

BA HONS FILMMAKING

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.			
* 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.

Excellent and inventive approach to awarding individual grades within collaborative working at Level 6. I have detailed this in my main report. A warm, friendly team who care very much about the course and their students.

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 *
	x		
<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).
Very smooth and focused. The chair was efficient and attentive. A couple of queries were made and were dealt with satisfactorily. I was able to give a brief report and an introduction of myself.

(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.)
My first year.

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.
The work on the two modules that I have examined is comparable to the work of students in other UK institutions of equivalent standing. The best examples are superior, and amongst the best in the country.

(d) The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills.
The range and quality of technical skills demonstrated by students is very strong. The knowledge of the individual skills (camera, sound, production design, editing, scriptwriting, producing, directing, animation) in relation to the professionalism, the understanding of process, and the appropriateness of choice within a filmic setting, is evident and impressive. The conceptual grasp within the individual skills at Level 5 is not

strongly evident, and I detail this below in (h). There is a much stronger demonstration of how the skills fit into a conceptual framework and within a wider context in the L6 film project, again, detailed in (h).

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

I am particularly impressed by the organisation of the individual assessment in the 60 credit Film Project at Level 6. With extraordinarily high numbers (180), the staff have developed a method to ensure students, who all work in small production groups to make a film, are all marked fairly and individually.

The use of the Production Passport is innovative and makes excellent use of the producing students who oversee the group productions. It, along with the weekly staff-student meetings, allows the assessing staff to capture and identify correctly (with evidence) individual students' working methods, timekeeping, ability, motivation, skill etc, all of which can too easily be missed when students work in groups. The employment of graduates as Production Supervisors, who, as a part of their job, visit the groups off-site on sets, adds to the body of evidence for each individual student.

The feedback forms are very clear, useful and enable students to understand exactly why they have been awarded their grade.

I would think that this inventive solution to individual marking within collaborative work, which includes peer-assessment without the students being quite so aware of it, inclusion of alumni, and mirroring of industry practice, should be shared more widely as an example of best practice to other institutions who are engaged in developing appropriate methods of assessment for group work. Perhaps it could be presented at external and internal LTA conferences?

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

The performances of the students are generally as expected. The curriculum has been through a recent revalidation and has addressed the key issues of parity across the specialisms (both vertically and horizontally – detailed in (h)).

The resourcing of the technical equipment is very well organised. The students (producers and cinematographers) use an online booking system, Connect 2, to book equipment which then gets checked by an academic and a H&S representative before they are allowed to begin the shoot. The use of edit suites and studios is equally well run. The technicians are a key resource and are integrated well within the curriculum.

There are very large numbers of students in each year group, and inevitably some will drop off. Within the SW3 module, there are 15 students who have not submitted without any reason being recorded for why they didn't submit, with a further 7 who have been given extensions and mitigations. In Film Project, the number who have not submitted drops to 4. I am concerned that the staffing resource is too low (both for academics and admin) and there is simply not the time and resource available to catch these failing students.

I understand that 4 full time members of the teaching team have left this academic year, along with a 5th part time lecturer, and that these teaching roles are not going to be replaced. This is a huge concern for me, as well as the team, and I cannot foresee the programme of study being delivered smoothly with such a large percentage of the teaching team missing. There is no doubt in my mind that the overuse and reliance on part time and associate lecturers will impact on both the student experience (lower NSS, potentially higher rate of mental health amongst students not being identified or supported) and on staff

well-being. The remaining staff will be forced to pick up extra module leadership, marking and mentoring. They will be the staff that inevitably have to respond to issues (firefighting) on a daily basis, and this extra work will very likely impact on their stress levels and morale. The levels of stress may rise to the point of staff having to take time off through ill health.

It is not possible to deliver a curriculum of this complexity and to this many students (500+) without a satisfactory staff student ratio and a strong admin team, for any sustained period of time and I sincerely hope that the retiring staff will soon be replaced.

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

This is used consistently and usefully throughout the programme.

(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.)

Specialist Workshops 3 There are 8 different specialisms within this module. The module itself is part of a series of 4 specialist workshops that exist within the programme, progressing through the three levels. SW3 takes place in Semester 2 of Level 5, and the students choose one of the specialisms. I have looked at a sample of the work across all of the strands, and have provided detailed comments below.

Generally, there is an issue of parity between the strands, both in what students are delivering (some have 2 tasks, some 1, some ask for written evidence, some don't), and there is some variance over the use and interpretation of learning outcomes. I wasn't sure how LO3 was being assessed. The team are currently undertaking a lengthy and detailed planning workshop where these issues are being addressed. This will be well worth the time and effort put in, and I look forward to seeing the clarity and parity next academic year.

