

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 05/09/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Manchester Fashion Institute

Subject(s):

BA (hons) Fashion

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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.

The course is run by a proactive and committed team of staff who have previously worked in the fashion industry. This mix of academic and industrial backgrounds has led to the creation of a course which is well structured, carefully balanced and highly academic. The students have a solid understanding of the needs of the industry through live projects and close relationships with industry partners. Many of the students also benefit from undertaking year-long placements within fashion companies, which provides them with a sound basis for undertaking their final year. The portfolios are particularly strong as they are underpinned with critical and analytical thinking which makes the graduates very employable. Many become designers within the fashion industry either at high profile fashion companies or within lesser known but equally viable fashion businesses.

During my visit I was provided with a very organised file containing Programme Modules Descriptors, student feedback and marks as well as easy access to the practical work and the two-dimensional work, everything was presented systematically. The Dissertation submissions was accessible on-line well in advance and the Classification Board is very well organised.

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 there was some outstanding work produced as part of the student's Research and Development Journals. There was evidence a very high level of analysis and detail within these journals, which is to be commended. The reflective journals successfully help the students to develop and visualise their design ideas. The research process is rigorously undertaken, and this cohort explained their investigations in full detail. There was also evidence of the use of comprehensive studio notes which were used to explore the design process. The technical drawings were very analytical, whilst figure drawings were tactile and three dimensional. The use of the computer did not hinder their ability to create high quality creative sketches.

This cohort produced some very skilled fabric embellishment work, which made a positive addition to their portfolios and worked very well on the garments.

The new Programme Leader has settled into his post within education very well. He has been fully supported by his colleagues and as a result the course is running smoothly, the transfer of responsibilities has been handled splendidly.

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

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 a 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.

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 is evident in the level of academic rigour which the students are expected to achieve. The influence of research is also evident in the student's design work, their journals and their theoretical writing which is often highly investigative. The use of referencing and acknowledging their sources used to underpin their design work, enables the students to demonstrate the breadth of their own research and to highlight their own contribution to new knowledge. They enter the fashion industry understanding the need to utilise their research in order to be original, creative and resourceful.

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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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

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

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
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The assessment process is carried out systematically, the staff are very careful to ensure that each student is marked impartially and that very clear written feedback is provided. The written comments/feedback and the programme design are aligned to the learning outcomes. The summative assessment feedback is very clearly written up for the students and linked with headings to each element of assessment.

The Module Descriptors are very clear, they carefully explain the module contents and the learning outcomes are written in plain English. Each unit has a good explanation of the Employability Skills which are undoubtedly linked to the needs of the real world. The work produced is therefore very relevant to the student's career prospects.

Although the emphasis of this course is often on the two-dimensional work within this fashion course, the Garment Technology element of this programme is essential to the learning process for a Fashion Designer. As a substantial element of this course is practice based, the teaching of the technical skills is paramount to the learning process. The teaching of garment manufacturing and pattern cutting is carefully structured throughout the duration of the course, skills are taught incrementally. The garments are made with great care and this year and there was a positive focus on experimental pattern cutting. Experimental pattern cutting could be added as a learning outcome to the Garment Technology Module. The garments produced are handed in for assessments during the entirety of the course and they are then rigorously analysed as part of the assessment and feedback process.

Each module has a number of assessment elements which are allocated a percentage. Some modules such as DESN 1661 Garment Technology, include an element of 'Professional Practice' which is assessed through the student's commitment, self-motivation, or engagement (for example). As an external examiner it is not easy to verify the assessment processes attached to these elements of assessment. It would be useful to unpack how these skills are taught.

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 students generally perform very well indeed, the work is in line or above national academic standards. The course compares favourably with similar courses within the UK. This year, as in other years, the portfolio work was very strong, their commercial design ideas are often outstanding. The portfolios have been award winning in the past. The design work is presented in a very professional manner, the information is easy to digest, and there is clear evidence of originality.</p> <p>The students perform very well on this course, the grades are consistently high for good reason. However, some discussion did take place regarding the level of marking, during my visit the staff were questioning whether the overall percentage of its First Class degrees is in line with the rest of the University. A small piece of research into how these grades lie in comparison with comparable courses may be helpful to establish if there is a need to look at the grading systems.</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?	NA
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?	NA
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

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Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Design

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Fashion Design
Fashion Design (INT)
Fashion Design (IND)

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

BA

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

AHC, School of Design

Address for communication:

Clothworkers Central Building
University of Leeds
Leeds
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) 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. We were delighted to read your remarks on the areas of good practice within the Programme.

We were particularly pleased to read your positive comments on our mix of academic and industrial background staff contributing to the course which is well structured, carefully balanced and highly academic. We also appreciate your comment on how our students' portfolios are particularly strong and how they are underpinned with critical and analytical thinking, making graduates very employable.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We were glad to read your comments about the high standard of student work within students' rigorously researched Research and Development Journals, with the use of comprehensive studio notes used to explore the design process and the high quality creative sketches.

As Programme Leader I appreciate your feedback on the transition of this role by the support of my colleagues and that the transfer has run smoothly.

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:

Thank you for confirming that there were no matters requiring 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:

We were delighted with your comments about the course's academic rigour and use of research in their work. We are pleased that the efforts of the Programme Staff to encourage these practices are so successful.

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 very much for your positive comments on the feedback provided to students and on the development of the student's career prospects through their work including how our written comments and feedback are aligned to the learning outcomes and that our summative assessment feedback is clear for students.

We were pleased to read your comments about the garment manufacturing and pattern cutting skills taught through the core Fashion Design modules and how paramount this is to the learning process for students who intend to peruse fashion design as a career.

Your comments about the need for greater clarity on the assessment processes attached to the 'Professional Practice' components are appreciated and we are analysing whether this is necessary practice to continue within each module.

Thank you very much for your kind remarks about the general student performance. We are very pleased to hear that the students are performing so well especially our student's strong portfolio work were they balance their outstanding commercial design ideas with excellent professional presentation.

You noted the discussion we had during your visit about the high proportion of First Class degrees achieved by students on the programme and we intend to research and conduct a comparison of First Class degrees with comparable courses.

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 are pleased that you were satisfied by the progression and awards process.

Other comments

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

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