

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
 ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016– 2017

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

Faculty / School of:	The Language Centre, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies (LCS)
Subject(s):	<i>EAP</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Language and Science ELU3015 Engineering ELU3013
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	NA

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

Title and Name of Examiner:

Institution:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

**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 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*

The issues are fairly minor.

**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?*

This was a new course in 2016 so my 2016 report was the first one.

**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*

NA

**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 courses have clear aims and learning outcomes (I think these were already well established on the general STEM course I looked at last year) which are appropriate for preessional students who have not yet quite met their English language/IELTS entry requirements for entry into departments for degree-level study, and/or who need further help and support to develop their academic language, literacy and study skills so that they are ready to progress to their department.

The structure and content of the courses meet the needs of the students in terms of the language, skills and strategies they are developing, which they can apply to preessional course assessments and future HE study. Students are exposed to appropriate academic genres, discourse, language and rhetorical functions. There is an appropriate focus on higher order intellectual skills, collaborative learning and learner autonomy, preparing students for full participation in a typical HE environment. There is also the opportunity for students to develop a better understanding of expectations placed on university students in the UK as well as the broader social and cultural context of study in the UK. These are important considerations for international students beginning their studies in the UK.

Both courses build on both general academic skills and subject-specific knowledge through reading, writing seminar and presentation tasks. The assessment tasks are very clearly staged and scaffolded.

An engineering strand has been added, increasing the level of subject specificity for those students. I think it's interesting and motivating for science students to work at this level of specificity; for tutors, it is important that induction and CPD includes focus on how to deliver these courses effectively. It is important that tutors do not feel that they ought to be 'teaching content', that they are aware that they are rather enabling students to explore how knowledge is developed and presented in their disciplines, handing over significant responsibility for subject specific content to students themselves. It is also important that students are aware of these respective tutor/student roles and responsibilities and the rationale behind them.

There are appropriate modes of course delivery (lectures, tutorials etc.) and assessment (essay; seminar; presentation and viva) which reflect the norms and practices of HE and, where possible, specific disciplinary contexts (such as the reported focus on oral skills in engineering), thus meeting the needs of international students preparing for UK university entry.

Handbooks on both modules were clear and informative. There are elements of good practice in each which could perhaps be shared across both:

From Science: the weekly breakdown of the micro-stages of each assessment

From Engineering: explicit discussion of responsibilities and expectations for students in HE

Assessments require students to meet 'a standard expected level' of 55-59%, which meets the required entry onto university courses as would otherwise be represented by an IELTS score (around 6.5). The scripts I saw assured me that those attaining this score and above were ready to progress on to degree study.

**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.*

These preessional courses are comparable, in terms of structure, content and assessments, with those I have experience of in other institutions and can be measured against international qualifications related to English for Academic purposes and university entry such as IELTS, as mentioned above.

**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.*

Assessments have face and content validity. They test relevant skills and approximate real-world tasks in academia. They have clear disciplinary relevance, and allow students to demonstrate relevant language and literacy skills. There is a reasonable amount of assessment at an appropriate level of difficulty.

On science, assessment is weighted towards reading and writing (2/3 assessments); on engineering, assessment is weighted towards speaking (2/3 assessments). It might be worth bringing these into line. However, it is clear that written and oral assessments have other skills integrated within them.

Both modules have writing assessments; only the science module has a rewrite assessment, a very useful task which will alert students to the value of editing their work carefully.

Engineering has an individual presentation; the science module has a group presentation, which allows for the development of collaborative skills. However, the engineering module has a very useful seminar task, which also promotes collaborative learning.

Student performance generally indicated fair to very good understanding of the assessment task and assessment procedures, which attests to the quality of teaching and suggests that the design of the assessments has been successful.

There is evidence of good practice re assessment procedures. Scripts are submitted through Turnitin. Approximately 15% of assessments are second marked, as prescribed in the School's guidelines. There appears to be a moderation procedure but I couldn't find any notes on the forms I looked at last week. Also, some feedback forms only had the name of one tutor. Are there clear guidelines for this? It was also unclear as to whether tutors should be blind marking or check marking. This needs to be standardised.

Last year there was some variation in assessment procedures; for example, some students submitted with a cover sheet while others did not. This has now been remedied.

On the whole, feedback is clear, detailed and usually incorporates formative as well as summative elements. Some feedback was excellent, for example the feedback on seminars on the engineering module and the feedback on the reading task on the science module.

Last year, I noted the marking grids to be appropriate and comprehensive, but perhaps not as consistent, accessible and user-friendly as they might be, which could affect both teachers and students (though I was unaware of particular feedback from either group). I suggested the following changes:

- 1) More consistent use of language (e.g. in writing, 'purpose' was mentioned in some but not all bands).
- 2) Merging some of the categories (e.g. writing 2 and 5 could combine quite naturally as 'structure and argument'; there could be a single 'language use' component including clarity, accuracy, range and cohesion).
- 3) Clearer differentiation between band descriptors.
- 4) More consistency between language used in the grids and the assessment rubric: a notable example was the term 'coherence', something which is mentioned across the marking grids but not in the assessment guidelines.

I note considerable improvement in those areas:

There is more consistency in the use of language across bands – though this could be further developed (eg in seminars: refs to 'support' and 'paraphrase' do not occur in each band in seminars; students at the lower end are only penalised for dominating, not for limited contributions.)

The structure and argument category in writing works really well.

In general, there seems to be a move towards standardising descriptors across assessments and across courses, so that, for example, pronunciation of key words is similarly alluded to in both the seminar and presentation documents on both courses. It would be good to build on this as it makes the documents more accessible to both students and tutors, especially if they move from course to course each summer.

