School of Art, Architecture and Design

Postgraduate

- MGRAD Graphic Design(TP)

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:

Students commented about the enthusiasm and dedication of their tutors.   The CAGD virtual learning environment is a great example of using good design to support design students. It's so refreshing to see a VLE that feels like it was designed for creative and visually literate people.

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.			

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).
Documentation was made available in a timely way and the discussions I've had with the course team

have been open and constructive.

(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.

I can confirm that the coursework I examined and the assessment grades are comparable to similar HE institutions nationally.

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

I saw a relatively broad and varied range of approaches to design (considering the small size of the cohort) that engaged with a variety of graphic design outcomes from books to augmented reality applications. There was not always a great deal of evidence in the final submissions of the broader context in which self-directed projects were situated. It would have been useful to see students place a bit more emphasis on the purpose behind their ideas and test the validity of their proposed approaches more fully in the early stages of development.

Contemporary Graphic Design references were quite thin on the ground at my interim visit although this had improved on my second visit.

Final ideas were often the first or only idea and more evidence of testing and developing a range of approaches in the early stages of a project would be welcome. It should be noted that students were inventive and creative in overcoming the potential limitations as a result of the pandemic.

It would be useful moving forwards to try and develop deeper connections between student coursework and their aspirations after graduating, to equip them more fully to identify and engage with their next destination, whether that be industry, artistic practice or education. It should be noted that the pandemic has no doubt had an impact this year in exaggerating a sense of distance from more typical professional practices.

In general I would like see to the programme place a bit more focus on the importance some basic typographic detailing amongst the students specialising in graphic design for the first time.

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

I was given samples of work from the whole cohort, including online journals and written assessment feedback from tutors. I met with the cohort during my interim visit and it was obvious that they felt well-supported by the programme. The assessment process was well-managed, fair and transparent.

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

This was my first opportunity to examine the course and my visits both took place 'virtually' using Microsoft TEAMS due to the COVID-19 situation. This made it somewhat difficult to make an evaluation of the physical resources though I did see evidence that the team had been inventive with their use of webcams to link on-campus students with those studying online.

There were no adverse comments from students about resources but I got a slight impression that they sometimes felt a bit 'tagged-on' to other activities.

It can be be problematic for a new course with a small cohort to assert itself alongside larger and more established programmes.

I would urge the School to continue to ensure that dedicated space and resources are available while the course builds momentum and establishes its identity within the school. And perhaps support the programme to increase the course-specific input from [a few more] visiting speakers, lectures or workshops.

COVID-19 has obviously had an impact on students ability to engage with activities both inside and outside of the institution.

The necessary cancellation of the planned collaboration with the Leeds International Festival was a great shame as it would have offered a bit more 'real-world' perspective to their work which wasn't always as evident as it could be. The lockdown has undoubtably had an adverse effect here.

The curriculum has been well-thought out. This is a new course and it was encouraging to see how the team sought to review and evolve their approaches to delivery in light of this first year.

At our second meeting the Programme Team wished to discuss the pros and cons of altering one aspect of emphasis with respect to the delivery of one module. I got the sense that real care is being taken to develop existing good practice and enhance the student experience.

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

I can't speak to the use of My Beckett but the CAGD environment is well used, useful and should be applauded. It's a blessing to see a such a nicely designed and bespoke environment being used creatively.

(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.)

The modules are well thought-out and designed to support a student as they progress through the year. The outcomes from the Research Retold project ended up feeling a touch generic but perhaps the energy brief was a bit prescriptive considering the very open open approach to design that students are encouraged to follow in the later stages of the programme.

The Research Methods very usefully prepares students to plan the more self-directed tasks that follow later in the year.

As previously mentioned it's a shame that the lockdown disrupted the Generation Future project, rooted as it was in collaboration and engagement with external institutions and organisations.

The connection between the Critical Study and Independent Studio Practice modules seems crucial in order to give students time to develop ideas around their chosen subject before embarking on a practical application. Most students tended to develop their subject very naturally from one unit to the next.

Assessment was fair, clearly communicated and consistent across all modules.

External Examiner's report summary

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

The team are knowledgable and working hard to develop an engaging program. This year has posed more than a fair share of challenges but the students I spoke with were engaged with their coursework and full of praise for the team.
Hopefully this coming year will allow the ambition to situate more learning activities within the broader context of the creative opportunities offered by within the city to be fully realised.

(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