

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:

Faculty of Arts, The Language Centre

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

ELU 3007 Language for Business Management and Enterprise

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 3007 namely: the fact that critical thinking is embedded throughout the syllabus and is particularly apparent in the use of clearly focussed seminar questions and reading group discussions. Also, the Independent Learning sections are well-structured and presented as an integral part of the syllabus. I would also like to commend the moderators for the detailed nature of a number of the moderation sheets I saw. These would be of enormous value to the professional development of less-experienced tutors.

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 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.

Assessments and weightings were altered from the rather unbalanced 80% for the essay and 20% for Oral Presentations.

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

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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. 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-sessional programmes in the sector can feel primarily like language development programmes with some subject-specific elements tagged on.

The structure followed in ELU3007 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
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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)

The design of ELU3007 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 Independent Study which would also be informed by educational research

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / N
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y / N
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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y / N
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
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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.

Summative assessment methods for this EL3007 are appropriate and in keeping with pre-sessionals delivered by other institutions: an Essay and Oral Presentation. These are clearly linked to the ILOs giving students adequate opportunity to demonstrate learning. Assessment criteria are available to students as well as staff.

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 ELU3007 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.

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.

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

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).

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

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 3007 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 strongly encourage 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.

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. Moderation sheets were detailed and suggested significant efforts went into this aspect of assessment.

As mentioned above, I would also like to commend the moderators for the detailed nature of a number of the moderation sheets I saw. These would be of enormous value to the professional development of less-experienced tutors and of course standardises marking across the programme.

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

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

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 ELU3007, the strand leaders were 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 3007 resulted. It would clearly be of benefit to staff and students if changes in student numbers were communicated as early as possible so that adequate time is available to make the changes which are respectful of staff well-being and student experience. ELU3007 is an exception pre-sessional run by conscientious, experienced members of the ELU. It seems important to me that care should be taken that the benefits of growth in student numbers for the university should not be at the expense of staff well-being. Maintaining an open and frequent dialogue between recruitment colleagues and the ELU could potentially help to avoid that scenario.

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 and for that reason should be commended.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report**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 3007 Language for Business Management and Enterprise

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Language for BME (co-leaders)

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 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

The comments regarding innovation and good practice on the programme are extremely pleasing. It is heart-warming to receive such praise. Any examples identified by the External Examiner as good practice (collaboration; independent learning; critical thinking) will be shared with other strands.

In response to the comments regarding the strength of collaboration with the academic programme, the co-leads are pleased that this comes across. We are looking forward to working with a new Academic Lead this year who will bring fresh insights into the needs of students on their PG programmes.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

In response to the comment regarding tutor input on draft assignments – thank you - this will be passed on.

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? These questions have not been completed above.

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:

Pleasing comments again.

As the External Examiner comments, this is very much intended to be a preessional strand with a strong subject-specific nature, not simply a language programme.

With regard to reduced class contact time, this became necessary due to a new structure. Finding an appropriate balance between the prior expectations of the students regarding face to face sessions and the future demands of their PG programmes is a fine-line so it is encouraging to hear that this was 'well-managed'.

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 encouraging to know that the summative assessment, standardization, moderation and clarity of feedback is perceived to be appropriate overall.

The significant change of the removal of the formative exam component was due to logistics: large student numbers and teacher marking time. In hindsight, this was a successful move and gave teachers/students more valuable time to focus on the two summative elements of assessment: the essay and presentation. These present sufficient challenge for the students. Though beneficial, in previous years, it has been difficult to weave the exam component into the smooth flow of the programme, given the limited number of weeks of study and it is unlikely that the exam will return unless the new Academic Lead from LUBS requires this.

Similarly, losing the final consultation was a consequence of student/tutor ratios as marking continued into the week post-teaching. Given that this has hitherto been an important part of the learning/transition process, it is indeed, not ideal that this did not happen this year and in light of current projections, will be difficult to re-incorporate in future. However, we are looking into ways in which students may gain optimal benefit from final feedback. Struggling students are also strongly encouraged to take up consultations with insessional or Language Zone specialists while on their Masters.

The recommendation of a post-tutorial form (to be completed by students) to evidence learning between first draft and final submission is helpful and will be considered in 2019. The use of moderation sheets in the professional development is something that we already include during the induction week for our less-experienced teachers.

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:

The timing of the Progression Board meeting will be changed for next year.

Other comments

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

The impact on staff well-being mentioned by the External Examiner is a concerning observation and important for the sustainability of such programmes. For next year, increased dialogue between LUBS, the summer DSE team and strand leaders is already taking place plus better planning with regard to expected student/tutor ratios and recruitment is happening. This will assist the co-leads with anticipating changes further in advance. In addition to this, longer-term strategies for identifying potential new strands, thus taking some of the student load to even more tailored programmes e.g. Language for Design / Fashion ,which is a new programme for 2010.

It is pleasing that Minerva is clear and usable from the viewpoint of an independent observer and worth mentioning that all programmes will be marking assessments on Turnitin in 2019.