

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

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 15/10/2018

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

The Language Centre, School of Languages, LCS.

*Subject(s):*

*EAP Pre-sessional*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

Language for Engineering (ELU3013)  
Language for Science ( ELU3013)

*Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):*

NA.

**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.*

1. The 'Assessed Discussion' on the *Language for Engineering* module is a particularly good example of assessing students' interactive oral skills. There can be a tendency in this type of assessment for some students to memorise contributions, and this can mean that this type of assessment rarely meets the stated ILOs. However, in this case the instruction sheet for students is particularly clear, and the topic particularly well chosen to be of interest to this cohort of students. It was clear from the recording that the majority of the students were actively engaged in the task. Reading-to-write assessment is common in the field; this is an interesting example of a reading- and listening-to-speak activity. In this way, this assessment addresses the UKVI requirement that pre-sessional students be assessed on all language skills, and is also a good example of assessment for learning.

2. The 'Writing a Lab Report' assessment in the *Language for Science* module is an interesting example of how a content-based STEM pre-sessional works. Collaborations between academic content staff and English for academic purposes staff are becoming increasingly common in the field, and this would be one area that would be worth disseminating through conferences, etc. It will be interesting to see how these collaborations develop.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

This is the first year of my appointment.

**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*

There are no matters for urgent attention.

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

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

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

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

*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

**Standards**

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

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

One of the challenges for EAP Pre-sessionals globally is how to address the need for language enhancement within a discipline-specific context when students are progressing onto a wide variety of programmes requiring mastery of varying disciplinary and inter-disciplinary vocabulary and genres. The programme structure of both the *English for Engineering* and the *English for Science* modules meets these challenges effectively by combining a range of theme-based lessons based on topics relevant to students from all engineering/ science disciplines, and by incorporating 'subject-specific' lessons where students can begin to develop their use of more subject-specific vocabulary, and meet more tailored genre requirements. The material is at all times based on engineering or science related academic content.

While the *Language for Science* module, in particular, faces on-going challenges in how best to immerse students in a content-rich environment when the numbers of students going on to some programmes can be quite small, I was pleased to see that the module leader had made strides in working with the appropriate university departments to provide authentic content, such as the Lab task. Forging these links means that assignments and assessment tasks are authentic while still appropriately scaffolded. I wish the new module leader luck in continuing to strengthen those relationships, and suggest that they might like to disseminate this practice-how these relationships were made and nurtured- at the appropriate conferences.

One of the strengths of both these programmes is the way that the lesson aims and assignments are explicitly tied to the ILOs of the programme. It is made clear to both teachers and students how the individual tasks can be transferred to postgraduate study at a UK university. Both the aims and the ILOs meet sector-wide expectations, and the course structure and content of both courses is of an appropriate language and skills level for this pre-sessionals cohort going onto postgraduate study at a university of this calibre. The assignments on both courses are very clearly staged and scaffolded, and this staging was very well displayed in the *Language for Science* handbook in particular.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?  Both courses effectively employ curricular content and learning and teaching methods well-established in the field. The tension between language and content is effectively addressed in the	Y / N
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	chosen assignments and assessments. The content is task-based, and allows students to develop and reflect on the skills required when studying STEM at a UK university, such as (relational) autonomy, collaboration and critical thinking.	
<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>As stated above, curriculum design is well informed by scholarship, with assignment tasks informed by an understanding of not only what students will be doing in their field at PGT and PGR level, but also the values of STEM at Leeds. It might also be a useful exercise to track, in particular, the PGR students throughout the academic year to gain a fuller understanding of how PGR study might have different requirements to PGT study, and how these might be incorporated into an individualised curriculum in future iterations of the course(s).</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p> <p><b>NA</b></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y / N
<p><i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i></p>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y / N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p> <p>The programme is accredited by the field's regulating body BAS, and must conform to UKVI requirements. The courses are comparable in terms of content, aims and ILOs to other accredited programmes I have experienced in other universities of a similar calibre.</p>		

## Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<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> <p>All assessments have very clear ILOs appropriate to students who are learning the language, and developing an understanding of the genres and discourse of their field. Assessments are designed as learning opportunities allowing students to engage in collaborative work, and there are ample opportunities for skill and knowledge transfer, such as with the lab work task on the <i>Language for Science</i> module. I am satisfied that all assessments methods match the ILOs, and have content and face validity for a course of this kind. There are an appropriate number of assessments for the length of the course, and the student performance on the assessments this year indicates that both the teaching on the course and the design of the assessments is suitable.</p> <p>The mean for the writing assessments on both courses ( 57% and 58%?) was within the 'expected level' as indicated on the writing assessment criteria. I believe my predecessor had identified a lack of differentiation of students at the higher reaches of the scale. This year, there was evidence of markers using the whole scale appropriately. On the whole, papers in the samples I looked at achieving a mark in the 60s did evidence better accuracy, coherence and understanding of how to evidence claims than those marked in the 50s range. The marks of all scripts sampled were correctly justified by the highlighted criteria.</p> <p>While the weighting of the <i>English for Engineering</i> course is slightly unusual for pre-sessional programmes in that it is weighted more towards speaking rather than writing ( 2 out of 3 assessments), this would seem to be in-line with disciplinary requirements that engineering students be able to orally communicate complex ideas effectively, and I would recommend that this weighting be kept unless the Faculty of Engineering think differently.</p> <p>Moderation procedures saw 15% of the cohort marked as required by Leeds regulations, and I was able to witness check- marking being carried out by the course leads. It would be useful to see the moderation sheet next year, so</p>		

that I can have a better understanding of the steps in the moderation process. Many of the essays I saw only had the name of the first marker visible.

This summer has been a particularly challenging one for many universities around the UK as the growth in international students looking to do an academic skills pre-sessional has had an effect on the calibre and experience of teachers available to teach, and on the time that it has physically taken to mark and give written feedback to students. There was, however, no evidence in the feedback that I sampled that the feedback process had in anyway been compromised on either of these courses.

The major change, as I understand it, from previous iterations of these courses has been that the majority of the students had already been granted access to their postgraduate programmes. This makes these pre-sessional courses different to others around the UK, where such courses serve a dual role in initiating students into the practices of their learning communities, but also play a gate-keeping role in ensuring that the language level of the students is sufficient for them to cope with the demands of their programmes. This shift in emphasis suggests that thought now needs to be given to the role of summative assessment on these courses. There may be a case for rethinking both the timing of assessments, and the nature and amount of feedback given.

In terms of timing, the one student who required a re-sit this year had to do the re-sit on the Monday after the course had finished when their teachers' contracts may well have ended, and the course leaders were on leave. This meant there was no one who knew the students or the course available to mark the re-sit. There was also one case of possible academic misconduct. This was handled well by the module leaders on the day of the Board, and I have no doubt the case was sensitively handled and adhered to regulations, but I did feel that if assessments had been conducted earlier, there could have been a time for a less ad-hoc procedure; perhaps the student could have been asked to produce a piece of work under supervised conditions to see if they could really produce work of the standard required? If students have already gained entry to their postgraduate courses, I am unsure whether a student could be prevented from progressing based on academic misconduct? Could this be made clearer in the assessment information?

#### Formative feedback

Feedback given on the speaking tasks was generally strong and apposite, and there were instances of excellent feedback particularly in the 'Assessed Discussion' on the *English for Engineering* module. There were also, however, quite a few very general summative comments on writing grade sheets, such as 'proofread,' and comments, which required knowledge of meta- language, such as 'use a zero-article'. I wonder whether assessors could be asked to link explicitly to appropriate web, and other, resources in the feedback to ensure that students are able to engage with the formative feedback to the fullest extent possible?

While 'coherence' is clearly referred to in the writing assessment descriptors, most teacher feedback in the samples I saw referred to cohesion, but not coherence. As, arguably, coherence can be one of the major contributors to the clarity of student writing, perhaps a training/ induction session for summer teachers on the differences between coherence and cohesion would be useful?

Some markers had highlighted scripts, but not left a summative comment. Occasionally, the summative feedback comment did not reflect the highlighted criteria or the mark given, but these were isolated incidents.

The mark sheet used on both courses is one of the most detailed I have ever seen. This has obviously helped ensure consistency across courses and markers. I do wonder, however, now that the majority of students do not need the summative mark to enter their programmes whether such detailed criteria are quite as necessary, and might rather detract from the formative feedback comments given?

I also wonder if it might be feasible to invite content staff to offer joint feedback tutorials for a task such as the lab task on the *English for Science* course to tie content, language and skills together, and in so doing help these courses move from culminating in a summative assessment to a formative assessment more in line with the content-based ethos of the Leeds Pre-sessional?

18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y / N
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y / N

*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:*

The samples of students' oral and written work demonstrated that the students were working at a language level comparable to STEM students on programmes at universities of a comparable level to Leeds. I am satisfied that those students who achieved the standard expected (55-59%) should be as capable of handling the tasks required at postgraduate level as those students who directly enter their courses with the required IELTS score of 6.5.

Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:

### 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 / N
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y / N
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y / N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y / N
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y / N
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?  There were technical issues with accessing the Minerva platform. I'd like to thank both programme leads for taking the time to make samples available by email.	Y / N
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?  One of the <i>Language for Engineering</i> scripts had had annotations done in pencil. This actually changed the nature of the comments made. This marker focused more on surface errors in the text than those who commented using track changes where the technology shaped the feedback and so more discourse-level comment was evident. The sample was too small to judge whether this actually made a difference to the students' experience of feedback, but it might perhaps be worth examining which of these methods was more worthwhile.	Y / N
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y / N/ NA
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y / N NA
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?  Thank you. Arrangements were clear and timely.	Y / N
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y / N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N

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

**Other comments**

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

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)***Title and Name of Examiner:*

Subject(s):

Language for Engineering

Programme(s) / Module(s):

ELU3013

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

*Title and Name of Responder:*

Position\*:

Senior Teaching Fellow

Faculty / School of:

AHC/ Language Cultures and Society

Address for communication:

Language Centre, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Email:

Telephone:

*\*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 [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:gat@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**

The positive comments are appreciated. The assessed discussion was introduced following discussions with the Engineering schools, who want incoming students to be able to interact and communicate with academic staff, and also with peers in group work, lab work and projects. It was felt that a more interactive, discursive element in the assessment would be a useful way to focus on this.

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

N/A

**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:*

N/A

**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:*

Materials on the Engineering pre-sessional have been provided by the academic departments. However, some are more involved than others and although progress was made this year in arranging new lab activities and through initiating links with Transport Studies, more still needs to be done 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:*

Just to clarify here, the assessment weightings are equal. Although there are 2 speaking assessments and 1 writing assignment, the weighting balance is 50-50. (the 2 speaking assessments are weighted at 25% each). The rationale is that Engineering have emphasised the importance of students' oral communication skills.

The resit/academic malpractice case on Engineering was a new experience and from a PhD student who needed to pass the course to progress. The procedure was somewhat rushed but the module leader needed to consult with staff responsible for academic integrity & progression to clarify how to deal with such a case. Additionally, there was time pressure not so much because of assessment timings but because the student submitted 4 days late.. The outcome was that the student subsequently submitted the resit late but, following discussions with receiving department was allowed to progress.

This has provided a learning opportunity and we will be much better prepared to deal with similar situations in the future.

Point taking about making pass for progression issues clearer in advance but it was only relevant to 2 students. A new Module for PGR students has now been approved for 2019 so that the majority of students who need to pass in order to progress will be in one group. SES should also inform programme leaders of any students who fall outside this category, but who still need to progress.

More emphasis can be given in the course induction next year on grading, moderation and feedback to improve standardisation. However, time in the induction week needs to be made available in order for this to be done.

## 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:*

N/A

## Other comments

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

N/A



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

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

English for Academic Purposes

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Language for Science ( ELU3015)

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

N/A

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Programme Leader

Faculty / School of:

Language Centre

Address for communication:

Language Centre Reception  
15 Blenheim Terrace  
Leeds LS2 9JT

Email:

Telephone:

\*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**

The report demonstrates that the lab report task was a successful aspect of the content-based programme and is something we should build on in future.

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

N/A

**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:

N/A

**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:

The report shows that the external examiner was provided with the necessary documentation prior to arriving to carry out work.

**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:

The challenge of how to make the content relevant to all students, accepting that some disciplines have very few students enrolled, is particularly challenging for the Language for Science Programme. In order

to ensure that this challenge is met, ongoing discourse with departments across the University will be vital. Through greater communication with departments, hopefully we can establish a greater depth of subject-specific texts and resources, which will allow us to develop the content-specific nature of the course. However, we must also ensure that, as we do this, the subject content used throughout the science pre-sessional programme is accessible to all, regardless of their disciplinary background, in order that any student may be able to benefit from the input. That way, if students have to be educated in a class where their discipline is not the principal focus, they will still be able to benefit from the programme content.

## 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:*

It is pleasing that the external examiner described the programme as meeting the learning outcomes as set out. However, certain issues raised will need to be addressed in future. Particularly there was an issue identified regarding academic misconduct and whether, given the automatic progression most students face, it would be possible to prevent a student progressing due to academic misconduct and what effects this would have on them. Clearly, we need to make this clearer in the assessment rubric in future.

In terms of feedback the external examiner noted some lack of detail and use of meta-language on some scripts; however, it was noted that these were 'isolated incidents'. Nevertheless, additional input for teachers on feedback expectations in induction week should be considered. This is particularly important in terms of the quality of formative feedback, which is paramount as this course offers, for the vast majority of students, automatic progression to postgraduate study.

## 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:*

Clearly next year we should make specific time to discuss the assessment itself with the external examiner and receive their comments on this. Moreover, we will ensure a greater sample of work is available for the external examiner; as next year marking will be done electronically through Turnitin, it should be easier for the external examiner to access all the scripts they would like.

## Other comments

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