

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

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

Faculty / School of:	School of Education
Subject(s):	<i>TESOL</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	EDUC 5011 M - EAL, language diversity and inclusion: research and theory EDUC 5012 M – EAL, language diversity and inclusion: investigating policy and pedagogy EDUC 5013 M – EAL, language diversity and inclusion: classroom-based enquiry
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA EAL & Education

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**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 Quality Assurance**
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

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.*

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.*

Yes, 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.*

For both EDUC 5011M and 5012M, the students were assessed by a 6,000 word assignment. The assignment titles seemed very well-suited to the subject and all the students whose work I saw, including those who failed, seemed to engage well with their chosen topics. Those who failed seemed to do so more due to not following academic conventions than for other reasons. This emphasizes the need for students struggling with their academic English to access the support available at the university.

While the work did vary in quality, some of it was excellent. An assignment that scored 75%, for example, demonstrated very deep learning from the module in weaving together theory and practice in a thorough and detailed analysis.

The quality of the feedback was very high. It was extremely detailed, sensitive to the students, and appreciative of their efforts. It was also very helpful. Students could gain very beneficial formative advice that pushed them to improve.

I was also impressed by work submitted for the 5013M critical study. Reading an assignment that scored 72%, I was struck by the way this programme has managed to attract and nurture students with a great deal of ability and relevant experience. For this student, I can imagine it would have been the perfect choice for an MA programme.

The marking and quality of feedback on the module appeared very high. However, regarding pedagogy, one characteristic of all three assignments I saw (across bands) was that they seemed relatively light on methodology, though strong on background. Perhaps more support could be provided on research methodology.

A related point is that possibly more reference during input on research methodology could be made to research carried out by staff, partly since such indexing emphasizes to students what expertise is available in the department, which in turn invites students to seek out informal help during office hours. For example, one of these critical studies drew on Exploratory Practice and I felt rather than using second-hand sources, e.g. Allwright cited in..., could have been using Allwright and Hanks (2009) or Hanks (2015).

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.*

Though some students fell short, the academic standards demonstrated by the students were good overall, comparing well with those on other courses.

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.

The quality of the feedback is particularly high, while the nature of the assignments promote deep engagement.

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 module manager is a leading researcher in the field, and it was pleasing to see the better students drawing on this expertise.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

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

<> was appointed as my mentor. This was useful as I had several questions I emailed him about; <> responded promptly and helpfully.

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. 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, everything was provided.

11. 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, appropriate documentation was provided.

12. 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 provided with the assessment tasks. I thought the nature and level of the questions were highly appropriate.

13. 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, this was all fine. I was provided with the assessment and a range of work from all grade bands. The work was annotated.

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

Yes, very appropriate in both respects.

15. 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, the arrangements were helpful. I was able to attend the June meeting, which was very useful. I was fully satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

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

Yes, appropriate procedures were in place.

Other comments

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

I was impressed with the way the external examiners' day was organised in June. It was very useful to share impressions with EEs of other programmes.

12 January 2016

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Dear <<>>

Thank you for your report on the MA TESOL and MA EAL & Education programmes during the academic year 2014-15. We are very pleased with the positive overall tenor of your report, and that you feel the Examination process has enabled you again to make a valid judgement on the quality of our standards and assessment procedures.

To address your specific comments, the brevity of the feedback for one of the **critical studies (EDUC 5001M)** you saw is certainly a matter of concern. Markers are always instructed to offer advice to students on how their work could be improved. I can only imagine that in this case, where there is no further written work to be submitted, the marker felt this was less of a priority. We will continue to stress the need for markers to give guidance on how higher marks could be obtained.

Regarding the module **EDUC 5901M**, the assignment does specify a teaching or learning context and TESOL Studies students are all able to identify a recent example of the latter. We have had Distinction level work from TESOL Studies students on this module. However, it probably is the case that experienced teachers, who understand more about the issues, will generally do better. The suggestion for an alternative assignment is a helpful one. However, as a consequence of the TESOL Review of 2013-14, the TESOL Studies programme has been radically restructured, and the new-model programme will come into operation next academic year so students will no longer take EDUC5901M. The restructuring has been designed to facilitate both a stronger focus on language description and analysis, language learning and analysing classroom learning experiences in the first semester, and a more practical, hands-on approach to methodology in the second semester. There are in fact ample opportunities for the kind of activity you mention in the current EDUC 5301M module which runs in the second semester under the current programme, but these will be extended in the new-model programme.

We agree it is surprising that students did not choose to focus on Practitioner Research or Exploratory Practice in the **EDUC 5925M** module assignment. There is always variation in students' interests from year to year, and previous groups have tackled these subjects.

We note your comments on the marking of module **EDUC 5981M**, and agree that text annotations are redundant if students ignore them. With the move to online marking with Grademark, this issue

will probably not re-occur as students will have to open their document in order to see the general report and mark, and so will not fail to notice annotations made by the marker.

With regard to the modules on the **EAL programme**, you will be aware that with the retirement of Dr Jean Conteh this programme has been withdrawn. However your comments on the need to strengthen the research methodology component of MA students' work echo those of previous External Examiners in recent years and is being addressed at a School level with the provision of a suite of online research methodology courses, and within the TESOL department by adding rigour to our non-assessed 'Research methods for TESOL' module. We are also actively considering making this an assessed 15-credit module once again from academic year 2017-18.

We would like to thank you again for your work on the MA TESOL and MA EAL & Education programmes during the academic year 2014-15, and hope that you are enjoying your new posting in the Middle East. We look forward to working with you again during the coming year,

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education