

## Form 'External Examiners - Leeds School Of Arts' for External Examiners - Leeds School Of Arts

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<b>Submitted By</b>	
<b>Began</b>	28 Sep 2023, 8:22 am
<b>Finished</b>	28 Sep 2023, 8:29 am
<b>Updated</b>	28 Sep 2023, 8:29 am
<b>Status</b>	<b>Default</b> <b>Last Status Change:</b> 28 Sep 2023, 8:29 am by Kay Hartley <a href="#">↻ Status change history</a>
<b>Actions</b>	<a href="#">Edit submission</a>  <a href="#">Print submission</a> <a href="#">Delete submission</a>

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**LEEDS  
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UNIVERSITY**

Introduction

### Leeds School Of Arts

#### Postgraduate

- MFASH Fashion(TP)

External Examiner ID

Name Of External Examiner:

First Name

Last Name

Collaborative Institution:

Date of Main Progression and Award Board Attended:

2022-09-15

## Introduction

External Examiners are required by the terms of their appointment to submit an annual report. The report will be considered in depth during course annual monitoring activity. A record of the University's responses to examiners' reports also forms part of the documentation for this activity. It is also used in compiling our annual report on external examining.

**Your report will be widely circulated and shared with Students** and therefore we ask you not to refer to anyone by name or in a way that allows identification of an individual.

Please complete all sections of the report unless they are not relevant (such as you do not examine Collaborative or Degree Apprenticeship Provision). This report must be **submitted within 28 days of the main Progression and Award Board** and failure to submit within the required timescale may result in termination of your tenure as an external examiner without good reason.

**NO EXAMINING FEES WILL BE PAID IF YOU FAIL TO SUBMIT YOUR ANNUAL REPORT.**

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## Section A

### External Examiner's Report Summary

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](#) applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements and [Leeds Beckett University regulations](#)

If any boxes are ticked "No" the Dean of School or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the Course Director.

[HK1] Added Reference to correct section of Regulations in here.

### Standards set

A1) "Threshold academic standards set for the modules/courses meet the applicable national academic standards." (required)

See 14.3.6a of regulations

Yes

### Student achievement

A2) "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." (required)

14.3.6b of regulations

Yes

A2b) Please provide any further comment on the comparability of any associated collaborative provision:

### Conduct of processes

A3) "Processes for assessment and the determination of awards are reliable, rigorous and conducted in line with the regulations at all times." (required)

see 14.3.6c of regulations

Yes

### Professional Body Requirements

A4) Do the learning outcomes and assessment of the courses allow successful students to meet the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies criteria at the appropriate level'. (required)

see 14.3.6a of regulations

Yes

### Actions from last year's report

A5) In respect of your feedback, has any required action from last year's report been satisfactorily responded to? (required)

Yes

## Issues/point for clarity during the year

A6) Did you raise any issues/point for clarity throughout the year? (required)

Yes

A6a) Please expand below how they were/were not addressed: (required)

In reviewing the assignments were students have to complete primary data collection, it seems there continues to be some inconsistency in relation to research ethics procedures. It would be useful to clarify what procedures are in place and to know how students are monitored in adhering to these. There is also concern that some of the work produced lacks academic underpinning or the evidence/demonstration of this in the work samples seen seems to be limited in some instances. Given this is an MA/Level 7 course there is an expectation that through the research process students are adhering to and evidencing how they followed ethical procedures and also underpinned their research through academic-related practices (e.g., reading, use of library resources, primary research).

This is the fourth year the course has run, and the team are to be commended for maintaining a relevant MA Fashion course suitable for addressing the training needs of the contemporary fashion business. There is certainly a fashion industry need for a course that provides a space to produce and conduct independent research which can be evolved through research informed practice.

It is clear the team have also maintained a high standard of parity between the cohorts, which is positive to see, and the students have no doubt benefited from a personalised approach to their learning and development, given the small cohorts, which in the 22-23 academic year was 5 students.

However, the cohort numbers continue to be quite small, and there is concern about the viability of the course. In discussion with the course team it was suggested that one way to grow student numbers is to promote the course to current Level 6 Leeds Beckett students from the autumn of their last year, including a talk by a current MA student and/or course alumni about their experiences. The BA fashion courses are potential 'feeder' courses would be a logical first step towards growing student numbers.

It is highly recommended that the course team are supported in seeking ways to grow what is potentially a very valid MA-level opportunity for students to be able to evolve their creative and business skills. Some questions still to answer include: What is the longer plan for the course? How does this fit within the wider course offering? What encouragement/incentives are there for progression from BA to MA within the fashion programme offering? What support from enrolment and marketing teams is in place for the MA Fashion course?

## Areas of good practice/commendation

A7) Please outline any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features you have observed in relation to learning, teaching and assessment:

Re Question A5 -

The course has now been taken over during the 22-23 academic year by a new Course Director who has sought to maintain and build on the course strengths from the previous three cohorts it has run. The Course Director and team are to be commended for maintaining the course and to provide the participating students with the structure and support they need to develop a personalised body of research and related creative outputs.

