

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18 QAT Received 13/10/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Arts, The Language Centre

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

ELU 3006 Language for Human Resource Management

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

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 effectiveness of a subject-specific pre-sessional programme depends in great part on the strength of collaboration between the language and subject departments. In my review of this programme, this aspect appears particularly strong in comparison with similar programmes in other university contexts in my experience.

That the programme is not based on a Pass/Fail system so all completing students will progress provides an example of good practice in terms of student support. During the board last year it was refreshing to witness detailed discussion of students who were flagged up as needing support in particular areas. The resultant positive effect this openness towards support must have on student experience and completion, should be commended. It should be noted that I was not privy to such discussions this year due to the fact that the timing of the board was before all final marks were in.

I was impressed by some elements in ELU 3006 – the guide which was produced for tutors to support them in the marking of assignments is an example of good practice in pre-sessionals. One of the challenging elements of pre-sessionals is that temporary staff are required to be standardized in a short period of time. This guide would be a significant help in ensuring support for such relatively new tutors who need to provide standardized feedback on a subject-specific task.

In terms of the reflective assessment task, good practice is evident in there being an opportunity for students to produce a draft version of this assessment and equally good practice, receive Peer Feedback on it.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

In response to external examiner feedback in 2017, the marking criteria for the reflective assignment were more appropriate and specific to such writing tasks. I would like to thank the strand leader for working closely with me on this.

Again in response to feedback, I was given access to draft assignments which gave a very helpful sense of how much progress was made between first draft and final submission. Some of the progress was impressive and demonstrates the significant input of tutors and lecturers in supporting students to improve.

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
N/A

For Examiners in the first year of appointment N/A

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 N/A

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 / 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.

The aims and ILOs are highly appropriate. They have been carefully designed to allow for clarification and investigation of content along with language and academic skills development. ILOs are appropriate, supportive and respectful of learners being challenging enough to prepare students adequately for their postgraduate studies. Perhaps the ILOs could be expressed in a way which highlights the academic literacy and skills focus more. Particularly because that academic literacy and skills focus is excellent. Good links are made between the ILOs and course content.

The design is creative and provides students with a supportive bridge into their subject studies. The subject-specific element is appropriately very strong being central and providing the core around which the language development takes place. This is worthy of comment since some pre-sessionals programmes in the sector can feel primarily like language development programmes with some subject-specific elements tagged on.

The structure followed in ELU3006 results in fewer face-to-face whole class contact hours than on some comparable pre-sessionals across the sector. However, the integration of significant amounts of independent study time is appropriate for the postgraduate context students will be entering and well-managed here.

As a general comment the approach taken here feels very much like the students are being provided with a model of how best to approach the rest of their studies – which will prove of great benefit to the learner.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N
<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>The design of ELU3006 is clearly informed by research into the most effective way to deal with EAP skills improvement along with subject requirements. It is clear the programme is also influenced by research around learning strategies and student engagement generally. Good use is made of Peer teaching which would also be informed by educational research.</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>N/A</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>N/A</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>Summative assessment methods for this EL3006 are appropriate and in keeping with pre-sessionals delivered across the sector: an Essay and Oral Presentation but with the rather innovative addition of a Reflective Task. These are clearly linked to the ILOs giving students adequate opportunity to demonstrate learning. Assessment criteria are available to students as well as staff.</p> <p>The assessments have been designed to allow students to use the skills under focus in class sessions. The realistic nature of these assessments is a positive feature with learners being required to listen and read-to-write. Feedback on drafts which inform final submissions, a key aspect of many pre-sessionals, is an important element here too. Time pressures required the Exam Preparation element to be dropped this year which was felt by those leading ELU3006 to be necessary to accommodate extremely large numbers of students. However, there was some sense from those who had to take that decision that it was an element they would rather have retained based on the feedback from previous cohorts.</p> <p>The marking of the final assessments was completed in the week beyond the end of the pre-sessional. Ideally, students would have had time to speak to those who marked their final work to seek clarification and guidance but my assumption is this would not have been possible this year.</p>		
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
<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>Students performed well in their final submissions particularly bearing in mind the length of the course (which in terms of classroom contact was shorter than last year). There was evidence of clarity of feedback from which students could make significant learning gains. The marking of assignments seemed appropriate in the majority of cases and the marking criteria were supportive and clear for those assessing the Essay and Oral Presentation assignments. Standardization procedures were clearly followed.</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 mentioned above, I was given access to draft assignments as a result to requesting this last year. They were helpful but highlighted the significant work that is undertaken in that space between the first draft and final submission. I would like to recommend that the leaders of ELU 3006 find a way to capture that input both to evidence to assessors just how much good quality effort goes into this process and also to allow students to identify it. I feel this might be well-managed with the addition of a post-tutorial form on which students record what they were told by the tutor and outline what they intend to do as a result.</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 / 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?	Y / N
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y / N
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y / N
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y / N
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p>		

In relation to the following questions:

28. Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?

33. Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?

34. Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?

I was able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting but due to the exceptionally high numbers of students, the timing of the board ended up being in advance of all final assessment marking. I completely understand the reasons for completing marking beyond the end of the pre-sessional but the result was that the progress board was unusual in that the final outcomes for students were at that time unknown.

Other comments

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

To accommodate the extraordinary numbers of students on ELU3006, the strand leader was required to find creative solutions to ensure quality was maintained. It was clear to me that excellent decisions had been taken at this level but undoubtedly a significant extra burden on those staff leading and teaching on ELU 3006 resulted. Following discussions with the strand leader it felt to me that they would benefit from having a co-leader with whom to make the type of significant and speedy changes required this year.

On a university level, I would like to say that the Minerva interface seems like a very supportive, learner-centred tool to me. An example of this on a personal level being that the very fact so much information and so many links appear enticingly on the screen encouraged me to explore. I think it must have a similar effect on students.

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

Subject(s):

English language pre-sessional

Programme(s) / Module(s):

ELU 3006: Language for Human Resources Management

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

N/A

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Programme Leader

Faculty / School of:

AHC/ Language Cultures and Society; 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. 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

Communications with LUBS are strong due to the accommodation of the academic Lead- this is in part due to the length I have worked on the course as strand leader (3 years) and the working relationship we have. From suggestion, there is the possibility of a Chinese colleague from Work and Employment Relations Department (WERD), contributing some student support to the cohort for 2019. This may provide support with reading as this was identified by students as a difficult area. Exploring the formative -rather than summative nature of the CBPS will continue in 2019.

There will be guides for marking available for tutors for all of the tasks as well as access to past work and comments.

In response to requests in the external report last year, it is clear that there is significant benefit in supplying drafts for external examiners, this will continue for all programmes now. Drafts and final essays will be analysed for materials development.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

Reflection marking criteria was used in 2018; this seemed to fit better with the task. Thank you for the examiner's support in their development. Standardisation and seeing past papers also helped tutors to mark confidently. Reflection tasks were all marked 'in course'; it seems due to the specific nature of the task it would be best for this to continue.

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:

Following the external examiner's suggestion to highlight the academic literacy and skills focus of the Independent Learning Outcomes (ILOS), for 2019 they will be reframed in order to express this more clearly.

Good subject specific focus- to continue, with consideration of topics that are common amongst the three destination courses: MA HRM, MSc Organisational Psychology and MSc Management Consulting for 2019.

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:

Draft feedback was the only opportunity for individual feedback on writing for this year due to increased class sizes, although there was a formative summary paragraph. In 2019 the summary paragraph may change to an essay section and the extensive draft feedback will continue. A working group is discussing the use of peer and self-evaluation if formative feedback.

There was an exam task, this took place in week 5, the working group mentioned above will consider management of marking workload so the exam may continue in 2019. Feedback from students and teachers was positive for the task.

It seems challenging to provide clarification and guidance for students after the 6-week course is completed, many tutors have finished their contracts and year-round staff take leave, in response to this issue for 2019 onwards, staff teaching on the Business courses will be given contracts which extend for a week after the end of the CBPS, this will allow for marking to take place in week 7.

As recommended in this report, there will be the addition of 'post-tutorial form' to capture the learning process by focussing students on what feedback advice will they use to develop their essay, this should provide evidence of the self evaluation process.

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

Thank you to the external examiner for the advice on having a co-lead for 2019. Following meetings in which plans for student numbers and marking have been discussed, I feel confident that I can lead this CBPS in 2019 without the need for a co-lead, but an 'advisor' has been requested.

Use of Minerva to continue, with the addition of more embedded features such as videos, and cloud-based document sharing and collaborative writing with use of One Drive. Leader to investigate. Marking and feedback will continue to be done on Turnitin.