# BSc (Hons) Audio Engineering 2017/18

## External Examiner's report summary

*Please indicate in the relevant boxes below whether you agree with the statements about the threshold standards of Leeds Beckett University's awards, student achievement and the conduct of the University's assessment processes, using as a reference the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements.*

*Please also list any shortcomings and areas for commendation. You should expand on any issues you mention here in the main report. If any boxes are ticked "No" the Dean of School or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the Course Director.*

| Standards set | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | **No** |
| "In my view, the threshold academic standards set for the modules/awards are appropriate." | X | |
| *If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.* | | |
| | | |

| Student achievement | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A \*** |
| "In my view, students' achievement is comparable with similar course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar." | X | | |
| Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision. | | | X |
| *\* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this please indicate here.* | | | |
| *If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.* | | | |
| | | | |

| Conduct of processes | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | **No** |
| "In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are rigorous and fairly conducted." | X | |
| *If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.* | | |
| | | |

| Areas of good practice |
|---|
| Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. |

This is my final year as EE for the Audio Engineering program. One constant across the years I've been in this role is the dedication from the academic staff associated with this course. Based on the materials I've looked over and chats with students, it's clear that the staff strive to provide high-quality teaching and learning materials and go beyond that to provide any required support required for each student. Students are clearly well looked after. I think this is something that can go unnoticed when just looking at marks at boards, so it's worth highlighting what a good academic team you have for the Audio Engineering program.

In terms of student achievement, the standard remains quite high. I see some challenging modules across all years and I think this is a big factor in leading to good employment with your graduates. This isn't a degree you can get just by attendance – it takes hard work – and this produces the type of engineers that members of industry want to employ.

# Main report

*In this section you are asked to describe more fully how the University has or has not maintained threshold academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to the course(s) for which you are the external examiner, using as a reference the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements.*

**Please complete all sections of the form fully and where not applicable please state N/A.**
**Where applicable please also complete the sections for any collaborative provision sampled.**

**If you are an external examiner for any of the University's** Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes **(HND/HNC level) provision, please also complete the section on page 9 sections l, m and n entitled "for External Examiners Associated with** Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes**."**

| **Professional Body Requirements** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| "In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met. <br><br> *Not applicable if the course is not a professional body course please indicate here.* | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A \*** |
| | | | X |
| *If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.* | | | |
| | | | |

| (a) **The operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board (and/or Module Board meeting you may also have attended).** |
| --- |
| I attended the board on 21 June 2018 and was happy with how things were conducted. Things ran smoothly and efficiently. No issues here. |

| (b) **The action, if any was required, taken in response to your report of last year.  (This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time.)** |
| --- |
| - In last year's report, I mentioned that some modules still didn't seem to be using rubrics for turnitin reports. I see an improvement here, where now I think I only saw one assignment that didn't have rubrics embedded into the marking scheme online. <br><br> - I didn't have any other significant actions required from last year's report. |

| (c) **The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.** |
| --- |
| I continue to be satisfied with the student performance on the program. All year groups show a range of abilities, where there are some clear shining stars and the usual few who are struggling (largely due to non-engagement). The work students are carrying out is comparable to other institutions, where I'd say the level 5 project work exceeds that from other institutions. It's also good to see how the teaching team handled a less academic group on level 5 this year. It seems an honest and open discussion was what was needed to get them a bit more focused and motivated to excel in their work. There seems to be an improvement in performance after this. |

(d) **The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills.**

I don't see much difference between the strengths and weaknesses that I observed last year. As usual, students seem to perform better at hands-on practical work and less well at theory/math-heavy exercises (which is normal). The second year and final year projects nicely showcase exactly what the students are good at, which covers quite a wide range of subjects.

(e) **The standards of the structure, organisation, design and marking of all examination papers and/or other forms of assessment.**

This area remains largely the same to last year (where I had no problems with what I saw). There seems to be better inclusion of rubrics within turnitin assignments now, which was a minor concern from last year.

