

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 28/06/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Languages, Cultures and Societies

Subject(s):

Spanish- LfA

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Spanish Languages for All: Beginners, Elementary, Lower Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced

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

n./a.

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.

The programme keeps offering a strong linguistic background for those students interested in learning a language and the practical side of the modules is to be really praised. Even some students who do not have a linguistic background show strong performances and this is thanks to the robust programme put in place. It is also praiseworthy to mention the healthy number of students doing the upper levels and I am sure this is a reflection of the great job the teaching team does.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

On an administrative level, I am glad that for some modules, the module convenor made a selection of the assignments to be moderated, rather than being left with a folder through which I need to navigate in order to select the assignments myself. Unfortunately, this selection only applies to some modules.

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

Although it is not urgent at all, I think it would be interesting here to highlight that there are (understandably) discrepancies in the marks between the first and the second markers in some modules. I raised this in the Exam Board meeting. I would strongly recommend to introduce the figure of a Spanish native speaker moderator whose task would be to blind-mark the assessments where the first and second marker disagree. This would apply to two marks in different bands or two marks within the same band with one of them in the lower end and with the other in the upper end (for example, 64 and 69). Thus, the third moderator should blind-mark the assessment with the hope that this would help to gauge the final mark of the student.

Another matter that I would like to bring up here is the wording for the instructions of some core tasks. In some exercises (usually, the listening core tasks of the lower levels) the student is told to fill in the gap

with no more than three words. On a couple of occasions, the students have been given full marks with answers using four or more words. Whilst I don't think that this is a mistake as such, and I also believe that the student(s) should not be penalised for this, it is my opinion that it would be better to reword the instructions, as sometimes the students may find it difficult to fit the precise information in with those three words.

I strongly recommend the inclusion of a written task for module FLTU1825, which is heavily assessed by oral component. Although I understand that oral assessment is the key for communication, I think the students should also be able to show their written skills. Maybe a 75% of the module mark for the oral component and a 25% of the module mark for the written part would do justice to the assessment of the module, by keeping the preponderance of the oral component.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y / N
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 a 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

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.

As stated above, the programme offers a robust scaffolding for, mainly, non-language students to practice and enhance their linguistic skills through a series of interesting, challenging and engaging exercises that put into practice their knowledge.

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)

<p>This happens to some extent, as they are not research modules <i>per se</i>. Nonetheless research is shown in some of the outputs of the students when they have to look for information for their core tasks, mainly in the upper level modules. This shows independence and research skills.</p>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i></p>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	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)?	N
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></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> <p>It does, but I would like markers to make use of more marking criteria language in their feedback. Feedback is, all in all, good, but the cross-reference to the language used in the marking criteria would help students with the signposting on where to improve.</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>This is mainly evident in the upper levels where students show good performances as per research skills and applied knowledge.</p> <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>As stated above, more reference to the marking criteria and I would like to see more dialogue between the first and the second markers.</p> <p>As stated above, feedback is usually good, but, at times, it can be very limited and vague and the student may find it unhelpful. For instance, in one of the core tasks feedback for a student, the first marker wrote: "part of the listening and speaking questions are hard to read." Whilst the context clearly meant difficult to follow their reasoning rather than having issues understanding the students' writing, yet a couple of sentences pointing at where difficulties/mistakes happen could help the student to realise where they need to improve.</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:

Since my first report I have been asking for a selection of assignments with which I can gauge the level of the cohort. This year this has been partially done, mainly in the low level modules. Nonetheless, with the rest of the modules, I have been left, again, to navigate and select myself the assignments as per the information given by the module convenors. I don't think this is my task, as it is very time consuming and not very productive or even fair for the general moderation of the quality of assessment of the overall programme. So, for next year I would like to have a selection of:

- All fails
- Benchmarks (marks ending in -4, -5, -6).
- Borderlines (marks ending in -9)
- All firsts (or a selection of them if there are too many).

Having these selected plus the spreadsheet of marks for the cohort would incredibly help me in my task to judge the performance of the students and the fairness of marking.

Other comments

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

I would be grateful if, in the selection written core tasks could also be selected. Listening core tasks were uploaded on VLE. Whilst this was helpful, nonetheless I would also like to have written core tasks selected in order to have a general grasp of the holistic assessment process.

I would discourage the use of google translate for some core tasks where the students have to provide a written assignment. Whilst google translate may work well at word level with big languages, it is MT, so it does not work well at a syntactical level. Probably I would introduce small/ short exercises in the classroom where students can make use of dictionaries, rather than google translate. This could help students to familiarise themselves with the use of dictionaries. Alternatively, the teaching team could direct them to other more reliable webpages for dictionaries (Oxford and Macmillan are good and some of them provide reliable translations into different languages).

I am still unconvinced by the different levels of difficulty that some students make use for their core tasks in FLTU1808. I flagged this up last year and I know this has been partially addressed, but I think that tighter, more specific information should be given to the students about the minimum grammatical requirements to be used.

VLE was really helpful with the oral assessments, and I hope the module convenors can use this platform for this end. I would prefer to assess the written tasks *ad-hoc*, as it were, and I presume this would also make a most efficient time of the language tutors' time.

My thanks, lastly, to the teaching team and the LfA coordinator and the administrative staff for their excellent work!

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Spanish - LfA

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Spanish Languages for All: Beginners, Elementary, Lower Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Director of Languages for All

Faculty / School of:

AHC/LCS

Address for communication:

Michael Sadler Building,
University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane
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. 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 very pleased that the External Examiner found our modules to be linguistically rich and offer a strong linguistic background for our students. We are also pleased that the External Examiner is happy with students' performance, notably those students who have no linguistic background.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

I is pleasing to learn that the External Examiner is happy with the selection of samples to be moderated and we will ensure this applies to all modules.

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:

We will consider some of the External Examiner's recommendations and, where possible, we will address them fully. The case of discrepancy in marks is often looked at by another colleague from the School, and their arbitration is discussed and accepted by the examiners.
The rubrics for filling in the gap will be reworded to ensure consistency of marking across cohorts and avoid any ambiguity.
The inclusion of a written task for module FLTU1825 will be considered by the team.

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:

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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 to read the External Examiner's comments that our modules ' offer a robust scaffolding for, mainly, non-language students to practice and enhance their linguistic skills through a series of interesting, challenging and engaging exercises that put into practice their knowledge'.

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:

Where appropriate, we will address some of the External's comments.

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

Written tasks will be made available for the External Examiner, as requested.

The External Examiner's comments on the use of google translate will be taken on board and students will be encouraged to replace google translate for online dictionaries.

With regard to the External's comment on providing specific information about the minimum grammatical requirements, we aim to provide the following: More correlation between core task feedback and grammar revision before the core tasks and before the Portfolio preparation. Portfolio agreements: Don't include dialogues unless is minimum part of the writing task, don't include any topic of the first part of the module; explain the grammar not seen in class by giving one or two examples / sentences related to the writing task topic. And an explanation when it is used (in English if it is in Spanish) and its grammar. Provide a list of new words used in the writing task.