

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2009– 2010

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

<b>School of:</b> Modern Languages and Cultures/ The language Centre	<b>Subject(s):</b> Undergraduate Study Skills in English (ELU0010) & English for Social Sciences (ELU0030)
<b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b> International Foundation Year Modules – ELU0010 & ELU0030	<b>awards:</b> (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)

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.*

No

***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?*

Yes

***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.*

N/A

## 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.*

I was very satisfied with the link between intended learning outcomes and overall assessment. These were both transparent and concise. Assignments had clearly specified grading criteria which reflected the overall learning objectives outlined in the module handbooks. The modules had been carefully designed to develop and assess a range of study skills at Higher education level. These were well conceived and appropriate. The standards upheld were clearly in line with sector benchmarks.

### 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.*

It is clear that the programme module compares very favourably with other such courses across the sector. Indeed, the attempt to cover a full range of study skills in an integrated and innovative way was impressive.

### 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.*

The modules used a variety of methods to assess the students. ELU0010 broke down course work into a wide range of different assignment and task types. These reflected the kind of work that might be expected of students when undertaking undergraduate study. There was a sense that some of the course work could have been combined into larger units with greater overall weighting to reflect the quantity of work required, and to reduce the overall number of small pieces of work demanded of students. Similarly, specific marking criteria for individual subcomponents could be refined and varied according to the specific learning outcomes or study skills being assessed. Having said this marking followed a clear and transparent procedure. There was evidence of extensive moderation and an attempt to ensure standardisation across the different groups that made up the cohort. Students seemed to make satisfactory progress over the year and the programme was well designed to allow them more opportunity to develop the specific skills required for independent study by the end of the year. Feedback on individual assignments was thorough, instructive and practical. Teaching, as evidenced by both the results and feedback was of a high standard.

### 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 academic standards demonstrated by the students were clearly in the expected range of ability. This was made clear from the range of assessments I was able to see, both oral and written. In general, students on both the modules I was examining had reached a level of performance which is comparable with students on other such courses. There were occasional problems with plagiarism, as there often are with international students on such programmes. However, through the range of assessment types (both formative and summative) and mix of closed and open work, it was clear such problems were being addressed and minimised as far as possible. A movement towards more interim scrutiny of larger scale work (like report writing) may help further to tackle the associated (and growing) problem of commissioned work which is affecting this sector. I was impressed by the rigour which the staff were tackling this problem and their openness to new forms of assessment.

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

N/A

### 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.*

Since this was the first year of my external examining, it is difficult to answer this question. However, I was very impressed with the overall design and implementation of the course. There was an impressive attempt to integrate a full range of study skills with appropriate language development. Projects were carefully conceived to reflect the diversity of students taking the programme whilst giving them an opportunity to explore subject areas more in line with their chosen areas of academic study. A wide variety of teaching materials has been collected to enhance this and students are encouraged to use the VLE to extend their learning in private study.

#### **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 decision by Leeds to include English for Specific Purposes modules such as English for Social Sciences is to be commended. Recent research into EAP has shown that students at this level gain greatly from the targeted language expertise that can be provided by experienced and well qualified language tutors. I would strongly urge that such courses remain firmly under the overall umbrella of the Language Centre, who can then focus on developing their language needs so that they can cope with the demands placed on them by their academic course of study.

## **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.*

I was given any materials relating to the modules that I requested. In addition I was able to meet a number of teachers and to discuss operational aspects of the course.

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. All documentation that I required was supplied.

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

Yes. I was given direct access to a wide range of student course work and examinations.

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

Yes. Administrative arrangements were exemplary and the staff couldn't have been more helpful.

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

Yes. I attended the local Board of Studies which enabled me to oversee the full process of award making and to meet some of the teachers involved with the modules. Full consideration was given to mitigating circumstances by those present.

### **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.*

N/A

### **Other Comments**

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

I have been very impressed by the reception I have received by the Director of the International Foundation Year and the module leaders. It is clear that the modules are very well organised and run. The module Undergraduate Study Skills in English (ELU0010) adopts an innovative and challenging approach to preparing students for Higher Education in the UK. Aspects of the module such as the way different study skills are developed alongside language work and the integrated nature of project work, involving guided research and independent study should be regarded as examples of good practice in learning and teaching and staff should be encouraged to disseminate it to other professionals involved in pre-sessional work.

## The Language Centre



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

Dear

**Re: Response to External Examiner's Report 2010 - 11**

Thank you very much for your report about the International Foundation Year modules, ELU0010 and ELU0030. We would like to thank you very much for your helpful and positive comments and for agreeing to act as External Examiner this year.

We are very pleased to know that you have observed several aspects which you consider could be disseminated as examples of best practice and that you have been satisfied with the way the assessments have been conducted.

In response to the suggestions in your report I would like to outline how we plan to address them.

### 1. Module: Undergraduate Study Skills in English

ELU0010

External Examiner's comment	Response
There was a sense that some of the course work could have been combined into larger units with greater overall weighting to reflect the quantity of work required, and to reduce the overall number of small pieces of work demanded of students.	In the 2011-12 academic session, the complexity of the tasks for the Portfolio Writing tasks will be simplified to make them more consistent with the weighting for each individual assessment. Consideration will be given to making changes for 2012 – 13 academic year, as to reduce the number of assessed pieces of work before then will require an official change to the module.
Specific marking criteria for individual subcomponents could be refined and varied according to the specific learning outcomes or study skills being assessed.	This will be trialled in the coming year with the Portfolio Writing tasks so that differential weightings can be placed for Content & Organisation compared to the weighting for Language on each task.
A movement towards more interim scrutiny of larger scale work (like report writing) may help further to tackle the associated (and growing) problem of commissioned work which is affecting this sector.	Tutors will ask students to submit a draft version of each assessed piece of work, which tutors will give brief comments about before a final version is submitted by the students. This may help to tackle this problem. In addition, we will continue to require students to submit all written assessed pieces of work via Turnitin.



The decision by Leeds to include English for Specific Purposes modules such as English for Social Sciences is to be commended. Recent research into EAP has shown that students at this level gain greatly from the targeted language expertise that can be provided by experienced and well qualified language tutors. I would strongly urge that such courses remain firmly under the overall umbrella of the Language Centre, who can then focus on developing their language needs so that they can cope with the demands placed on them by their academic course of study.

The Language Centre will continue to offer EAP modules to the International Foundation Year Office and stress the importance of EAP study skills training to them and receiving departments.

The specialist EAP modules are designed to help IFY students prepare for academic study in specific subject areas and to improve their study skills as well as specific language content.

### 2. English for Economic Studies ELU0030

Unfortunately, this module is not going to be offered to the International Foundation Year students for 2011- 12, hence no changes to the module will be made at the present time.

Should you wish further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Rupert Herington  
Director of the English modules for the International Foundation Year programme