(f) **The curriculum, teaching or resourcing of the programme of study as indicated by the performance of the students in the assessment.**

From what I've reviewed, I can find no major issue with the curriculum/teaching/resourcing. I'm excited to hear how the plans for the new building progress, as it sounds like the facilities will be quite impressive and will greatly benefit the students.

(g) **Comments on the use of My Beckett (Virtual Learning Environment) within the course (if applicable).**

I've been able to look over all the module pages on Blackboard this year and I'm fairly happy with how they're used. The content is usually organized clearly and is a very good resource for students. I have no issues concerning this area.

(h) **Module content, consistency of modules and module assessment across the course and the achievement of learning outcomes. (You may be asked by your School to provide detailed comments on the modules that you examine.)**

**General comments**

- Very nicely organized documentation in the module boxes and on Blackboard.
- Impressive work from year 3 (especially the projects)
- No evidence of any group projects across all three years. Maybe consider including one or two, as this is an important experience, in my opinion.
- There are lots of written reports. Is there any way you could provide a bit more variation in assessment formats?
- Looking over the module leader reports, there aren't many examples of areas for improvement mentioned. I think it's important that module leaders critically look at their modules and always think of ways to improve them. If they've been teaching the same module for many years, maybe it's time to pass the module onto another member of staff to give it a refresh.
- The student surveys aren't generating any useful data, I think due to their method of delivery (online). We tried online surveys for one year at Derby and quickly realized that they don't work since few students engage with them. If you can't get at least 50% of each module's cohort taking

part in the surveys, then they aren't worth doing. Also, I find that the scale-based ratings, while interesting to look at, don't give much useful information. I suggest including as part of the survey some open response questions. I find these very useful in targeting areas for improvement in modules.

**Level 6**

- Audio Engineering Project
    - Excellent level of feedback from both markers
    - Nice range of project topics. Some projects are very ambitious!
    - Why doesn't the viva carry a mark like in other courses' project module? Is there any issue related to this in terms of students putting enough effort into the viva? Why not have them give a formal presentation? I think this is an important aspect of research.
- Applied Acoustics
    - Very clear marking on all assessments with good use of rubric and detailed feedback
    - Nice set of practical experiments
- Sound Reproduction Systems
    - It's good to see students doing some fieldwork, but one option seemed to be a music rehearsal room. Not sure this is comparable to what other students were looking into.
- Game Audio
    - There were quite a few low marks in this module… why?
    - Very good documentation of 2$^{nd}$ marking in this module
    - Some impressive work!
- Audio Visual Interfaces
    - I couldn't find much info regarding the double marking. Can this be made a bit more transparent?
    - I liked many of the projects. Some very clever ideas!
- Spatial Audio
    - This module is a good example of shared teaching. Good to see a number of academics contributing in their areas of expertise.
    - The coursework examples given were impressive. Good student achievement.
- Music Technology in the Community
    - Nice to see guest speakers and working with schools. Why not more guest speakers in other modules?
    - I couldn't find any evidence of internal moderation for this module, but may have missed it in the module box.

**Level 5**

- Audio Design Project
    - Nice selection of project options (8 choices). Doesn't seem that students are going for any perceived easier option.
    - Other than a few NS, good student achievement
    - Feedback is in depth and constructive.
    - This module is one of my favorite across the whole program. A nice example of good practice across the board.
- Audio Transducer Design
    - From an EE point of view, the zip files with student work are difficult to access. I can't directly download them (but did find a workaround!). It took me quite a while to look through these, due to this.
    - Good evidence of internal moderation of the coursework.
- Live Sound
    - I liked that in the teaching schedule there is a column for suggested further reading (I didn't notice this in any other module). A good idea that other module leaders should implement.

- o Many fails/NS… why?
  - o Student's formatting of the written reports needs improvement. Were they given guidance on this?
- Interactive Audio Systems
  - o Quite a few fails/NS... why?
  - o I couldn't see any feedback in the work included in the module box. Where is the feedback located?
- Mixing and Mastering
  - o 2 x 2500 word reports for this module. I think this is a bit much considering they're also working hard on their mixes and masters.
  - o Many NS/fails… why?
  - o The feedback given is very good and detailed.

