

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

**PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION***Subject area and awards being examined:*

School of Modern Languages and Cultures Programme(s) / Module(s): BA in Linguistics & Phonetics	Subject(s): Linguistics and Phonetics  awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BA
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The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to [exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk](mailto: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.*

***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.*

## 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.*

Throughout the degree programme the intended learning outcomes are entirely appropriate for single and joint honours degrees in Linguistics and Phonetics.

The standards set for students' work are appropriate for an undergraduate degree. The marking guidelines and the marks awarded clearly discriminate between different classification zones.

### 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 fully complies with national benchmarks. The ILOs are entirely compatible with those of similar degree programmes at 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 assignment. 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, dictionary creation) 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. In some modules students are also required to keep logs and workbooks to show evidence of independent learning over the course of the module.

The system in place for awarding marks to individual pieces of work and for final degree classifications is very transparent and robust.

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 range of assessment formats allows ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in relation to the degree programme's ILOs.

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

Not applicable.

### 6. 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.*

In addition to being impressed once again by the varied nature of the assessments I have to commend the very high level of extremely detailed feedback that students receive for every piece of work submitted. The staff criticism is always extremely focused, informed and full of practical ways in which students can improve their work.

The level of feedback from students was also extremely impressive; their comments show that they clearly appreciate the competence and dedication of their teachers.

**7. 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 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.

## ***The Examination Process***

8. **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.*

Yes, the guidance provided in advance was clear and appropriate.

9. **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?**

- *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 clear and helpful.

10. **Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

Yes, a good range of exam papers and assignments (including feedback forms) were made available to me to gauge the spread of marks.

11. **Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

Yes, the administrative support was timely and very efficient.

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

Yes, due consideration was given where necessary.

### ***For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements***

*If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.*

### ***Other Comments***

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

A note was made by the exams officer on behalf of the teaching team to be more explicit about the appropriateness of topics for final year dissertations.

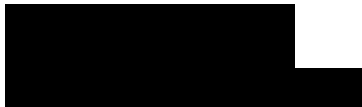
Although the written guidelines are already clear it was felt that students should be reminded that their choice of topic and the content of their work must reflect the fact that they are studying for a degree in Linguistics and Phonetics. On one occasion this year it transpired that one student had been carried away by a sudden enthusiasm for archaeology and failed to focus on the more linguistic nature of the topic that he was trying to develop.

Department of Linguistics and Phonetics  
School of Modern Languages and Cultures



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT



23 June 2011

Dear 

Many thanks for your External Examiner's Report for the 2010-2011 BA programmes in Linguistics & Phonetics.

We are pleased that you continue to be satisfied by the overall quality of our assessment practices. We note with appreciation that the aspects we care most about meet your approval, namely the discriminatory power of assessments (allowing good students to shine), the consistent provision of constructive feedback, and research-led teaching.

As noted at the Exam Board, we will make sure that all students undertaking a dissertation are fully aware of the absolute necessity to give a linguistic focus to their work.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your work as our External Examiner. My colleagues and myself look forward to receiving further input from you in next year.

Yours sincerely