The work has been double marked and standardised by the module leader. I queried a mark of 28 in one specialism, which appeared to me to be comparable to another piece of work in a different specialism, which had been awarded a 42. The tutor and module leader reconsidered the mark, referring to the assessment grid and agreed that the mark would stand. I am confident that the marks have been rigorously checked and awarded. A few observations below (I understand that most of these concerns will be ironed out through the planning):

Directing: Really excellent feedback, but there is a lot of it, which must take time. Will the introduction of a rubric help to cut this down? Really clear brief. Their bibliographies don't match the reading list. Do they read the reading list? One student used the 12 questions as a template, which seems a sensible way to help them to structure. One submission was 26 minutes in length. Could you get them to edit them down?

Production Design: One of the module specialism aims mentions 'rigorous critical analysis' but I didn't see evidence of this in the samples I viewed. The best work is very strong and the students clearly enjoy the module. The brief suggests there should be 21 pieces of work, but I could only see 16 in the highest students work.

Sound: I was only able to open 2 of the 3 samples, but the work was strong and fairly marked.

Screenwriting: I like the evidence of development in this strand. There is only 1 task, which seems appropriate for a 20 credit module. The first 2 sentences in one students feedback are a little confusing,

but generally the feedback is really useful and insightful. One student didn't attend very much, but still submitted a strong piece of work. Very good.

Post production: Again, just the 1 task and a clear brief, but I was unable to open 2 out of the 3 samples, as the files were from editing software. The one I viewed was excellent, and the feedback very useful.

Cinematography: The brief seems to be at odds with what the students have submitted, but on VLE, there is the addition of a sentence that offers an alternative submission (one that all the samples I viewed chose). I understand that with there being so many cinematography students (70), it is practically impossible for them each to book a camera for their submission. The result is that this assessment has had to be inventive (they present to camera in a YT style), but I have raised concerns with the ML about the level of academic rigour within this approach.

Producing: The samples I viewed were fairly assessed and interesting pieces of work. From the feedback, it's clear that one of the students was disengaged with the process. Although this student still submitted, I wonder what the process is for following up on students who are disengaged like this?

Animation: Without there being a requirement for a written rationale, it's difficult to see how this strand addresses all learning outcomes of the module. Reading the structure of the strand, it's clear it's being taught during the sessions, but it's difficult to see evidence of this within the submissions.

Film Project This is a 60 credit module that goes across both semesters of L6 and is the main filmmaking module for the students. I have already spoken at length about the impressive organisation of the assessment of this module in (e) and the sheer effort required by the teaching team to enable 180 students to work collaboratively to produce films ready for exhibition is impressive and should be applauded. The teaching team will have to collaborate themselves in order for this operation to run smoothly. Again, I am concerned that the lack of staff next year may impact on this.

I looked at the samples, which included ones from each specialism, as well as a range of fiction, documentary and experimental films. The marking is very rigorous and should be used as an example of best practice more widely. I understand that the hours spent on assessment do fit in with the total hours awarded for the module, but it might be worth checking that staff are not over working (going into the red) here.

The best films are outstanding. They should be (and I understand, are) screened in student (and other) film festivals. The weaker films are equivalent to the weaker ones in equivalent institutions. There are a number of films that are within the mid-range and could be described as unexceptional. I wouldn't be concerned about this, but instead, I would again, point out the outstanding marking approach which allows students to achieve the top marks even when working on a mediocre film.

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

Staff are extremely committed to the programme and go to lengths to ensure that students have a good experience at the Northern Film School. Retiring staff have clearly enjoyed their time here and spoke of the continuing and important need for staff to retain their professional practice and research. I gather that some of the team are collaborating on a film over the summer. I hope this gets financial support and is taken into account on their workplans too.

I understand that some staff are studying for PhDs, which is fantastic and I hope they continue to get the support they need (in terms of working from home etc) in order to complete.

I also hope that staff are able to build research and scholarly activity into their workplans, particularly in

light of the staffing issues.

(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.

No comments.

(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).

No comments.

External Examiners' Report Checklist

Please comment for all boxes

Course Materials				
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/marketing 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?			
b.	(i) Was the nature and level of the coursework appropriate?			x
	(ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			
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
<p>Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:</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?			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		

Development and support of External Examiners

Please mark the appropriate boxes:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Were you new in post in academic year 2016/17?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you were new:

(a) Did you access the on-line External Examiner Induction Module?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not, was there a particular reason?	I had all info from the email and course team	
(b) Did you receive any specific induction or other support from your School?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Some inexperienced new examiners are formally mentored. Were you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(d) Did you find the mentoring you received helpful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any general or specific comments on the development and support offered by the University, especially improvements you would like to see:

Very good. I have very much enjoyed my visit. Thanks to everyone concerned.