**Level 4**

- Audio Electronics
  - o I was happy to see the good student performance this year. This module had some issues in its first couple years, so it's good to see that the issues have been resolved and the module is running well now.
  - o Nice use of MultiSim to explore basic circuits
  - o Very clear marking and feedback
- Creative Audio Programming
  - o Lots of NS/fails… why?
  - o I feel this (along with Audio Electronics) is a very important module at Level 4. From what I can see, I think this is well delivered with interesting challenges embedded within the coursework.
- Audio Production Techniques
  - o Nice feedback given and good use of rubrics. Marking is very clear

(i) **Areas of student/staff engagement in teaching and learning, scholarship, research or professional practice.**

From what I've observed, I see a good deal of evidence of the staff engaging in good learning and teaching practices and appear to be committed to expanding their research and other scholarly activities. This will serve to further improve the quality of teaching in the long run (although the quality is quite good, anyway). Student engagement suffers from the usual issues surrounding attendance, but for the students who do turn up regularly, I see some good results and students are clearly building the skill set required for graduate level employment.

(j) **The University welcomes external examiners' comments on its academic regulatory framework. Such comments may not have a direct bearing on standards set and achieved or the conduct of processes and so it may not be appropriate to include them elsewhere in this report or its summary. Please record any concerns or comments you may have here.**

I mentioned this in my report for the last three years and will repeat it this year as this is an ongoing concern and will need to be addressed in some way if the team goes for IET accreditation:

I'm very concerned with how learning outcomes are treated in regards to passing a module. It became clear to me at the board that a student can completely fail an assessment while still passing the module, provided they have an overall mark of 40% or above. This means that a student can pass a module while failing one or more learning outcome.

| (k) **Collaborative Provision: please include here any comments you wish to make on elements of collaborative provision for which you have responsibility (in addition to those you may have indicated previously in this report).** |
|---|
| N/A |

For use from March 2017

**External Examiners' Report Checklist**

**Please comment for all boxes**

| Course Materials | | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Did you receive? | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
| a. | Course Handbook(s)? | X | | |
| b. | Academic Regulations including any Professional Statutory Body requirements where appropriate (these may be included the Course Handbook)? | X | | |
| c. | Module specifications (these may be in the Course Handbook)? | X | | |
| d. | Assessment briefs/marking criteria? | X | | |

| Draft examination papers | | | | |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
| a. | (i) Did you receive all the draft papers? | | X | |
| | (ii) If not, was this at your request? | | X | |
| b. | (i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? | X | | |
| | (ii)      If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | | | X |
| c. | Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | | | X |

| Draft coursework | | | | |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
| a. | (i) Did you receive all the draft coursework? | X | | |
| | (ii) If not, was this at your request? | | | X |
| b. | (i) Was the nature and level of the coursework appropriate? | X | | |
| | (ii)      If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | | | X |
| c. | Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | X | | |

| **Marking Examination Scripts** | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | (i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative partner students? | X | | |
| | (ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory? | | | X |
| | Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows: **a)** Samples should be determined by a square root of cohort size, no smaller than 6, no larger than 15. However it should be borne in mind that not all work is assessed in a way that makes a square root sample possible and allowance should be made. For example in subjects such as the performing arts where there may be a requirement for an external to come and view a performance instead, or to visit the exhibition of art work. **b)** Samples to include all classification categories, and it is helpful to concentrate around the boundaries to include some fails. **c)** Samples to consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process. | | | |
| b. | Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate? | X | | |
| c. | Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks? | X | | |

| **Dissertations/project reports** | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? | X | | |
| b. | Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate? | X | | |

| **Coursework/continuously assessed work** | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative partner students? | X | | |
| b. | Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory? | X | | |

| **Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements** | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements? | | | X |

| **Module Board/Progression and Award Boards** | | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Were you able to attend the meetings? | X | | |
| b. | Were the meetings conducted to your satisfaction? | X | | |
| c. | Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Module Board/Progression and Award Boards? | X | | |