The Open University

Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP)

External Examiner report template

Section A: General information

Institution:	**Leeds City College**
Programme:	**BA (Hons)/ FD Fashion, Theatrical and Media Hair and Make-up**
Subject examined:	**Fashion, Theatrical and Media Hair and Make-up**
Name of examiner:	**Alexandra Wathey**
Current year of appointment	**Third year of appointment, academic year 2020-2021**

Section B: External examiner's report

The reporting structure of this section is intended to help draw out issues which may require attention by the Institution or the University. It should not be seen as limiting in any way the range of issues which may be addressed or the level of detail given. The report will be considered as part of the annual evaluation process and, as such, external examiners are encouraged to be as frank and open as possible, but avoiding wherever possible references to individual staff or students. External examiners' attention is also drawn to 'The Guide for external examiners of OU validated awards', which should be forwarded by partner institutions to their external examiners.

Please comment as appropriate on:
1. The range of assessed material and information provided by the institution on which your report is based.
Module Handbooks, Internal Moderation documentation of the Module Handbooks, samples of moderated assessments from each module, as well as internal moderation documents relating to the assessed student's work per module were provided and shared with me via GoogleDrive.   Work from a good spread of grades was sampled from each module of the programme at all levels (4-6).   In spite of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, assessment methods continued to have a varied range offering a diverse and creative approach to meet the intended learning outcomes appropriately.
2. Whether the standards set are appropriate for the award, or award element, by reference to any agreed subject benchmarks, qualifications framework, programme specification or other relevant information.
FdA - The standards set are appropriate to the levels of the award in reference to the QAA Arts and Design 2017 Subject Benchmark, QAA Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement 2015, QAA Foundation Degree qualification benchmark May 2010 and the July 2018 Programme Specifications (version 2).   BA(Hons) - The standards set are appropriate to the levels of the award in reference to the QAA Arts and Design 2017, QAA Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies 2016, and QAA Dance, Drama and Performance 2015 Subject Benchmarks, as well as the Programme Specification 2016 (version 1).
3. The quality of students' work, their knowledge and skills (both general and subject-specific) in relation to their peers on comparable programmes elsewhere.
Overall, learners demonstrate autonomy at an extremely high level and possess excellent graduate attributes such as confidence, problem solving and effective communication skills in comparison to their peers on comparable programmes.   Students have excellent knowledge of hair and make-up industry professionals and wide ranging products and techniques from a variety of sectors within the industry. It is worth noting that student's knowledge of prosthetic materials is to a good standard and this is supported by the curriculum and resources made available to students to identify and analyse the advantages and

disadvantages of using different materials for different scenarios.

The Creative Showcase module develops essentials skills and knowledge in relation to budget and the overall complexities of running promotional events which is beneficial and somewhat unique to the programme, providing learners with a competitive edge and understanding in relation to marketing strategies which are important tools as a freelance artist.

4. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

Practical work and technical skills demonstrated by the students are generally to a high level. A high percentage of the practical work has been photographed professionally and overall, students demonstrate excellent attention to detail and holistic composition to support building of a professional portfolio for onward employability. It is lovely to see student using editing software to contextualise their final photographs to the briefs.

Students demonstrate confidence and a high level of proficiency with using IT to professionally present their work, with use of Canva, Wix websites, poster and digital sketchbook creation being to a particularly high standard leading to effective communication and onward presentation of work to a wide audience to enhance employment prospects.

Whilst most students demonstrate a good level of creativity in design, this could be further developed with greater focus on design development and increased experimental practice, particularly in hair. Critical and reflective practice still appears to be weaker in comparison to other peers at their level and this is particularly evident at level 5 in spite of the evident input provided both in delivery and feedback from the teaching team to support this. Nevertheless, the understanding and application of research methods at level 6 appears to be of an equal level to their peers studying at other institutions.

5. The quality of teaching and learning, as indicated by student performance

The use of webinars and guest speakers is supportive of students gaining a greater insight into industry which is also clearly evident in their work. Like all years, students have been provided with many enrichment opportunities this year and this is to be particularly commended due to the challenges of Covid-19.

Good practice has been demonstrated with a blended approach to learning, with great links to external working settings such as the Northern Film School to support learning of working behind HD lenses for example.

Scheme of Works support student's development of contemporary technical make-up skills and also clearly embeds IT and academic skills development pertinent theories and opportunities for formative feedback. It is commendable that peer feedback is also often included, which encourages a collaborative process.

The summative results have been high this year and are reflective of the work produced by the students. This is a testament to the dedication and high level of support provision to students from the teaching team and wider academic support staff.

6. The quality of the curriculum, course materials and learning resources

The curriculum is current and responsive to contemporary issues and industry trends. This is maintained by close collaboration and partnership with wide ranging and high profile employers.

Content of the modules has parity with other institutions at the appropriate levels and are well structured to support student's achievement.

It is assumed that given the circumstances of Covid, learners worked on themselves, hence the lack of diversity of models used in some practical submissions. It will be important as restrictions are lifted, that students have access to a more diverse range of models moving forward in their studies to develop their understanding working on a range of skin types and face shapes – perhaps this could be a workshop activity? This in turn would then have parity with other institutions, where a diverse range of silicone dummy heads have been used in replace of live models to develop understanding of colour matching etc.

At level 4, it is worth highlighting the work that the teaching team has put in this year in order to help develop critical thinking and researching skills from the outset with library workshops to support academic skills. Students are given plenty of opportunities for formative feedback throughout to support this development.

7. The quality and fairness of the assessments, in particular their:

(i) design and structure

The assessments and methods are appropriate to the level of study and the quantity of work required in the assessments are appropriate to the assignment weightings.

