

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORT FORM

First Degrees and Taught Master's Degrees

The purpose of this form is to ensure that the quality of the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards is maintained and developed at the University of Buckingham. In addition, it provides valuable feedback in respect of standards set for the awards, student performance and an overview of the programme(s) as a whole.

Please complete all of the sections of this report as fully as possible, and make sure to state specific module names where necessary. Please sign (electronically) at the end of the form when you have done so.

USE OF REPORTS

This report will be regarded as a public document within the University and form part of the documentation for internal review panels, professional bodies, and QAA submissions. The University also shares external examiner reports with the student body. It is therefore important that individuals, particularly students, should not be named or be easily identifiable.

External Examiners should be aware that reports will be made available to students. **Please state here if you do not wish this report to be shared with the student body:**

External Examiners are free to send a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor if they wish.

SUBMITTING YOUR REPORT

Please submit your report electronically to

collaborations-external-examiners@buckingham.ac.uk within ONE MONTH of the Examiners' Meeting.

Name of Collaborative Partner	Conde Nast College of Fashion and Design	
Examination period examined (eg June/September/December/Other)	(month) October to March	(year) 2019-20
Name of External Examiner	Sarah Lewington	
Year Appointed	2018	
Programmes for which appointed (e.g. LLB, BSc Economics, MBA)	MA Fashion Media Practice	
Modules Examined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Research in Fashion and Media • Contemporary Issues in Fashion and Media • Fashion Writing and Criticism • Multi-Media Production 	

1. CURRICULUM

1.1 Have you seen the syllabus for the modules(s)? Please comment on whether this represented a reasonable spread of topics for this subject.

Yes, I saw the syllabus for all the modules and agree that it represented a reasonable spread of topics for the subject. From talking to the Course Director, and from having seen the paperwork of the proposed changes, I am really excited to see how the course will continue to be enhanced particularly in relation to areas such as the research module being more consumer and audience focussed and the Fashion Media Futures module really capitalising on the relationship with Conde Nast International. This module which will replace Contemporary Issues in Fashion and Media, will contain more emphasis on how Fashion media is evolving and can be future proofed. This is really exciting particularly in the current climate where innovation is key to the survival of many parts of the Fashion and Lifestyle industries.

In relation to my comments from last year's interim report, next year fundamental CAD skills which are currently being replicated across many of the courses, will be turned into a series of videos which all students can access. This will enable the CAD tutor to offer more one to one and bespoke teaching for each programme of study. These changes should benefit areas such as presentations which currently are not graphically strong, for example in the second part of the Contemporary Issues module. There also needs to be greater attention to detail in illustrated reports and longform articles where some of the students present more of a visual approximation of a publication which undermines the strength of the writing.

Study skills in relation to academic writing and referencing are already much improved from last year, however the issue of self-plagiarism was highlighted at the board and this is something that will be emphasised more strongly next year.

Once again in relation to my comments from last year there was a much better relationship between the Multi-Media Research journal in the Critical Research in Fashion and Media module and the subsequent essay. Feedback was turned around much more quickly and it was clear that the students understood much more effectively how they could capitalise on the research from the former in order to inform the latter.

The documentary film project has also been changed to something much more relevant to the pathways the students are undertaking, as last year a lot of time was spent teaching film production skills but the results often didn't reflect the effort put into the process.

The Multi-Media Production module briefs have also been entirely rewritten to ensure they replicate the range of projects a freelance creative director might receive in industry.

Overall in the Interim visit it would appear that the Journalism students are the strongest as they have a more natural writing ability. This is however misleading as the first term relies most heavily on theoretical research and when the Creative Direction students (there are no students on the Business Pathway this year) engage with the more practical modules, they come alive. This will be addressed in the modifications for next year as more practical elements will be combined with theoretical across both the first and second terms.

1.2 To what extent were you consulted on the content and assessment procedures of the programme(s) with which you are associated?

Last year I was consulted on the Module briefs for terms 3&4 of the programme and was asked to comment on the content and assessment for the four modules spanning this timeframe.

This academic year I was given a comprehensive overview of how the team's reflection on the success of last year was capitalised on. It is also clear to see how the module content which has been rewritten in some cases such as the Deconstructing Fashion and Sounding Fashion projects in the Multi-Media Production module, has had an extremely positive effect on the resulting work. I was also asked to comment on the forthcoming modifications of some of the modules as part of the validation procedure with Buckingham on the External Review and Response form.

