

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 01/10/2018

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Language Centre

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

International Foundation Year and ELU Modules

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.

Clear assignment briefs, varied assessments aimed at the relevant learning outcomes, very good feedback to students, fair and consistent marking.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

Successful attempts have been made to reduce the assessment *burden* both for students and staff.

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

None

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 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

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)?	n/a
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y
<p><i>Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>As I have said in previous reports, these modules provide students with a very good opportunity to improve their study skills and language skills in (often) specific subject contexts. The content, delivery and assessment are all appropriate and high levels of student performance indicate equally high levels of commitment/engagement from the students and effective teaching from the staff involved.</p>		
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 courses seem to me to be based on current good practice in the teaching of academic skills, English language and study 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>The assessment methods are appropriately varied and clearly focused on the relevant learning outcomes.</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>As I say above, the standard of student performance was pleasingly high in most cases. Performance across the board is at least equal to that on comparable courses in the HE sector in the UK. See my more detailed comments later in this report.</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>See above and below.</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?	n/a
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	n/a
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	n/a
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
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p> <p>I felt that the communication between the Language Centre and me, as their External Examiner, was of a very high standard.</p>		

Other comments

Academic Study Skills, ELU0025, IFY Programme:

The five assessments for this module test an appropriate range of skills and are firmly aligned with the relevant learning outcomes.

Essay: Good candidates produced work which was high in relevance, focus, cohesion and structure and exploited appropriately advanced lexis and grammar. Weaker candidates struggled in all of the elements mentioned in my previous sentence and did not succeed in producing a reader-friendly document.

Abstract: Successful candidates demonstrated real fluency and mastery of the accepted academic writing style in that they employed passive constructions, hedging devices and so on. I was very impressed (as I was last year) with the high quality (word-processed) written feedback provided to students. This is a good example of good practice and hopefully these students will come across feedback of this type and quality later in their subject degree programmes.

Assessed Reflection: This is an element of the assessment which most students seem to value and this is a form of assessment which is becoming more common in undergraduate programmes in the UK.

Good levels of satisfaction were evident in the comments in the student evaluations.

Academic Study Skills, Dentistry and Medicine: ELU0026

Annotated Bibliography: Again, it is good to see the comprehensive feedback which is provided to students on their work. The feedback focuses on things done well, on candidate strengths and elements where improvement is needed. It would be good to see more evidence of input from the second marker who, at the moment, often only appears as a name at the bottom of the feedback report.

Seminar Discussion: There is a very clear assignment brief for this element of the assessment and students are assigned specific roles. I think the way in which they are provided with supportive sources and reading works very well.

Health Promotion Report and Presentation: This is a very good set of tasks with very clear briefs and clear assessment criteria which seemed to work very well. There was evidence of some excellent work in terms of the presentations, many of which were interesting and informative. Students whose work attracted high marks produced presentations which were both well-researched and well-structured. These students engaged very positively with the task and presented their ideas with enthusiasm and clarity. Again, I felt that the input from the second marker needs to be more evident. The Module Handbook for this course is an extremely useful document.

Academic Study Skills, Science, Technology and Engineering: ELU0027

It is good to see this link between the Abstract (and reflection) and the Presentation (plus reflection). The pre-task activity (a poster presentation) is a very useful preparatory experience and seemed to work really well. Students were provided with some very good feedback which was sensibly linked to both the learning outcomes and the marking criteria. The assignment brief for the Report is clear and explains that this part of the assessment must initially be done as part of a team but that each candidate must write their own report. Students are asked to write a reflective commentary of "up to 500 words" which allows students to hand in quite short pieces of work of, say, 200 words or less. It would be better to say that the report must be between *400 and 500 words* or something similar.

The Annotated Bibliography and the Assessed Discussion also worked well. Again, candidates received good levels of feedback for the discussion. It would be good to have more information on the candidates' views of this part of the assessment. Student evaluations were generally very positive although some students questioned the perceived high levels of reflection involved in the assessment.

English for Communication ELU1002 and ELU1003

The assessment for this module involves a poster presentation and a viva. The two assessments are linked under the idea of "exploratory practice" whereby students solve a *puzzle* of some sort which opens with the words, "I wonder why . . .". There were some excellent posters which presented explanations of the chosen puzzle in a range of imaginative and thought-provoking ways.

