

## External Examiner's Report

Year: 2020-21

<b>Name of External Examiner</b>	Kayla Dougan Bowtell
<b>Name of Course(s)</b>	Foundation Degree Dance
<b>Name of LCC Course Manager</b>	
<b>Date of Board Examiners</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Date of Report</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

### 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/ provision annual monitoring and review activity. A record of the departments' responses to examiners' reports also forms part of the documentation for this activity.

### External Examiner's report summary

Please indicate in the relevant boxes below whether you agree with the statements about the standards of Leeds City College's awards, the standards of student performance and the conduct of the College's assessment processes.

Please also list any shortcomings and areas for commendation. You should expand on any issues you mention here in the main report.

Standards set		
	Yes	No
"In my view, the standards set for the awards are appropriate."	x	
<i>If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.</i>		

Student performance			
	Yes	No	N/A *
"In my view, the standards of student performance are comparable"	x		

with similar course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar.”

I have reviewed a sample of student work from the collaborative / franchise institution and in my view the standards of student performance are comparable with students studying the award(s) at Leeds Met

*\* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess national standards 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

“In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted.”

Yes

No

x

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

### Areas for commendation

Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes

**All module material was organised and sent to me in a timely and user-friendly manner.**

**I examined work from semester A and semester B and found the marks awarded to be appropriate to the quality of work submitted. Tutor feedback is thorough and demonstrates how the student has met the learning outcomes of a module. Feedback also captures areas requiring development that the student could consider when crafting future work. There is a range of visiting artists delivering on modules, this is a strength that should be continued as it provides breadth of input by industry professionals, nourishes and supports core staff and students alike, and could, if used well contribute to the marketing of the course.**

**I was encouraged by the choreographic/performance output for the Somatics module. Here, students demonstrated great maturity and application of principles inside a choreographic/technical and performance frame. Likewise, the ambition of Synectic Dance Making is commendable, enabling students to develop necessary skills to work creatively with digital technology and performance, underpinned by a conceptual frame, and leading to the crafting of lengthy and substantial of works over two semesters. This ambition and challenge is well placed for the level of study.**

## Main report

*In this section you are asked to describe more fully how the College has or has not maintained academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to the course(s) for which you are the external examiner.*

Please write a report (in addition to completing the Summary) in sections under all the following areas.

(a) The operation and conduct of the Board of Examiners (and any Mitigation Panel or Examination Committee meeting you may also have attended).

**The Boards that I have attended this year have taken place online. Processes have been proficient. However, instructions for proceedings felt a little brusque at times. A slower pace would have been appreciated as people navigate a wealth of data online, via a spreadsheet that is centrally operated.**

(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.)

**NA**

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

**The Dance cohorts are very small however the range of marks, and student performance is consistent with similar programmes at other institutions.**

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

**The students show great creativity in their choreographic and digital practices. Given the tiny cohort, it is commendable that they have managed to stimulate themselves to create the range of work achieved. Written work reveals competence, however application, integration and development of theoretical concepts require work. It's positive that students are trying out their use of academic language, supporting them in editing processes towards concise and succinct articulation will enhance development in future written work.**

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

**Modules are well designed and I appreciate that a lot of re-imagining has taken place due to the pandemic. Despite this, module content has been thorough and module design has aligned with learning outcomes. Where modifications to assessment content or dates had been made due to the pandemic, the handbooks that I received did not always capture these changes (more so in semester a). All of the assessments that I examined had been moderated and comments provided where necessary.**

I wonder if the quantity of feedback could reflect the weighting of assessment components, for example in Synectic Dance Making, much lengthier feedback was provided for the reflective document (30%) compared to the practical component, weighted at 70%. The modules are assessed via an interesting range of assessment components supporting the students' skills and confidence in demonstrating their knowledge, understanding and application in different ways.

I haven't seen information about re-sit assessments and wonder at what point re-sit assessment briefs are written and signed off.

