

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Faculty of Arts/School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>Linguistics and phonetics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA in Linguistics and Phonetics
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Completed report

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Academic Quality and Standards**
Academic Quality and Standards Team
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Matters for Urgent Attention

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

. None

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

I have served as an external examiner on the BA in Linguistics and Phonetics for 4 years as I was asked to extend my appointment for another year at the end of 2011-12. The BA was already very strong when I joined both in terms of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment standards. I am pleased to say that throughout my appointment the teaching staff have always responded very positively to my suggestions. Mostly it was a case of streamlining assessment procedures and the overall amount of testing and marking in a series of modules where students were tested very extensively. Exam papers and data assignments were changed accordingly. The quality of feedback is one of the major assets of this BA and has gone from strength to strength over the years.

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

Over the three years of the BA in Linguistics and Phonetics the ILOs are entirely appropriate for single and joint honours degrees.

The standards set for students' work are appropriate for an undergraduate degree. The marking guidelines and the marking criteria are clear and transparent and the marks awarded generally discriminate well between different classification bands.

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The degree programme is fully compliant with national benchmarks. The ILOs are entirely compatible with those of similar degree programmes in other UK HEIs.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

Every module has composite assessment, typically one exam and one piece of coursework. Some of the phonetics and phonology modules also have oral and aural assessed components. The range of tasks in the assignments (e.g. data analysis, traditional essay style work, literature reviews) and the different exam formats (e.g. MCQs, short questions, longer overview questions) allow students to show the depth and breadth of their learning tapping into different but complementary sets of skills and areas of knowledge.

The system in place for awarding marks to individual pieces of work and for final degree classifications is very transparent and robust. Most tutors also provided a very detailed set of marking guidelines to moderators and external examiner allowing for a very robust assessment process.

Once again the overall high standard of students' work over the three years with peaks of excellence, especially evident in some final year dissertations, is testament to the excellent quality of the teaching and to the competence dedication of the staff on the BA in Linguistics and Phonetics.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

The wide range of assessment formats allows ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in relation to the degree programme's ILOs, allowing for students' individual strengths in either exams or coursework.

The marks are typically normally distributed showing a good range of top marks in the high 70s and a small minority of fails.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

NA

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

There were no specific instructions on my part last year. I am however pleased to say that the improvement on the clarity of guidelines on the suitability of dissertation topics was maintained from the year before.

Areas of good practice: Extreme clear assignment guidelines and marking criteria; extreme detailed feedback on coursework giving very clear indications of areas of strengths and of points for improvement.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

The breadth and depth of the excellent research expertise of all members of the teaching staff is evident in the content of the modules, in the good range of different assessment used and in their enthusiasm for their subject which clearly inspires the students, as shown by the very positive feedback received for all the modules I have seen. Most assessment included an independent research component that tested students' abilities as proactive thinkers and learners.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

NA

The Examination/Assessment Process

9. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

- Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

Guidance was transparent and timely, additional information and clarifications were promptly provided when required.

10. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

- The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Yes, the documentation was timely, accurate and complete.

11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes, I was consulted on exam questions and on coursework tasks. I provided feedback as required and I was satisfied that my comments had been taken into account in the clarification/reformulation of a few exam questions/coursework tasks.

12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes, the sample for each module contained a good range of scripts and the feedback on the work was clearly marked and made available to me alongside the scripts and the complete marking grids.

13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Yes, the choice of topics was entirely appropriate this year and both the method and standard of assessment were adequate with a good level of agreement between first markers and moderators. Only on a couple of occasions was I required to consider major discrepancies.

14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

Overall the arrangements were appropriate. I attended the Board of Examiners' meeting on 14th June. As in previous years, after the board a series of inaccuracies in some students' marks were brought to my attention and I had to approve the final marks by signing and sending back forms as appropriate.

15. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

Yes, I was satisfied that this was the case.

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

As I have reached the end of my 4-year appointment I am satisfied that I am leaving the programme in an even stronger position than I found it. I have to commend my colleagues on extremely high standards of teaching and learning, on the breadth and depth of their assessments, on the excellence of their feedback, and on the attention to personalized learning. The staff on the BA in Linguistics and Phonetics are an extremely dedicated team providing first-class training in the field.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

University of Leeds
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5th of August 2013

Dear

Many thanks for your External Examiner's Report for the 2012-2013 UG programmes in Linguistics & Phonetics, which I received on the 30th of July.

We note with great appreciation your praise for the quality of the feedback we give our students, the clarity of our assessment guidelines and marking criteria, and the high standards of teaching and learning achieved in our Subject Area. We take the absence of specific recommendations as a sign of your satisfaction of how our programmes are run and assessed.

It has been a pleasure working with you over the past four years. We have appreciated enormously the genuine interest you took in our programmes and the care with which you examined the work of our students. Your insightful recommendations have helped us improve and streamline our procedures and continue raising our standards. Your advice has been particularly helpful with respect to the Dissertation module, which, as you note, now showcases some excellent pieces of work from our students. We hope that the establishment of the Pathways in our programmes will lead to more excellent pieces of student research projects in this and other final year modules.

We are grateful you have accepted to shadow _____ in first year as your replacement.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Linguistics & Phonetics