The student evaluations show high levels of satisfaction with this module although a small minority of the candidates failed to engage with the assessment to any great extent. The hard-copy posters worked well but I wonder if some students would prefer to create something digitally which at least would (probably) allow for the correction of language slips or mistakes. The marking criteria are clear and appropriate, and students are provided with extensive feedback. Stronger candidates engaged very effectively with their audience during the presentation and exploited a range of appropriate paralinguistic features. These presentations had a clear focus and structure. The quality of the audio and video on the presentations was high.

English for Academic Study ELU 2002 & 2003

The two elements of these modules - the Annotated Bibliography and the Student-led Seminar - worked well. The Module Handbook is a very useful document and explains the appropriate marking criteria. For the annotated bibliography students were given very good qualitative feedback and there was a clear, visible role for the second marker through a useful feedback sheet. These are regarded as “discovery” modules as is the case with ELU1002 and ELU1003. I felt that the range of formative tasks succeeded in maintaining the spirit of the previous portfolio. In this respect it is good to see this willingness to update materials as a way of maintaining relevance and helping to create engagement on the part of the students.

While I have indicated above that there are no urgent matters which require urgent attentions, the following areas would benefit from the attention of the module leaders and others:

1. While there is very good case to be made for reflective elements in the assessment, there is an equally good case to be made for reducing the **amount** of reflective assessment;
2. Staff would benefit from some staff development and/or awareness-raising in relation to the idea of assessing something as subjective as reflection; and
3. There is a need to look again at the role of the second marker so as to make her/his role more obvious or visible to the External Examiner and to the candidates where appropriate.

Part C: School Response to External Examiner Report

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

ELU0025; ELU0026; ELU0027; ELU1002/3; EL:U2002/3

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Director of Student Education

Faculty / School of:

The Language Centre, The School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

Address for communication:

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 would like to take this opportunity to thank _____ for constructive and positive feedback on each of the ELU modules. Much hard work is done to ensure a positive student experience, and positive comments in relation to areas such as clear assignment briefs, varied and relevant assessment, very good levels of feedback provided to students and fair and consistent marking are much appreciated. We also welcome the acknowledgement that much work has been done to reduce the burden of assessment on both tutors and students across our module.

Below are more specific comments on some of the points made in the report.

ELU0025

EE comment: "Clear assignment briefs, varied assessments aimed at the relevant learning outcomes, very good feedback to students, fair and consistent marking."

Response: As the key role of the IFY modules is to help induct students into the academic community of a UK university, it is important for these modules to reflect as accurately as possible the *types* of assessments students will be faced with once they begin their degree programmes. Furthermore, providing students with detailed written feedback on assessments as well as offering follow-up consultations for them to clarify any specific points is paramount in terms of their development, because the nature of the Foundation modules is in this respect both formative and summative, students receive grades for assessments but the feedback they receive for these assessments should feed forward to their future studies.

ELU0026

Response: I agree with the comments made

ELU0027

EE comment: *“Clear assignment briefs, varied assessments aimed at the relevant learning outcomes, very good feedback to students, fair and consistent marking.”*

Response: I have worked hard to maintain and develop the effective practice outlined above and it is satisfying to have this acknowledged.

ELU1002 & 1003

Response: I agree with the comments made. Many thanks.

ELU2002 & 2003

Response: I agree with the comments made. Thank you.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**ELU0025**

EE comment: *“Successful attempts have been made to reduce the assessment burden both for students and staff.”*

Response: Since being divided into 3 separate modules for the academic year 2017-18, these modules have been able to cater more for the students' specific disciplines while maintaining consistency in terms of student and teacher workload with regard to assessments.

ELU0026

Response: The change to the number of assessments was made in 2016 and first put into practice during the academic year 2016/17 by myself and the then module leader, . The examiner would have been made aware of this last year.

It was disappointing that there was no reference made to the formative essay writing task that both myself and the ELU0027 module leaders started this year as an add-on to the summative annotated bibliography task.

ELU0027

EE comment: *“Successful attempts have been made to reduce the assessment burden both for students and staff.”*

Response: The timetabling of class input sessions and marking deadlines have been managed in order to add to improvements initiated in earlier years which limited the number of assessments. In addition, marking criteria have been modified as a result of consultation with staff in order to inform standardisation and moderation. Input from Engineering was also provided to support staff working on marking the newly introduced report task content.

ELU1002 & 1003

n/a

ELU2002 & 2003

EE comment: *"I felt that the range of formative tasks succeeded in maintaining the spirit of the previous portfolio."*

I am pleased that this change in assessment burden was received positively by the external examiner, whilst still maintaining a variety of tasks.

