External Examiner's report summary

School of Film, Music and Performing Arts

Undergraduate

- BMUPP Music Performance & Production(UG)

Please indicate, 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.

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Standards Set

	Yes	No
"In my view, the threshold academic standards set for the modules/awards meet with the requirements of the relevant National Qualifications Statement's."	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' who have been awarded qualifications have had the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar." *Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this statement, please note here:	X		

Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short:

Conduct of process

	Yes	No

"In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are reliable, 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.

Actions from last year's report **(This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time)**
N/A

Areas of good practice/commendation
Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment:
The marking/moderation process is transparent and fair, and the feedback given to students is constructive, respectful and appropriate. The curriculum is engaging and strikes a good balance between vocational skills and preparation for more independent academic study/research.

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			
	Yes	**No**	**N/A***
"In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met. *Not applicable if the course is not a professional body courseplease indicate here.	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).
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and my own teaching responsibilities, feedback and discussion as a result of

my external examining was carried out via email. The documentation I was provided with, especially for the final progression board that dealt with the consequences of Covid-19, strongly suggests that the progression and award boards were conducted fairly and in good practice.

(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.)

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

The students at Leeds Beckett University performed similarly to comparable providers in the UK I am familiar with (Huddersfield, West London). There is evidence of strong artistic practice in performance and production.

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

The course combines music performance and production, which sets it apart from specialist performance or production/technology courses. The provision in both subject specialisms is noticeable in the student work that shows a more 'musical' understanding and approach to their practice than is common in pure music technology courses. Although such combined courses tend to produce less specialised performers/producers than respective courses at universities and conservatories, I am confident that the well-rounded skillset of graduates of the Music Performance and Production course will make them competitive on the job market and allow them to work effectively as freelancers, if they wish to do so.

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

The assignments are well aligned with the modules' learning outcomes and structure the learning experience throughout the academic year/term. The assignment briefs are clear and accessible. The expectations are transparent. Most module handbooks include marking rubrics specific for each assignment or component of portfolio assignments. The feedback differs between members and staff and area of specialism, but in all cases, the feedback is fair, transparent, productive and respectful. There is some variety in the form of feedback, but I would like to stress that this variety is created by individual tutors who exceed the expectations by far. The only thing I like to raise is that on some modules the alterative assignments required due to the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in slightly generous marks, but this seems to be a common phenomenon across the HE sector and is nothing to worry about since the student should not be disadvantaged.

students in the assessment

The facilities used for this course are superb, especially the recording studios. The curriculum builds up skills systematically and strikes a good balance between vocational areas and research specialisms. The students have enough freedom to develop their skills in the areas of their interest while benefitting from the wide and more traditional, academic tuition accompanying their work as practitioners. Even in modules that are predominantly 'academic', the assignments promote skills important for an industry career; employed or as freelancers. The progressions from levels 4 to 5 and 5 to 6 match the FHEQ framework and guarantee that benchmarks for level 6 - such as a systematic understanding of the key aspects of the field of study, the ability to deploy established techniques of analysis, a conceptual understanding and independent learning skills - are fulfilled.

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

Blackboard is a relatively common and reliable VLE. Some module leaders have set up an area for the external examiner that is hidden from students, where responses to moderation and moderation forms are stored. This is very helpful, and ideally, every module would provide this information, as it gives valuable insights into the marking and moderation process and the resulting decisions.

(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.)

I have provided written reports on each examined module to the course leader; therefore, I will not repeat everything here. But in summary, the modules are well run in all regards. The module content is convincing and makes sense in the overall progression of the course. The assessment is transparent and fair. The spread of marks is reasonable, and the marks given compare to those at similar institutions.

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

I am not entirely sure what this question refers to. Students are encouraged to collaborate with each other and with practitioners outside the institution. This does not only provide valuable learning experiences but also prepares them for the 'real world', not least by establishing a professional network. The experience and professional networks of members of staff seem to be positive, as they can open doors. Furthermore, the frequent contribution of industry practitioners ensures real-world relevance of the curriculum and assignments.

(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.

N/A

(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