1.3 Please comment on the assessment methods for the programme/modules. Are these appropriate and do they fulfil the criteria outlined in the Programme/Module Specification(s)?

The methods are appropriate for the module and fulfil the criteria outlined in the module specification. As outlined above there has already been reflection on how these can be further enhanced for next year.

2. ASSESSMENT – DRAFT EXAMINATION PAPERS

2.1 Were you given sufficient time to examine draft examination papers and to provide feedback to internal markers?

N/A

2.2 Were you supplied with the appropriate information (e.g. module specifications) regarding the modules being examined to enable you to judge appropriately the suitability of questions?

Yes

2.3 Did the examination paper/s reflect the syllabus/i and were the questions reasonably spread across the syllabus/i?

Yes

2.4 Was the number of questions required to be answered reasonable, and was there sufficient choice (both in range of topics and number) of questions?

3. ASSESSMENT – EXAMINATION SCRIPTS

3.1 Were you given sufficient time to evaluate a representative sample of scripts and assessed work and was this workload manageable in the time permitted?

Yes

3.2 Please comment on the quality of the marking process (was there double-marking/blind double marking and were there comments on scripts)?

The marking procedures were extremely rigorous with everything being double-marked and in some cases, there was also consultation with an industry panel. I was able to see documentation of the moderation process.

Written feedback was extremely thorough and developmental and is a real strength of the course however there is a need for standardisation of paperwork.

I'm aware that there are going to be online assessment sheets and rubrics for next term and as I commented last year, this is important in creating parity across the college and individual modules.

It's often difficult to see how staff are arriving at a certain percentage as in some cases feedback is against learning outcomes and in other cases it's not. As percentages aren't given against learning outcomes it's also difficult to ascertain which learning outcome a student is excelling in as opposed to another where there is improvement to be made. This is evident from the comments when against the learning outcomes, but not when there are no learning outcomes on the feedback sheet. When several different assignments contribute to an overall holistic grade, it would also be useful to see how the tasks are cross-referenced against the learning outcomes.

For the industry presentation as part of the second part of the Contemporary Issues in Fashion and Media module, I still feel that immediate verbal feedback would be beneficial. This year a Q&A discussion with the panellists helped students to gauge the industry response, however there is no reason why further verbal feedback from staff can't be immediate; students could record this and type it up to reflect upon and then receive an overall grade against rubric at a later date.

3.3 Did you see the scripts (and any course work or continuous assessment element) of all borderline candidates, and were you given the opportunity to see the scripts (and any course work or continuous assessment element) of all other candidates?

Yes

3.4 Please comment on the spread of questions answered by the candidates. Was the whole of the syllabus covered in teaching?

As every module contributes to the final MA classification, it could be argued that this prevents experimentation and students seeing the value in being allowed to try out new things and to not always succeed. I'm aware that this discussion is ongoing.

3.5 Please comment on the teaching of the course, and the subsequent standard achieved by the candidates.

The teaching was of a very high standard with visiting practitioners and industry professionals being utilised throughout in order that the students could apply their learning to commercial situations. This included industry panels being used as part of the assessment process. Highly regarded industry journalists such as Paul Tierney ran parts of the Fashion Writing and Criticism module; the long-form article, and this resulted in some highly sophisticated pieces of journalism. A live project with Stella McCartney and Nova Dando was also undertaken as part of the Creative Direction Multi-Media Production module and even at the lower levels, there were still some very successful elements such as still imagery.

This year the Critical Research in Fashion and Media module paid greater attention to the relationship with the consumer and audience however this will be further addressed with the minor change modifications. The students were adept in understanding theoretical frameworks however when applying their research knowledge to part two of the Contemporary Issues in Fashion Media module, much of the primary research felt naive. Their knowledge of marketing felt limited, for example in relation to the Route to Consumer and Comms channels. There was a lack of evidence underpinning many of their statements and their primary research questions to consumers were basic. The presentations also lacked graphic sophistication and didn't utilise visualisation of research data effectively even within the higher grade bandings. This will be addressed next year both with the teaching of the research module across all MAs and two terms and with the review of the CAD delivery.

