441	Studio Practice 3B	30	2
28419	DESN3445	Time & the Image in Cont. Art	20	1
12257	DESN3660	Ind Study Dissertation	40	3

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.

Feedback is of an appropriate length and detail

A good programme of visits and external speakers is available to students

Exhibitions outside of teaching spaces offer students exciting developmental opportunities

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Small amendments have been made to the requirements for research file which forms a component of all of the practice modules.

The introduction of Midpoint tutorials at level 1 and 2 - based on student self-evaluations (as related to learning outcomes) is a good initiative

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

No

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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 an External Examiner Mentor?	Y / N

For Examiners completing their term of appointment only

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 programme combines study of Fine Art with Design (and participation in courses offered outside of those disciplines) allowing students a considerable amount of personal choice in their studies.

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>Some staff run faculty wide modules which draw directly on their research. Where staff do not do this perhaps this might form part of their medium term professional development objectives</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>Assessment and moderation is conducted in a detailed and appropriate manner</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>Art and Design combined honours courses are few in number within the UK and it is difficult therefore to directly compare students on this course with others. My experience lies in Fine Art education</p> <p>Broadly speaking overall academic performance by students in modules involving essay assignments is probably higher than on Fine Art single honours courses, although this may also reflect Leeds position as a Russell group institution and the demographic of the students it recruits.</p> <p>However, attainment in certain aspects of the practice-based modules compares a little less favourably. In particular contextual and technical sophistication with regards to materials and media is less developed.</p> <p>The influence of design thinking can be discerned among some students in a topic-based (almost brief led) approach – which while it has the potential to generate an exciting synthesis of both disciplines - can inhibit experimentation and criticality.</p>		

On the basis of comments made to the team last year students are now being asked to consider earlier in the course where art and design methodologies converge/ differ and to use these questions to refine the own practice reflectively. This would seem to be something that could be further developed in seminars, lectures and written assignments as critical field.

I also raised the question then of how much engagement students were making with different models of presentation and questions of reception, as related to the learning outcomes / assessment criteria: "consideration of issues pertinent to the curation and presentation of artworks/artefacts and associated visual material in an exhibition context.". This appeared to be more coherent /developed amongst this cohort. Never the less the execution and presentation of work by some students (marked in the 2:1 bracket) would still benefit from more reflection on these issues and attention to detail.

I suggested last year that streamlining the research and analysis component of all practice modules so as enhance criticality and the making of meaningful connections between research and practice. Changes have been made to good effect and further review is planned as to how this component might be most effectively mobilised at each stage of the programme (by making some tasks level specific and revisiting others with increasing sophistication). At present more emphasis lies with on reporting activity than reflecting on it. The creation of a template which sets the order and volume of material required would I think be beneficial and assist staff to more readily compare like with like. I would also recommend that the reporting aspect of the submission etc is further reduced and more emphasis placed on the making of connections to studio activity.

Attainment could also be enhanced by increasing the number of credits that practice modules carry.

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

As previously I would recommend that the 10% and 20% components of DESN1441 be combined to one 30% assignment to allow students to focus their efforts

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>All of the above was all well managed and conducted in a professional manner</p> <p>I would encourage staff to use the range of marks available to them more – some practice marks in the low 2:1s appeared generous and others towards the top of that bracket a little conservative.</p>		

Other comments

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

As previously the level of commitment of staff to the course is high, as is the quality of teaching

The range of input - lectures, visits, workshops activities, available to students seems very good.

In feedback students report that:

Fine Art staff are supportive and well informed - they find them to be approachable and highly engaged

They enjoy the freedom to experiment which they exercise in the studio practice modules

The Research Methods module is too generic - they would like to see more focus on discipline appropriate – humanities style, -qualitative rather than quantitative methods.

Some expressed anxiety about plagiarism related issues, connected to material already included in previous / parallel submissions. This led some to choose a dissertation topic which was quite significantly removed from their existing interests

Could students could be better supported to navigate such matters?

Staff and students report that more technical support is needed with digital processes and AV

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of
Examiner:

Subject(s):

Programme(s) /
Module(s):

<i>Design</i>				
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Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BA Art and Design

Title and Name of
Responder:

Position*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for
communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of School
<i>AHC, School of Design</i>
Clothworkers Central Building University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT

*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 encouraging report and for your support and advice this year.

We were delighted to read your comments on the quality of the feedback delivered to students.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We were pleased that you saw the benefit of the new midpoint tutorials initiative.

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 were pleased to read that you did not feel any matters required 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 about the level of personal choice students on the programme are given in their studies.

We were interested to read your comments about staff running modules available to the wider student body.

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:

Thank you for your feedback and suggestions.

We were pleased to read your comments about assessment and moderation on the programme.

We appreciate your comments on the programme's academic standards and comparisons to other institutions. We also appreciate your comment regarding student feedback that Art and Design staff are supportive of students and well informed.

Thank you for mentioning the high attainment of our students on written work and essay assignments, which has been consistently strong over the last years.

As to your comment about contextual and technical sophistication in practice-based modules in relation to materials and media, we continue to provide a wide range of workshops whilst looking at expanding the provision through specific workshops and by increasing awareness of technical support within the School, e.g. with special events dedicated to provision within the School.

We continue to develop Art and Design thinking through seminars, visiting speakers, workshops and practical/tutorial sessions. You commented that the influence of Design Thinking has potential to inhibit experimentation and criticality. This might be the case with some of the weaker students. Our learning and teaching curriculum emphasises the importance of experimentation and criticality across the art and design provision. Whilst higher achieving students respond well to these expectations, weaker students could possibly be further challenged in developing a greater level of experimentation and greater criticality in their appraisal.

We will consider your suggestions to further develop encouraging students to refine their own practices through enhanced attention to the qualities of making and forms of presentation supported by increased criticality.

We were pleased to read that you feel your helpful suggestion of streamlining the research and analysis component of practice modules was made to good effect and we have continued to further edit and consolidate the research & analysis component for the 2019-20 session.

Your suggestion about the credit weighting of practical modules will be further discussed in view of programme changes across the School.

Your comment about the components of DESN1441 will be shared with the module manager. The proposed change of credit weighting has been addressed and is now 80% for Practice and 20% for the Written component. It has come into effect from 2019-20.

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:

We were delighted to read that you felt the progression and awards process was well managed and carried out professionally.

Thank you for your observations on the range of marks used which could allow for a wider spread of marks, in particular in relation to the 2.2/2.1 boundaries and also regarding the marks at the higher end of the spectrum.

Other comments

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

Thank you for your comments on the quality of teaching and range of support and activities available to students. We are delighted to see that students feel engaged and supported by the staff team.

I can confirm that we have passed on your comments regarding the Research Methods module to the School. The Research Methods module has been further adjusted for the current session (2019-20).

Students receive guidance and support in plagiarism in their school wide modules, particularly at level 1. Your comments about student anxieties around re-use of their own work and avoiding auto-plagiarism will be passed on the School's Academic Integrity Lead to see if more work can be focussed in building student's awareness in this area and confidence in avoiding plagiarism while pursuing their research interests.

You raised the issue that more technical support is needed, in particular for AV and digital provision. This has been raised with the School.

Finally I would like to thank you for your support and advice; your feedback and suggestions are much appreciated.