

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

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

School of: Education Programme(s) / Module(s): MA TESOL CHINA	Subject(s): awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
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Name and home institution/affiliation of examiner:

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.

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?

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.

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.*

Learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of the award and the structure and content of the programme are appropriate to the type of award.

- 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 aims and ILOs are comparable to those of similar course at other universities and in line with benchmarks set by the HEQ framework.

- 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.*

Students are assessed by assignment and these are generally suited to the subject. The standard of work produced is generally of a high standard and comparable to that of students on similar programmes. The best work is where students contextualise their research and draw on local constraints in their discussions.

I have said consistently over the years of examining that the team might consider alternative methods of assessment in the interests of allowing students with different skills sets from academic writing to shine.

There is no doubt that the teaching on this programme is strong. Students consistently speak extremely highly of tutors. They are impressed by the amount of time tutors spend with them in and out of class, the fact that they are willing to provide formative assessment by commenting on drafts and that they engage in genuine discussion about current issues in learning and teaching English.

Work that is resubmitted and passes attracts a pass mark, which is in line with practices in other institutions. However, it would be useful for students to see what the mark would have been had the work been a first attempt.

I am pleased that my recommendation to ensure all resubmitted work from the China cohort is seen by a Leeds tutor has been taken up. I think this step is important in the interests of rigour.

- 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.*

Each year I discuss the issue of ethics in my report and each year I receive a letter from Head of School saying that this is a difficult area in China. I of course agree with this analysis but

there is still work that Leeds could do in order to ensure that ethics stays on the agenda in discussions with China and that students consistently address ethics in their assignments.

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. 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 I state above, I am pleased that all resubmitted work is now second marked internally,

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.

Students all carry out an in-depth critical study. Although students mostly carry out quasi experimental studies, there was evidence of this cohort going beyond SLA studies to explore what ethnography might offer.

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. This is good.

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.

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

Yes.

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

The administrative arrangements have again been excellent.

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

Yes.

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.

15 May 2015

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Dear <>

Many thanks for your help throughout your period as external examiner for the MA TESOL China programme, and for your latest examiner's report.

With regard to the points that you raise in this year's report our response follows.

1. The issue of alternative methods of assessment. While we fully acknowledge that the provision of alternative assessment formats might be desirable for some students there are a number of factors that complicate the introduction of alternatives. Firstly, although some Chinese students do find academic writing difficult, the current assessment of a written assignment does provide the programme with face validity in the Chinese educational context. Secondly the possibilities for supporting and organising for example more orally based assessment are limited by the structure of the programme and the physical distance. Finally, since the home MA programme is assessed by assignment, and the China programme claims to be equivalent in most respects, alterations to the assessment procedures for this programme alone might be seen as lessening the quality of the programme. While it is therefore unlikely that the assignment format will alter substantially in the short term, we will continue to emphasise the desirability of situating assignments in students' working contexts and of using personal experience to critically engage with ideas.
2. We completely agree with your suggestion that resubmissions should also indicate what mark the work would have got had it been a first submission. This will be implemented from now on.
3. The issue of research ethics. This topic was raised at the first programme meeting of the year in October 2014, and again during the second Leeds visit in March 2015. All students supervised at Leeds will of course be reminded of the ethical implications of their proposed research, and a message has also been sent to supervisors in Guangzhou. While progress may appear to be slow, we are confident that over time, the ethical implications of research carried out for critical studies will become ever more explicitly acknowledged and addressed.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education