The 'What does Fashion Sound like' project within the Fashion Writing and Criticism module was a huge success. Last year the course team recognised that too much time was spent teaching film production skills. This year the sound project was much more relevant to the pathway and resulted in a lovely range of audio outputs ranging from podcasts to conceptual soundscapes. Even at the lower levels there were some interesting ideas and the didactic panels in the main were a successful contextualisation of the work. Making the project more conceptual and focusing on both a philosophical and practical starting point allowed the students to complete a process which they'll replicate for their FMPs.

The title of this project was a little misleading as it implied that it was groupwork when in fact only the exhibition proposal was. This was also by far the weakest part of the submission, so if this is to be replicated next year it would be useful to embed this element more comprehensively into the teaching so that the students truly see the benefit of collaboration and innovative thinking within the context of an exhibition.

The Research and Reflective logs as part of the Multi-Media Production module, were at higher levels, excellent. It was also great to see both physical and digital research processes being combined to truly reflect the individual student's learning style.

3.6 Please comment on whether the assessment process enabled the students to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Yes, it did.

4. EXAMINATION BOARD

4.1 Were you given adequate notice of your required attendance at the Examiners' Meeting?

Yes

4.2 Were you satisfied with the extent to which you were able to participate in the assessment process and the Board of Examiners?

Yes

4.3 Please comment on the conduct of the Board of Examiners

This year the board was online and only related to the Post-graduate courses; it was great to see everyone on Zoom. The board of examiners was conducted professionally, and procedures were followed in line with QAA guidelines. Overall the event felt very welcoming and it's clear the staff have an excellent relationship with their students.

5. ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ENHANCEMENT

5.1 In your view, are the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted? If not, please give a statement of the respects in which they fall short.

Yes. It was noted at the board that due to the Corona virus outbreak and lockdown enforcement, the physical publications produced for the Deconstructing Fashion project within part two of the Multi-Media production module hadn't been able to be assessed as they were trapped at the college. The work was assessed based on the digital PDF of the physical zine and it was agreed at the board that the marks would be reviewed once the college reopened and the physical work was able to be looked at. This is important to note as the physicality of the documents was an integral part of the brief.

5.2 Are there any other comments you wish to make about any aspects of the assessment and examinations process with which you have been involved?

No

5.3 In your view are the standards of student performance comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which you are familiar? If not, please give a statement of the respects in which they fall short.

Yes, and at higher levels some of the work exceeds other institutions particularly in relation to the theoretical underpinning of the writing. Also, this year within the Creative Direction pathway, the Research and Reflective logs at higher levels were also better than those in other institutions and even the weakest student had some really strong elements such as the stills for the Stella project.

As mentioned above, the application of research knowledge is something that needs strengthening and this is already being addressed through the minor modification procedure.

5.4 Was the contact with the University during the process sufficient to enable you to perform the role of external examiner satisfactorily?

Yes, I was made to feel very welcome and despite everything occurring online, I had was able to have a number of very valuable conversations with the Course Director in relation to changes that had already occurred in this academic year. I was also given an overview of how the course would be further enhanced with the minor modifications.

5.5 Please comment on whether your comments from your last external examiner's report were, in your opinion, satisfactorily addressed by the academic department.

Yes, the level of reflection and willingness to make changes is to be commended; the Course Director is highly proactive in this regard and his working relationship with the other staff in ensuring that cross-course collaboration is capitalised on when appropriate, has already enhanced the teaching and learning in under 12 months.

5.6 Please give, where appropriate, a description or bullet point list of any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes.

- The quality of the written feedback is excellent; it is extremely constructive and developmental with reference to further reading etc.
- The amount of reflection while the course is still in its nascent phase and the willingness to make changes continues to be commendable. The collaboration with the other MA and indeed Undergraduate course leaders in this regard has ensured that particularly with the forthcoming modification, students will be able to form relationships across courses within the college and capitalise on common teaching and learning strategies such as research and CAD skills.
- The calibre of the visiting lecturers and visiting practitioners and accessibility to renowned brands and resulting live projects really sets the course apart from other institutions
- The staff have an excellent relationship with their students
- The theoretical underpinning continues to be very strong
- The conceptual nature of many of the briefs allows the students to produce some innovative outcomes
- The working relationship with Conde Nast International continues enhance the research and project potential

5.7 Based on your experience as external examiner on the programme, do you consider that there are any resource implications (staffing, physical resources, student access to resources etc) that have been revealed during the process?

