

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2016-17

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	EDUCATION
Subject(s):	TESOL
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) MEd Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA/MEd

**Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**

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

*Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box.*

Within the module specifications, there is scope for module tutors to read and give advice upon drafts of student assignments. This is unusual (and commendably resource intensive) on a programme of this type – and is a remarkable aspect of the Leeds provision compared with other UK institutions. (However, see also *Matters for Attention* below).

There is widespread use of portfolio work in for assessing modules. This enables students to embed their theoretical knowledge in suitably 'applied' type of work, such as materials development or language analysis.

There is also on many modules very well staged progression through different assessment points. In a/y 2016-7, I noted this in particular in relation to *EDUC5931M Analysing Language Learning*.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

*Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.*

The year 2016-7 was the last year in which this iteration of the MA TESOL was rolled out. I am currently engaging with a major recasting of the programme in a/y 2017-2018 and will make more detailed comments on this in my next report.

**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*

Despite the best intentions of module tutors, in the a/y 2016-2017, students raised the issue of some inconsistencies in the provision of reading drafts across different modules on the programme. However, I conveyed this orally to the programme leader, and am confident that this matter is being addressed by the course team for a/y 2017-8.

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment**

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	N/A
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	N/A
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	N/A

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	N/A
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	N/A
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	N/A
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	N/A

N/A	
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**Standards**

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y

*Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.*

The programme's Aims and ILOs are entirely comparable with similar programmes at other institutions and against national benchmarks.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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*Please explain how this is/could be achieved (examples might include: curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research)*

As in previous years, the curriculum is pf the programme influenced by current research as follows:

- In its unswerving commitment to maintain the links between theory and practice in keeping with the best pedagogic research in the field
- In its deployment of progressive assessment techniques such as portfolio learning.

Learning and teaching is influenced by current research as follows:

- In the use of a VLE to ensure that students can access and engage with their leaning materials at all times and in all places

The use of a varied range of teaching contexts in order to address the individualised needs of learners: from lectures, to seminars, to tutorials, to small group conferencing, to individual conferencing.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
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N/A	
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15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
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N/A		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p>		

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: 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.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All assignments tasks were well-conceived and the rubric well set out on assignment sheets, which were particularly well set out, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Excellent paperwork and proforma:</li> <li>o Well designed and clear proforma for marking</li> <li>o Tightly specified criteria for marking</li> <li>o Detailed grade sheets</li> <li>o Good presentation of course assignments</li> <li>o Well-designed assignment sheets</li> </ul> </li> <li>- There was a good range of assessment tasks, including expository assignments, analytical assignments, a portfolio of pedagogic tasks and assessed presentations.</li> <li>- Assessment tasks were well designed in relation to the practical context of language teaching and learning. In this there was a very good attempt to contextualise the knowledge and skills which the students were learning on the programme.</li> <li>- On the whole there was very thoroughgoing feedback on assignments, although it was a little uneven in places. It would be good to ensure consistency in quantity of feedback across all modules on the programme (although this was the case in most modules on the programme). The markers of the critical study, however, are to be commended on the consistency of their feedback, both in terms of quality and quantity.</li> </ul> <p>The overall high level of student performance reflected a good quality of teaching and learning across all modules.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on 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:</i></p> <p>The students demonstrated the full range of academic standards, with the top performing students were amongst the best I have seen in 20 years in the UK HE sector. In this respect the student performance was broadly comparable with other courses in the field. The strengths of the students as a cohort included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ability to relate theory to academic practice</li> <li>- ability to understand assessment task and execute it</li> <li>- ability to analyse the data set</li> <li>- good academic skills</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>If there was one weakness, it was probably in critical thinking, which unfortunately, is a perennial challenge given the diversity of students on the programme.</p>		

## The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:*

I would like to reiterate, and draw attention to my view, that once again this year the administrative arrangements for convening the PGT Exam Board at Leeds School of Education were the indisputably the best I have come across in UK HE, and indeed in HE internationally. It displays the highest levels of excellence and is a sure-fire guarantee of the maintenance of standards across PGT programmes in the School.

## Other comments

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

I attended each of the two programme boards in a/y 2016-7. Each visit I met a group of elected representatives from the two programmes for which I have oversight. While there are one or two minutiae of operational issues which arise, which I feed back immediately to the programme leaders, the students overwhelmingly endorse both programmes and the experience which they have on them (apart from the single point which I have raised requiring attention above). In particular, students are highly appreciative of the commitment and professionalism of the program tutors they encounter on their modules.

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Faculty / School of:

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

Head of MA TESOL Studies

Education

Hillary Place

\*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**

We are delighted at the recognition given to:

- the assignment support we provide by means of comments on drafts;
- the variety in our modes of assessment, including portfolio work;
- the staged progression through different assessment points in some of our modules.
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We feel that these are important dimensions of our strategy to support a diverse, international student cohort on a very intensive learning experience.

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

N/A

We look forward to the External Examiner's thoughts on our newly structured programme.

**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:

Immediately following the External Examiner's last visit, TESOL colleagues were made aware of the issue relating to 'inconsistencies in the provision of reading drafts across different modules on the programme'. We are quietly confident that this issue will not arise again this year. All students are offered the opportunity to submit a draft and to receive feedback on this. It is up to the student whether s/he takes advantage of this opportunity.

**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:

N/A

**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:

We are very pleased that the External Examiner responds positively to the 'Standards' related questions. It is heartening that he acknowledges our research informed and research driven teaching, our 'progressive assessment techniques' and our exploitation of the VLE.

We are committed to further enhancing our work in this area.

## 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:*

We are pleased that the External Examiner is very happy with almost all dimensions of our assessment procedures and related documentation. We are aware that, although our feedback is generally very good, this is not universally the case. Our Head of TPG, in particular, has done excellent work to ensure greater consistency.

Especially pleasing is the External Examiner's comment: 'The students demonstrated the full range of academic standards, with the top performing students amongst the best I have seen in 20 years in the UK HE sector'.

We will certainly address the identification of 'critical thinking' as a deficiency, regardless of the challenge this poses in relation to our diverse student population.

## 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:*

We are aware of the excellence of our colleagues in the Student Education Office and are delighted that the External Examiner too acknowledges the wonderful support they provide to students, tutors, External Examiners and others.

The following comment is richly deserved: '...the administrative arrangements for convening the PGT Exam Board at Leeds School of Education were indisputably the best I have come across in UK HE and indeed in HE internationally. It displays the highest level of excellence and is a sure-fire guarantee of the maintenance of standards across PGT programmes in the School.'

## Other comments

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

We are grateful to our External Examiner for the positive feedback on the commitment and professionalism of programme tutors.

We are deeply grateful to \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ detailed insights and tireless commitment to supporting us in our efforts to improve our provision.