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

Congratulations to the Dance team, the dance programme has been led well, despite a raft of changes to staffing as well as the pandemic that we have all had to navigate. It is clear the programme leader provides excellent support to the students and knows them well. Their feedback is detailed and individually focussed to each student. Teaching appears to have been successful given the level of student achievement, and the learning journey through appears to have been carefully considered. As mentioned in an earlier section, the input from visiting artists is imperative in enabling students access to industry professionals, so that they can experience how the academic may become vocational and start making networks that may lead to paid work post-graduation. The students have done remarkably well in their tiny cohort, but I do think that in order for students to really grow, to grapple with multiple ideas and voices, and to feel part of a group when some are absent, the cohorts need to be bigger. The modules offered on the Dance programme are distinctive and deserve greater population; this may also increase the sense of value students feel about their programme. I would encourage resources being directed into the crafting of a bespoke marketing plan to increase recruitment onto the course. How can the programme use the visiting artists to provide gravitas to the programme that is in a City with much competition? How can the interesting work that students are making on digital platforms be used to feed a social media presence? How can the live performance work be seen on the youth dance platform scene? How can outgoing students be used to contribute to the audition/interview process for interested applicants? How can you use your outgoing students to support school liaison activities, giving them much needed face to face experience that they may have lost during the pandemic, as well as helping them generate income, as well as using them, the people who know the course best to advocate for its recruitment? I would encourage detailed analysis of the curriculum and existing resourcing to discern what the programmes USP is, and use the student voice to sell this to new students. If the course does not recruit for September 2021 then perhaps this is an opportunity to invest time in its re-launch.

(g) Comments on the use of the VLE within the course(s) (if applicable)..

N/A

(h) Module content, consistency of modules and module assessment across the course and the achievement of learning outcomes.

Each module provides a specific learning journey that is assessed in an appropriate way. It's good to hear that the students made regular use of the additional learning support via the library, which has improved their ability to meet academic conventions. All modules are well balanced in terms of content and assessment.

It was interesting to see that students are asked to write for 'magazine readership' in Chichi Circus. It is a useful vocational skill to be able to write or disseminate work through multiple lenses/formats/voices to attract greater readership. It would be useful for students to understand why this stylistic choice is in place, and perhaps for clearer documentation in the handbook about how this can be achieved. There is space in the programme to explore the stylistic differences in writing for different audiences, and this could be developed further throughout the modules - for example contemporary modes of dissemination include pod casts, tweets, blogs, vlog etc. (and some of these may also populate a social media focussed marketing strategy!)

I would encourage the team to look at where credits are collected for Synectic Dance Making, and if it may be of benefit to the students to collect some in semester A, rather than solely in sem B. I could imagine an artistic brief or performance pitch may be useful towards the end of sem A. Further, I wondered if the reflection could be an ongoing assessment? Perhaps a blog could be a useful platform to evidence and document engagement with technology, theory and creative practice, as well a space to write an extended critical evaluation of their final show-reel. The module consists of three project phases and I wondered how project 1 and 2 fed into project three, and if completion of the first two impacted upon the student's final grade. It may be that the narration of the relationship between module content and the assessment needs fleshing out, or maybe a rethink of the inter-relationships, modes and placement of assessment and weighting could be of benefit. This said, I reiterate the ambition of the module is great and the challenge is well placed.

I wondered about how modules are evaluated centrally and how and when the student voice is formally and informally collected to feed into module development. I also wondered about the processes for making major and minor modifications to modules, as in my comments I have suggested looking at assessment weightings and collection points through the academic year.

(i) Areas of good practice you have identified – please expand on the key areas for commendation listed in the summary.

- Tutor feedback is thorough and demonstrates how the student has met the learning outcomes of a module. Feedback also captures areas requiring development that the student could consider when crafting future work.
- Tutors clearly develop supportive relationships with students – this is evident in student

feedback and pastoral care provided.

- There is a range of visiting artists delivering on modules, this is a strength that should be continued as it provides breadth of input by industry professionals, nourishes and supports core staff and students alike, and could, if used well contribute to the marketing of the course.
- I was encouraged by the choreographic/performance output for the Somatics module. Here, students demonstrated great maturity and application of principles, inside a choreographic/technical and performance frame.
- The ambition of Synectic Dance Making is commendable, enabling students to develop necessary skills to work creatively with digital technology and performance, underpinned by a conceptual frame, and leading to the crafting of lengthy and substantial of works. The students created bold performance works in this module, took risks and embraced technology. This ambition and challenge is well placed for the level of study.
- There are clear avenues for the work produced to be more outward facing – and I would encourage staff to consider how this could be achieved via a digital platform as well as face to face when allowed.

(j) The College welcomes external examiners' comments on its developing 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.

**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)?	X		
b.	Academic Regulations including any Professional Statutory Body requirements where appropriate?	X		
c.	Module specifications (these may be in the Course Handbook)?	X		
d.	Assessment briefs/marketing criteria?	x		

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

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

<b>Student Work</b>				
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
a.	Were you offered the opportunity to select your sample?	x		
a.	Was the full range of assessment activities made available for you to sample?	x		

b.	Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory?	x		
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Examination Committee/Board of Examiners				
		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 Examination Committee/Board of Examiners?	x		

**Signature**

K. Dougan Bowtell

**Date:**

21.07.21