Overall, the briefs are clear, with the grading criteria contextualised to the assessment. There has been significant improvement this year in stating what format the assessments are expected to be presented in on the assignment briefs, along with the intended word counts/percentages of body to be painted etc. This has led to greater fairness of assessment and set appropriate benchmarks amongst the cohort of students.

Good practice is demonstrated within assessment briefs by providing choices of topics/themes to promote equality and diversity, catering to learners' personal interests and career aspirations. Assignments have been continually designed with meeting current industry standard requirements and developing strong graduate attributes.

It is particularly noteworthy that component two assessment of 'Special Effects Make-up' encourages collaboration and the sense of working as part of a team whilst still assesses the learner's achievements on an individual basis for fairness in assessment. This approach is highly commendable.

There are sufficient opportunities for formative feedback of assessments identified in the SOW to support learner achievement and the policy for draft submissions is fair.

The new long and thin delivery method of Final Major Project this year appears to have worked particularly well, since it has allowed the students time to focus on their own research and data collection. This in turn has allowed students to concentrate on their practical and collaborative skills in C2 which has supported overall achievement.

(ii) relation to stated objectives and learning outcomes of the programme

Learning outcomes are appropriate to academic level of study and assessments have parity with other institutions. Overall, the assessments allow students to meet the intended learning outcomes extremely well and encourage autonomy in their responses.

It is worth noting that upon feedback from myself from last year, that within the 'Creative Hair and Make-up 2 module,' there was clearer differentiation between the two assessed components in comparison to last year, both in relation to the submissions sampled and assessor feedback, which now focusses predominately on the reflective process instead of a cross over between technical ability of final hair and make-up outcome. This is now in alignment with the intended learning outcomes, promoting fairness of assessment.

This year has seen a re-allocation of the learning outcomes and a change in assessment methods across the two components of the 'Creative Postiche' module. This now enables a clear distinguished difference between the two assessments (separating theory/design research from practical activities) preventing the danger of over-assessment.

(iii) marking

Scaling of grades awarded is deemed fair and consistent with level of work presented across the programme and has parity with other awarding institutions. Internal moderation of the marking is generally thorough and transparent documenting discussions taken place between assessor(s) and moderator, with appropriate decisions being made in order to ensure consistency and fairness of assessment.

Constructive feedback provided to student on how to improve upon the submission using appropriate grading descriptor terminology. Feedback is extremely detailed and in line with the language of the grade descriptors in relation to the grade awarded. It is personalised and supportive of the student's development, with focus on developing both academic and practical skills.

Length and the approach to written feedback is standardised across the teaching team, however where alternative audio feedback has been provided to the learner, more consistency in length/timing is generally needed across the work sampled. It would be interesting to gain feedback from students and staff in regards to their thoughts on the efficacy of audio feedback moving forwards.

Moving forward, it may be worth considering being more succinct with feedback to ensure that it is not only sustainable amongst the team with the increased cohort numbers, but to encourage more learners to actively read their feedback and address and implement the main developmental points in future assessments moving forward.

Suggestion: Instead of using the learning outcome headings, it may be worth trialling a different format such as providing one succinct sentence using the grade descriptor e.g. 'Overall, an extremely good response' and then follow with separate headings for Strengths, Areas for improvement, Presentation/Academic Structure. This in turn could offer greater clarity to students and may also be more sustainable for the team.

8. Where the programme has specific work-related learning outcomes (e.g. Foundation Degrees) please comment on the assessment and achievement of these outcomes,

including employers' involvement where relevant.

There was excellent work from students specifically in the Work Related Project assessment for the Level 5 Work Related Learning module. This is the first year that Work Related Learning has run long and thin and this decision supported the learner's ability to achieve the intended learning outcomes to a high level given the circumstances of Covid-19.

Exceptional practice has been demonstrated here in regards to collaborating with key industry professionals from diverse make-up backgrounds. Learners were allocated a high-profile industry professional from an industry sector of interest and collaborative work was undertaken between industry professional and student, with students responding and reflecting to the feedback given. This has clearly enhanced learners' understanding of the rigorous requirements of the hair and make-up industry and has provided outstanding enrichment and networking opportunities.

Learners have evidently developed outstanding communication skills and level of confidence throughout this project and the teaching team must be highly commended and applauded for facilitating these opportunities, especially in these challenging times. This has given the students a very competitive edge in comparison to those of other institutions.

9. The administration of the assessments, operation of examination boards, briefing of external examiners, access of external examiners to essential materials, etc.

Excellent communication was maintained throughout the academic year between institution and myself. Where deadlines have been changed due to the impact of lockdown and inability to complete some practical elements, this was very clearly communicated in regards to where this work is to be picked up in the academic schedule for future review.

Dates and times of scheduled exam boards were provided well in advance and were well organised and operated smoothly, with appropriate briefing of examiners beforehand.

All documentation was very well organised with each module having Module Handbook, IM of Module Handbook, sample of student's work and IM documentation for each assignment component sample. Due to covid-19 there was however a noticeable difference in regards to the provision and time to view the work before exam boards, however this was still achievable.

10. Have all the issues identified in your previous report been addressed by the institution?

Yes

If no, please comment

N/A

11. *(For chief external examiners or those with responsibility for the whole programme – if in doubt please check with the appointing institution)*

Please confirm that the assessment and standards set for the programme as a whole, including all its pathways, modules or individual courses are consistent and appropriate, and that the processes for assessment and determination of awards are fair and sound across the provision.

N/A
12. Any other comments
I have provided detailed module feedback to the teaching team via email conversations to the programme leader.
Please ensure that you sign and date below, if sending a hard copy of this report

Signed:	A. E. Wathey
Date:	19/08/2021