As the numbers of students increase and the range of provision expands, additional staff will be needed to provide student support and study skills.

5.8 Any additional comments

Overall, I could see how in under 12 months, changes to teaching and assessment and the rewriting of many of the briefs had resulted in a noticeable raising of standards and enhanced outcomes.

5.9 If this is your final report as an external examiner at Buckingham, then please use the space below to complete an End of Term Review

N/A

Signed

Sarah Lewington

Dated

21st May 2020

Please submit your report electronically to

collaborations-external-examiners@buckingham.ac.uk within ONE month of the Examiners' Meeting.

Collaborative Partner Response:

Please respond to the key points mentioned and indicate how you plan to address each issue raised.

Ref:	Comment from External Examiner	Response/Action to be taken
	In relation to my comments from last year's interim report, next year fundamental CAD skills which are currently being replicated across many of the courses, will be turned into a series of videos which all students can access. This will enable the CAD tutor to offer more one to one and bespoke teaching for each programme of study. These changes	The college is currently reviewing the way in which CAD skills are delivered. So far, the emphasis has been on teaching technical skills with less attention given to application of those skills. The team is currently exploring the option of having pre-recorded technical lectures on CAD skills made available to students before the start of

	<p>should benefit areas such as presentations which currently are not graphically strong, for example in the second part of the Contemporary Issues module. There also needs to be greater attention to detail in illustrated reports and longform articles where some of the students present more of a visual approximation of a publication which undermines the strength of the writing.</p>	<p>each module. This would in turn allow more time to be spent during the module for us to focus on application of those skills.</p> <p>The course team will also look at creating even more time towards the end of each module for students to work with practitioners on enhancing the look and quality of the work.</p>
	<p>Study skills in relation to academic writing and referencing are already much improved from last year, however the issue of self-plagiarism was highlighted at the board and this is something that will be emphasised more strongly next year.</p>	<p>Academic referencing guide will be reviewed and further developed in preparation for the next academic year.</p> <p>Self-plagiarism will be address more prominently as part of the academic study skills sessions.</p>
	<p>It's often difficult to see how staff are arriving at a certain percentage as in some cases feedback is against learning outcomes and in other cases it's not. As percentages aren't given against learning outcomes it's also difficult to ascertain which learning outcome a student is excelling in as opposed to another where there is improvement to be made. This is evident from the comments when against the learning outcomes, but not when there are no learning outcomes on the feedback sheet. When several different assignments contribute to an overall holistic grade, it would also be useful to see how the tasks are cross-referenced against the learning outcomes.</p>	<p>From the next academic year onwards, the college will move to online assessment feedback. As part of this course team will develop rubrics for each module that will make it clear to the students how well they have met each learning outcome.</p>
	<p>For the industry presentation as part of the second part of the Contemporary Issues in Fashion and Media module, I still feel that immediate verbal feedback would be beneficial. This year a Q&A discussion with the panellists helped students to gauge the industry response, however there is no reason why further verbal feedback from staff can't be immediate; students could record this and type it up to reflect upon and then receive an overall grade against rubric at a later date.</p>	<p>This will be actioned as part of next year's industry presentations.</p>
	<p>The students were adept in understanding theoretical frameworks however when applying their research knowledge to part two of the Contemporary Issues in Fashion Media module, much of the primary research felt naive. Their knowledge of marketing felt limited, for example in relation to the Route to</p>	<p>As part of the modification process, the course team has re-designed Critical Research module that focuses on primary research. The new iteration is more focused on developing students audience understanding and the course team hopes that this module will enable students to</p>

	<p>Consumer and Comms channels. There was a lack of evidence underpinning many of their statements and their primary research questions to consumers were basic. The presentations also lacked graphic sophistication and didn't utilise visualisation of research data effectively even within the higher grade bandings. This will be addressed next year both with the teaching of the research module across all MAs and two terms and with the review of the CAD delivery.</p>	<p>better understand the role of primary research and how this can be applied.</p>
	<p>The title of this this project was a little misleading as it implied that it was groupwork when in fact only the exhibition proposal was. This was also by far the weakest part of the submission, so if this it to be replicated next year it would be useful to embed this element more comprehensively into the teaching so that the students truly see the benefit of collaboration and innovative thinking within the context of an exhibition.</p>	<p>This will be clarified as part of next year's brief. More emphasis will be given to the group aspect of the project as part of the delivery.</p>