Consistency in written feedback is much in evident across the modules which is positive to see. In addition, it is positive to see that my feedback in relation to the Research Methods module has been taken on board, with a much improved module handbook, which now seems better orientated to students who are participating in academic research which has a creative focus and/or outputs. This includes the inclusion of a fashion-specific reading list, which likely will need to be updated as new books and resources become available.

An in-person meeting was arranged in early September 2023 to meet the course team and to review a sample of the most recent cohort's work. This was a very productive opportunity to meet the course team who were able to respond to my questions about the course and the future vision going forward. It was great to see that physical work samples are now being produced which is a fantastic way for the students to fully develop and evolve their creative concepts and related research. It was not possible to meet students from the course directly, but going forward I would recommend that the next incumbent external examiner does have the opportunity to do so and also to continue with in-person, on-campus visits which play a vital role in gaining a proper overview and insight to the course. A big thank you to the team for helping to facilitate such a productive visit this September.

Re Question A7

As in previous cohorts it was very positive to see students tackling a range of contemporary topics often related to their own lived experiences or personal interests in fashion culture and finding relevant ways to develop their research in depth with related creative outputs. This is certainly something to celebrate and now that we are out of Covid conditions it is hoped that ways can be found to showcase this (e.g., through exhibitions, seminars, media coverage).

The course team are to be commended for providing and facilitating a personalised structure through which the students can evolve and develop their work. It is hoped this can be evolved further with support from relevant guest speakers, trips and opportunities for fashion industry insight visits or experiences. In discussion with the Course Director several potential leads and opportunities were mentioned in relation to this and it would be a positive contribution to the course if these can be realised.

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## Section B

### Academic Standards

Please advise on the Academic Standards for the Programme:

B1) Do the Courses and its modules continue to be coherent and generally up-to-date and at an appropriate level to enable students to meet the relevant aims and learning outcomes? (required)

Yes

B2) What do you believe were the strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills? (required)

Overall, it continues to be a key strength of the course that students can and do make use of the opportunity to evolve and develop their personalised research interests, and in this cohort especially building on their own lived experiences and personal research interests, which can and should be encouraged and supported further.

It was very positive in this cohort to see physical creative outputs being produced and the varied and diverse nature of these (e.g., publications, photo essays, look books, artefacts/objects, full collections). This is again something to be supported and celebrated further, including opportunities to showcase these in an exhibition and through media coverage (e.g. local media, design/fashion publications such as Dezeen).

In some instances, adherence to research ethics procedures and protocols was not always transparent and at MA/Level 7 it is expected that students are adhering to and evidencing ethical procedures in conducting secondary and primary research.

In growing the student numbers it is hoped this will provide a greater diversity of voices and experience which can in turn help to inform and evolve the research practice of the students. At MA level the opportunity to gain peer feedback is very valuable, and while aspects of this can be seen in the outputs of the current cohort, it is a potential area to evolve and develop further as the course progresses and grows.

Given the individualised nature of research informed practice students should be supported and encouraged to deepen their reading and making full use of the library resources as well as made aware of other relevant libraries and research resources. For example, one student in this cohort had a project that would have benefitted from more in-depth reading perhaps obtained from medical or science-based resources; while it can be challenging to encourage students to 'think outside the box' in relation to resources, perhaps it is case of more guidance, with input from the library team in relation to this.

B3) Are the marking/grading criteria or marking schemes set at the appropriate level of study and have they been consistently applied including internal moderation processes? (required)

Yes

B4) Did students receive adequate and helpful feedback to inform their future learning? (required)

Yes

B5) In your view please indicate how well you feel the course prepares students for progression to managerial or professional employment or further study? (required)

0= not at all, 10= fully

8

B6) Please provide any further comments to indicate how the course could better prepare students for progression to managerial or professional employment or further study (if applicable)

In this cohort as in previous cohorts it is clear several of the students have a genuine interest and passion for their chosen research areas. Several also have a potential entrepreneurial vision, however, this does not seem to be fully realised at this juncture in the course's development. Given this concept of providing students with an entrepreneurial mindset could be a real USP for this course, this aspect should be given more support. For example, through engagement with guest speakers and industry insight opportunities and trips and perhaps coaching or mentorship from local fashion entrepreneurs and business owners. This would help support those students who wish to evolve their research informed practice into a fully-fledged business opportunity, and successes from this would in turn help to evolve the profile of the course and its links to the local, national or international fashion industry.

B7) Have you had the opportunity to comment on or contribute to a review of the course including any proposed modifications or enhancements to provision? (required)

N/A

B8) If you have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

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## Section C

### Assessment

Please advise on the Assessment Process for the Programme:

C1) The internal assessment / examination procedures are comparable with similar awards in the UK. (required)

C2) Procedures for the Exam Boards were fairly and rigorously conducted (including procedures governing extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and borderline performance), and in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations. (required)

C3) The design and structure of the assessment methods used were appropriate; there was comparability within and across modules/awards in terms of level and their effectiveness in measuring the overall learning outcomes. (required)

C4) There was sufficient rigour in the achievement of learning outcomes in professional placements / work-based learning / work experience (where relevant).

