

Conde Nast College of Fashion

Preliminary External Examiner Report

September 2021

I have undertaken the appropriate module scrutiny for 2020/21 modules within the BA (Hons) Fashion Communication course at Conde Nast College of Fashion. I have been given the opportunity to sample student work across the grade bandings for L5 & L6 work. Please see below for the specific modules scrutinised.

The huge challenges posed by a global pandemic seem to have had little impact on the quality and standards of the work produced by students on this course. The college team quickly established a shift in working practices that ensured that students were able to achieve learning outcomes in all modules to a very high standard. The quality and standards of the work produced within the BA course is something I have come to expect from the teaching and learning at the college.

The industry connections and support continue to grow, with some significant names attending the degree show this year, as well as the establishment of an advisory council with some of the biggest names in fashion, this provides a fantastically experienced and talented group of people supporting the continued growth and success of the BA (Hons) course within the wider context of the college.

Engagement in learning and assignments is very strong and the team, both within the course and within the wider college infrastructure are providing an extremely comprehensive support system to ensure the success and achievement of its students. There are a number of A+ grades included in these two cohorts, I have scrutinised the work and am satisfied that these grades are merited and evidence high achievement.

There evidence of the team making good use of the lessons learned about the strategic deployment of online activities during the pandemic and incorporating best practices from both online and face to face delivery in order to ensure the ongoing success of each student.

There is a sense that student work is relevant, current and future facing, essential in a fast moving fashion system that has been subject to such upheaval along with the rest of the economy. The currency of the teaching team continues to be maintained with a delicate balance of academic and industry expertise, continuing to deploy the knowledge and current working practices of some very accomplished industry professionals in the delivery of content.

It would be prudent for the college to ensure that its academic team members are given appropriate time and support to further their academic research, ensuring the kind of dynamic, research led teaching that would benefit these students. Cutting edge research is how change happens and these students (and staff) are poised to be the changemakers of the future.

The 'stand-out' that I have noticed in the work this time is the extraordinary depth and level of understanding that the students have about the key societal issues we are encountering, such as inclusivity and diversity as well as, global sustainability. The team are to be

commended on embedding the critical issues throughout the course, again this is how it should work, it is no longer enough to simply have one module for this sort of subject matter – it should be inherent in all that we do.

The course continues to set the bar extremely high in terms of standards and in most cases, the student work I have scrutinised far exceeds the standards with which I am familiar in similar courses – again the team should be commended for this. The standards of marking and 2nd marking are very high and the team have established a robust and efficient system to ensure parity. There is an appropriate distribution across the grade bandings in all scrutinised modules and the student facing feedback is uniformly good. Some comments on individual modules...

Fashion Branding and Communication

The work is visually strong and students across the grade bandings are evidencing appropriate sensibilities in the selection of images and the use of colour and layout. Feedback is clear and purposeful. Evidence of understanding of the importance of the consumer relationship even in the lower graded work.

Fashion Styling - Option

One student achieved an A+ for the portfolio element of this assessment. Sound adherence to academic protocols for L4. Good to see mood boards being annotated. Some really nice straight up photography in these submissions. Students are being encouraged to build on what they learn in sessions by undertaking further independent research, this works and students have taken their work further.

Fashion Magazine Publishing - Option

There are 5 x A+ assignments within this module. There are some very imaginative proposals for magazines here, which have been very successful, appropriately responding the learning outcomes for the module. Students are demonstrating in depth knowledge of specific magazine business considerations such as revenue streams, as well as considering content and branding etc. Comprehensive and useful feedback from the team.

Fashion Journalism - Option

One student achieved A+ for both assignments in this module. Evidence of students being aware of the wider context in which their work will be positioned. Assignments have been designed to effectively measure the student ability across a range of different types of medium through different types of writing such as news pieces and articles, and this works well with students rising to the challenge.

Fashion Business & Entrepreneurship

There are 4 x A+ grade assignments submitted to this module. Some creative and visually exciting responses to the assignments in this module, evidence of marketing theories such as positioning analysis etc. This is not easy in a subject that may tend towards being a little dry

– testament to the teaching team’s ability to engage the cohort. Very purposeful and detailed feedback to the students.

Fashion Futures

There are 3 x A+ graded assignments in this module. There is evidence of students really pushing the limits of what we know and understand about the way fashion is mediated in this module, with subject matter like bio design and virtual influencers being taken to new levels, as well as students considering what career paths may emerge - this is really good to see. Evidence of students reflecting well even at the bottom end of the grade boundary and the feedback is very purposeful.

Fashion Theory Dissertation

There are some very well executed dissertations here, students are writing with confidence and strong skills. Students are posing pertinent and interesting questions and are utilizing a combination of primary and secondary research effectively, along with confident visual language, even at the lower end of the grade banding. Evidence of real excellence at the top end. The quality of submissions in this module far exceeds that with which I am familiar in other similar modules at this level. I am satisfied that the grading process continues to be robust in terms of marking quality and standards. Adherence to academic protocols is evident across the submissions – well done to the module team!

Independent Project

Excellent work as ever at the top end of this module but evidence of real growth and abilities across the bandings. Some extremely accomplished and effective projects submitted, which have been achieved through briefs written by the students themselves evidencing the independent thinking required at this level. Students are demonstrating a real engagement with ideas and the wider context of their industry. Visual language is strong across the module and students are demonstrating ‘industry ready’ skills. Well-done to all - the strength of the work that is the culmination of the degree speaks to the quality of the course.

Conclusion

As always – my thanks go to Harriet and the team for all the hard work in preparing the samples, which have been very easy to access and extremely well organised, comprehensive documentation – Well done everybody!

I am very sad that this is my last ‘visit’ and I very much appreciate being given an extra year. It has been an honour and a privilege to have been involved with this course since the very beginning, I have learned so much, seen extraordinary developments and growth in the

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provision, and become friends with some amazing people – thank you! All of this means that it is probably time for the course to have new eyes and a fresh approach – further supporting growth and success I hope to always be associated with the college and the course in some way, I will be watching with interest.