A couple of points to note:

The language descriptors in writing might also cover style and expression, as these are mentioned in course aims and assessment rubrics.

Sometimes, there is a lack of differentiation between bands (eg science, presentations: use of sources, 79/70, 69/65, 64/60; visual communication, 79/70, 69/65; engineering, seminars: range, accuracy and appropriacy, 79/70, 69/65). However, being involved in similar projects at , I realise that it is sometimes it is hard to find the language to express these slight nuances.

It seems as if some excellent work has been done in this area.

#### 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 distribution of marks was consistent with a typical bell-curve, with the mean (Engineering 58%?; Science 59%) at the 'standard expected level'.

Last year I noted that there was probably room for differentiation amongst students at the top of the scale. There were some students who seemed to have addressed the task in a more mature, direct and insightful way than others with similar scores. This year, there was more differentiation in the marks – for example an excellent reading record received a noticeably higher mark (70s) which was well deserved, and there were two very good essays (1 sci, 1 eng) deserving of their mark in the 60s.

#### 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. 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 development of the marking grids is one noticeable area of improvement which could be beneficial for all preessional strands.

The rewriting task in Science and the seminar task in Engineering are excellent additions to the course. The former trains students to respond to feedback and put effort into the editing process; the latter can train students to use seminars to develop and test ideas. The students are working on important skills through authentic tasks.

**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 course employs a standard range of established and evidence-based university teaching and learning methods to promote acquisition and practice, with opportunities for guided discovery and discussion. There is an emphasis on task-based, collaborative learning and student autonomy (appropriately scaffolded).

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

NA

**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**

NA

**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.*

I felt well informed on my role and responsibilities and the format of the report was very clear.

**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.*

The idea of having the external folder on the VLE is very good but access to the VLE was problematic and communication channels were not always clear.

Turnaround is very tight on these courses; both coordinators and the external were all very busy with the final stages of preessional courses. What would have helped me is if the course coordinators could have contacted me at the beginning of the course to arrange VLE access and provide copies of the handbook. It would also be very useful to have a timetable with approximate dates when I would be able to access each assessment. This would mean that I would only need to look at the last few final assessments in that final week.

**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?**

I did not receive these prior to the course; I received everything at the end of the course (course info; assessment rubrics; samples). This made turnaround even tighter. Everything that can be should ideally be sent at the beginning of the course, with ongoing notification of when assessment documentation is available.

**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. A good range of marks was demonstrated in the scripts I saw.

Last year, I noted some variation in the way feedback was given: some tutors used track changes; others annotated the scripts by hand. This year, there is standardised practice on the science module, with all tutors using track changes. On the engineering model, there are both hand-written annotations and track changes, and one assessment had no annotations. It would be good to standardise practice across the modules. It might also be worth considering using VLE marking tools if this is standard university practice.

When I looked at the moderation forms there were guidelines but I couldn't find any notes, agreed marks, or information on how marks were arrived at.

The marks I saw were appropriate.

Detailed feedback was usually provided, justifying the marks given and noting strengths, weaknesses and advice for improvement. The feedback was also individualised where possible.

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

NA

**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.

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

Yes.

**Other comments**

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

I would like to thank the coordinators and other staff I engaged with for their help and cooperation. These are very interesting courses with very dedicated, creative staff.

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of  
Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for  
communication:

Email:

Telephone:

	Deputy Director of Student Education
	Faculty of Arts, The Language Centre

*\*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.*

**Completing the School response**

The completed School response (including the full original report) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to the Pro-Dean for Student Education in the relevant Faculty. Following approval by the Pro-Dean for Student Education, the School must send the response (including the full original report) directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at [qat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:qat@leeds.ac.uk). External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

**Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice**

Thank you for your very positive comments on a number of areas which are much appreciated.

**Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**

Thank you for acknowledging improvements made to the programmes' assessment criteria, which came mainly in response to advice given in your External Examiner report from 2016.

**Response to Matters for Urgent Attention**

*If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:*

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**Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

In question 1. it is also very useful to highlight the possible perception that tutors and students may think it is the tutors' responsibility to 'teach' content. The question, 'How is knowledge developed and presented in your discipline?', is highly relevant for strand leaders to consider when reviewing materials for next summer, as clarity on this will help tutors support students and be clear of their role. A clear rationale for the CBPS will be presented in Tutor and Student Handbooks which will be standardised in terms of generic content for all programmes in 2018 and tutors will receive advice during induction week.

Assessments and weighting (question 3) will also be discussed and moderation procedures will be agreed on with clear and detailed guidance in the Tutor Handbook. Your advice on how to improve the criteria in terms of wording and their outward facing value to students will be considered. Thank you for continuing to make positive contributions to criteria development.

**Standards****Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

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In question 11 you raise the issue of communication and fast turn around for Term 4 pre-sessionals. In 2018, External examiners will be contacted at the beginning of the course by strand leaders to provide course overviews, task deadlines and summative examples of work and final assessments as they come in to provide as much time as possible.

The report also raises the question of whether marking should be electronic or by hand. This question is to be reviewed again for 2018, the main issue being that some tutors are physically less able to annotate in this way for extended periods of time. Guidelines for moderation will be standardised and made as clear as possible across all programmes in the Tutor's Handbook for 2018.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

#### ***Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)***

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

### **The Progression and Awards Process**

#### ***Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)***

*Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:*

### **Other comments**

#### ***Response to items included in the 'Other Comments' section of the report***

I would like to take this opportunity to thank \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of the Language Centre for all \_\_\_\_\_ valuable contributions in 2016 and 2017. \_\_\_\_\_ advice and recommendations have been welcomed and we wish \_\_\_\_\_ all the best for the future.