C5) The moderation process is rigorous and there is consistency in marking standards. (required)

C6) The range of exam papers / assignments provided for sampling purposes and their appropriateness in terms of subject / level / learning outcomes were appropriate. (required)

C7) If You have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

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## Section D

### Organisation and Arrangements

Please advise on the organisation and arrangements for you undertaking this role:

D1) I was new in post this academic year. (required)

D2) The University has helped me to undertake my role effectively. (required)

D3) I am satisfied with the range of external examiner activities undertaken and with my involvement in assessment procedures at module level. (required)

D4) I am satisfied with the appropriateness and timing of information, of draft examination papers for approval and student work for moderation. (required)

D5) I am satisfied with the on-line induction training designed to familiarise External Examiners with the University's Regulations/Procedures concerning assessment.

*Newly appointed External Examiners only*

D6) I am satisfied with the level of support received from my mentor.

*External Examiners new to the role only*

Yes

D7) I am satisfied with the programme-level induction provided by the Course Director to familiarise me with the programme itself. (required)

Yes

D8) Are there any general or specific comments on the development and support offered by the University, especially improvements you would like to see:

D9) If You have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

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## Section E

### Collaborative Provision

Please indicate if you have been satisfied with the following:

E) Do you examine collaborative provision?

No

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## Section F

### Degree Apprenticeships

F1) Were you involved in the examination of Apprenticeship Provision?

No

Open comments

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## Section G

### End Point Assessment

G1) I have seen evidence that Apprentices have the opportunity to practice the assessment methods that will be used at End Point Assessment before undertaking the End Point Assessment.

G2) If you examine integrated apprenticeship provision, please provide specific comments on the suitability and content of End Point Assessment:

G3) If you have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

Where applicable, a copy of your report will be shared with the Chief External Examiner who is appointed to provide oversight of related modules and/or courses.

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## Final Comments

Are there any other final comments you would like to make in relation to your role as External Examiner?

The standard and level of work appears to be commiserate with previous three cohorts which is a positive achievement. This is a course that continues to have a lot of potential which should be supported to grow student numbers to evolve a proper and substantial community of professional calibre fashion graduates who are prepared through the course for the exciting entrepreneurial and career opportunities provided by the fashion industry.

## End of Tenure Report

If you are at the end of your tenure as External Examiner, please provide an overview of the development of the programme during your term of office. This overview will be of value to the University, the programme team and to the incoming External Examiner.

Please include commentary regarding academic standards and student achievement across cohorts during the examiner's period of appointment:

*This Section is only to be completed by external examiners at the end of their tenure.*

Overall, it has been positive to see that there has been a fair and appropriate application of marking and assessment standards across all four cohorts I have had the opportunity to examine. Student achievement in all four cohorts has also been well supported and is commiserate with similar HEI courses at MA/Level 7. It is positive to note that feedback has been taken on board in relation to written feedback and module handbooks, and the standards for these will no doubt need to be maintained and monitored going forward to ensure consistency in alignment with institutional and wider HEI standards and practices.

It is positive to see that the opportunity for the students participating in the course to develop their own research informed practice continues to be supported and facilitated through this course. This is vital for the future growth and development of the fashion industry, of which Yorkshire has a rich heritage, and to evolve local, national and international opportunities for this.

Going forward, given the profile of Leeds Beckett University, the course team expertise and the community of students and prospective students it serves, perhaps the number of pathways the course currently has should be reduced to two, that is Fashion Design and Fashion Communication (the latter to include both visual and written communication). This would assist the coherency of the identity and profile of the course to have two distinct yet potentially interconnected pathways. This will also help the course team focus on their strengths and relevant specialisms to facilitate a continued personalised learning journey for the participating students.

It is recommended that the course and the course team are provided with the support they need to grow the student numbers to 15-20, which is going to be vital to develop a proper ecosystem that is going to be beneficial to the wider university as well as the participating students. Several initiatives can be developed to grow and develop, however, there needs to be proper strategy in place to ensure this is effective, working with the student recruitment and marketing teams. Activities and initiatives can include promoting the MA course to the current Level 6 BA fashion students, hosting an MA exhibition or showcase of work (locally and/or nationally), and media coverage of student's research (work-in-progress and final outputs). As part of this strategy benchmarking against other leading providers (e.g., Manchester Metropolitan University, Nottingham Trent University) could be referred to consider examples of best practice in this area.

It has been unfortunate MA Fashion has not had the opportunity to grow in the way it could have due to conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, with a new Course Director in place and a dedicated team, and with work evolved through progressing the first four cohorts, this can be considered the 'soft launch' phase. In the next four to five years the course now has the opportunity to be fully realised as a dedicated space for participating students to produce research informed practice that will form the basis of their future careers and contribute great value to the wider fashion industry. This is something to be supported and celebrated and I wish the Course Director and course team every success towards realising this.

Email Address (required)

Date (required)

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