

## MFA Film 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."	✓	
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."	✓		
Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision.			
* 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."	✓	
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.		

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<b>Areas of good practice</b>
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Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.
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<b>Committed staff.</b>
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<b>Excellent feedback throughout.</b>
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<b>A varied and exciting diet of assessments.</b>
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<b>Development of self-evaluative skills.</b>
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<b>Intensive craft-skill acquisition.</b>
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<b>Emphasis on collaboration.</b>
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<b>Excellent technical resources.</b>
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## 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.  <i>*Not applicable if the course is not a professional body course please indicate here.</i>	Yes	No	N/A *
	✓		
<i>If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.</i>			

**(a) The operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board (and/or Module Board meeting you may also have attended).**

**The operation and conduct of the Exam Board was efficient and effective.**

**(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.)**

**I am happy to learn that my concerns regarding the module Specialist Collaborative Filmmaking were acknowledged and that the planning and operation of the module have been modified accordingly.**

**(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.**

**The overall performance of the students in each of the modules is uniformly high, with the best achieving excellent results, commensurate with work at this level in other institutions. At least two of the MA final productions will do well in international film festivals, I believe. The MFA**

final production is an outstanding piece of work and will undoubtedly enhance the two graduates' career prospects.

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

The course continues to pose an exciting mix of critical, creative, craft, collaborative and self-evaluative challenges for the students. The emphasis on personal development and a rigorous diagnostic approach to the acquisition of filmmaking skills strongly assists each student in identifying personal strengths and weaknesses and, in conjunction with other modules, helps to provide a realistic appraisal of their chosen career path on completion of their studies. The MFA has added an excellent extension to the School's portfolio, providing additional opportunities for higher-level professional skills acquisition.

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

Despite changes in personnel and the departure of a valued and experienced team member, the organisation of both the production-oriented modules and the research-oriented modules has been excellent. The changes made to the design of the course are now fully bedded-in and have improved the student learning experience.

- As for marking, I would suggest that a greater range of marks be used, especially when rewarding excellence.
- **IMPORTANT:** In terms of future delivery of the MA and MFA, it is clear that to maintain the current standards will be a major challenge for the academic and support staff at the Film School. In light of the present and forthcoming staffing shortages (four full time staff leaving by the end of the Spring semester), I feel that it is vitally important to realise that this will have a major impact upon the course and the remaining staff as they strive to keep the curriculum working. Given that the course is one which integrates disparate specialisms in ways which form the core of the filmmaking process, it is unfortunately not so simple a process as to suggest that the remaining staff or students 'do less' or seek areas to reduce in importance. Essentially, this is an issue which needs an effective solution before the commencement of the next academic year. The course has an excellent reputation both nationally and internationally, within the academy and in the film and tv industries, and if this is to be maintained and enhanced even further, it is imperative that these posts are replaced promptly.

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

The standard of achievement in student assessment attests to the commitment and efficacy of the course team, and the results are commensurate with the best of post-graduate filmmaking courses nationally and internationally.

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

**MyBeckett is used in a variety of ways on the MA and MFA and continues to be a very useful tool.**

**(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.)**

**The forms of assessment are appropriate for the skills and aptitudes that are taught and developed in each of the modules. The mix of assessments, including practice and performative assessments, collaborative skills, reflective blog-writing, tumblr presentations, research and essay writing provide a wide-ranging and exciting mix of challenges for the student. Care has been taken to spread these assessments sensibly throughout the two years. The standard of feedback is high throughout.**

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

**Given the added pressures caused by staff shortages, it has been difficult for staff members to devote time to their research, professional development, scholarship and practice during the current year. I would encourage the institution to provide support for these activities as they contribute substantially to teaching, as well as foster personal well-being.**

**(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.**

none

**(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

## External Examiners' Report Checklist

**Please comment for all boxes**

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

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

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

<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
a.	(i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative partner students?	✓		
	(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?	✓		
<p><b>Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>b) Samples to include all classification categories, and it is helpful to concentrate around the boundaries to include some fails.</p> <p>c) Samples to consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process.</p>				
b.	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	✓		
c.	Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	✓		

<b>Dissertations/project reports</b>				
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
a.	Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate?	✓		
b.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?	✓		

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

<b>Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements</b>				
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
a.	Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?			✓

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