

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012**

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	<b>Modern Languages and Cultures/ The Language Centre</b>
<i>Subject(s):</i>	<b>Undergraduate Study Skills in English (ELU0010)</b>
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	<b>International Foundation Year Module – ELU0010</b>
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	

**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](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?*

N/A

***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

**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.*

The course continues to satisfactorily link learning outcomes with overall assessment. Assignments had clearly specified grading criteria which reflected the overall learning objectives outlined in the module handbooks. The module had been carefully designed to reflect the demands of academic study at HE level and individual skills are developed and tested throughout. The standards upheld were clearly in line, or superior to, 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.*

The programme module compares very favourably with other such courses across the sector. The attempt to exploit blended learning techniques and to create a module which takes a holistic approach to study skills at this level is both innovative and 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 module used a variety of methods to assess the students. These reflected the different study skills being taught and the learning outcomes outlined in the module handbook. The need to individually assess the full range of study skills, whilst retaining a formative dimension to the assessment, meant that some of the earlier elements of course work have limited weighting. However, some attempt has been made to reduce the overall number of small pieces of work, and to reward students according to the quality and quantity of work demanded. This approach supports the notion of skills development over a period of time and provides an opportunity for students to see their own progression over the period of study. 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. The use of grids to illustrate ability in a range of skills was well conceived and allowed students to see, at a glance, where their strengths and weaknesses were. However, it is essential that there is a clear correlation between such grids and the final mark and sometimes this was not in evidence. 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. Indeed, the practice of using specific examples from the student's work as evidence of areas which need further work demonstrate the overall commitment to formative as well as summative assessment. This was reinforced by the use of expanded marking criteria for later assignments so that students are not overwhelmed by too many demands at the outset. The final marks were thus a fair reflection of their ability to be able to cope at the level required of them in university education.

**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 in the expected range of ability. The range and variety of assessments evaluated their performance over a number of different language and academic skills as well as providing an overall assessment of their ability to function at HE level. Marks were generally consistent, although scores for the examination were significantly lower than those for course work. Because of the nature of international students, this was not unexpected and justified combining coursework and examination to reach a final score. The full range of language skills – speaking, reading, writing and listening – were assessed across the assignments. Problems with plagiarism were identified and dealt with according to university procedures. The impact and opportunities for this, however, have been minimised through the range of assessment types and mix of closed and open work. The decision to break down assignments into different components and stages, all carefully monitored, has helped to reduce the possibility of commissioned work and, where this was identified, the possibility of comparing different samples of work completed under different conditions has provided reliable evidence. Staff are clearly determined to tackle this issue and are developing effective strategies to overcome the problem.

**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. 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.*

As emphasised in my last report, there is already much to commend on this module. However, the staff have demonstrated a commitment to improve and develop material and its delivery. It is clear that a lot of work has gone into the provision of effective and useful feedback for the students. This was consistent across a range of markers and demonstrates a high standard of moderation between tutors and efficient coordination by the course leaders. Another example of good practice – and one that could be extended to other areas of university work – was the graduated approach to marking criteria. Rather than retaining the same marking criteria, and weightings, for all written work throughout the year, different areas were emphasised to reflect the focus of the course and to take account of student progression in various academic skills.

**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.*

It is clear that the course has been very carefully designed to incorporate latest research into blended learning and the need to adopt an integrated skills approach. The decision to focus equally on academic study skills as well as language for international students is one that is receiving increasing attention in the language teaching community. The approach adopted on the International Foundation year might be regarded as a pioneer in this respect and one that should be given greater recognition both within and without the university.

**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**

N/A

**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.*

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 clarify different aspects of the course and its operation.

**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.*

All documentation required by me was supplied.

**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?**

The nature and level of the questions used in the examination were appropriate and suitable for this level of student. This is reflected in the individual performance of the students and the overall spread of marks.

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

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

N/A

**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?**

Yes. Administrative arrangements were entirely satisfactory for the whole of the process.

**15. 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. Full consideration was given to mitigating circumstances by those present.

**Other comments**

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

The organisation and design of the International Foundation Year is exemplary. The course is clearly very well led and there is a good rapport between management and staff. The module Undergraduate Study Skills in English (ELU0010) is innovative and seeks to challenge the wide range of abilities of students studying at the centre. The course leaders are to be complemented on developing a wealth of appropriate new materials. I understand that steps have already been taken to share this approach at a conference level and it is to be hoped that this will receive university encouragement in the future. .

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24<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Dear <<>>,

**Re: Response to External Examiner's Report 2011 - 12**

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

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

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

**Module: Undergraduate Study Skills in English**

**ELU0010**

External Examiner's comment	Response
<b>Section 3</b> The use of grids to illustrate ability in a range of skills was well conceived and allowed students to see, at a glance, where their strengths and weaknesses were. However, it is essential that there is a clear correlation between such grids and the final mark and sometimes this was not in evidence.	This issue will be addressed in the coming year through staff training, standardisation and checking that tutors have clearly related the criteria to the final marks awarded to students for their assessed pieces of work.
<b>Other comments</b> The module Undergraduate Study Skills in English (ELU0010) is innovative and seeks to challenge the wide range of abilities of students studying at the centre. The course leaders are to be complemented on developing a wealth of appropriate new materials. I understand that steps have already been taken to share this approach at a conference level and it is to be hoped that this will receive university encouragement in the future.	It is our intention during the 2012-13 academic year for the module leaders to share elements of best practice from the module through dissemination at a conference and possibly through a related article.

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

Yours sincerely,



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Director of the English modules for the International Foundation Year programme