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:

All modules

There are no areas identified for urgent attention.

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:

We are pleased that _____ is happy with the level of communication between himself and the Language Centre.

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:

ELU0025

EE Comments: *"As I have said in previous reports, these modules provide students with a very good opportunity to improve their study skills and language skills in (often) specific subject contexts. The content, delivery and assessment are all appropriate and high levels of student performance indicate equally high levels of commitment/engagement from the students and effective teaching from the staff involved."*

EE Comments: *"The courses seem to me to be based on current good practice in the teaching of academic skills, English language and study skills."*

Working closely with receiving departments helps to inform both the selection of content and our assessment procedures appropriate for students at Foundation level.

Comments from Language Centre Director of Student Education

As a Centre, we welcome _____ very positive on the standards achieved in these modules from clear and appropriate learning outcomes to course content, valid and varied assessment and levels of constructive feedback provided to students.

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:

ELU0025

EE Comments: *“The assessment methods are appropriately varied and clearly focused on the relevant learning outcomes.”*

EE Comments: *“As I say above, the standard of student performance was pleasingly high in most cases. Performance across the board is at least equal to that on comparable courses in the HE sector in the UK. See my more detailed comments later in this report.”*

Response: The programmes are designed and structured to allow for students to experience and practice a variety of formative tasks (group and individual) and to reflect on their own performance. This together with both peer and tutor feedback helps to prepare students for their summative assessments.

ELU0026

No additional comments

ELU0027

It is motivating to have the comparative standard of the module acknowledged

ELU2002 & 2003

EE comment: *“There is a need to look again at the role of the second marker so as to make her/his role more obvious or visible to the External Examiner and to the candidates where appropriate.”*

Response: While Feedback forms for double marking of the seminars have a separate box for qualitative comments from the second marker, this is not the case for double marking of the Annotated Bibliography. This will be included in the next set of Assessments.

EE comments:

*“While there is very good case to be made for reflective elements in the assessment, there is an equally good case to be made for reducing the **amount** of reflective assessment”*

“Staff would benefit from some staff development and/or awareness-raising in relation to the idea of assessing something as subjective as reflection”

Response: These elements belonged to the previously assessed portfolio for ELU2002/2003. As this is now formative, there is no formal reflection to be assessed.

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:

Please see related comments in other sections of this form.

Other comments

Response to items included in the ‘Other Comments’ section of the report

ELU0025

EE Comments:

1. *While there is very good case to be made for reflective elements in the assessment, there is an equally good case to be made for reducing the **amount** of reflective assessment;*
2. *Staff would benefit from some staff development and/or awareness-raising in relation to the idea of assessing something as subjective as reflection; and*
3. *There is a need to look again at the role of the second marker so as to make her/his role more obvious or visible to the External Examiner and to the candidates where appropriate.*

Response: The element of reflection is key to helping students develop into independent learners who are able to cope with the demands of studying at a UK university. As such, it is felt that much of this reflective practice in the programme is a necessary part of students' development, however, it may be possible to reduce the amount of assessed reflection slightly in future academic cycles.

Regarding the role of the second marker, procedures as laid out in the Assessment Code of Practice are followed closely here. It may also be worth noting that 100% of spoken assessments are second marked, allowing for equal input by both markers in terms of the written feedback and grade received by students.

ELU0026

Response: I find the following comment rather confusing: *'It would be good to see more evidence of input from the second marker who, at the moment, often only appears as a name at the bottom of the feedback report'* – this is standard practice when giving feedback to students on these modules (and probably other university modules) and ELU0025 and 27 follow exactly the same procedure. The 1st marker is responsible for writing the detailed feedback for students and this is signed off by *both markers* to show that a particular piece of work has been second marked. If the examiner is referring to the 'moderation form' which details which pieces of work have been second-marked for each assessment, if both assessing tutors agree on the marks, there is very little to write except 'I agree with all the marks and comments of the first marker'. I am wondering why the examiner has chosen to make this comment about my module when the other modules (ELU0025 and 27) have followed the same procedure?

My response to the following:

5. While there is very good case to be made for reflective elements in the assessment, there is an equally good case to be made for reducing the **amount** of reflective assessment.
I have already dealt with this and there has been a reduction in reflection writing for the final project.
6. Staff would benefit from some staff development and/or awareness-raising in relation to the idea of assessing something as subjective as reflection.
Assessing reflective writing is always going to be problematic because of its very subjective nature and this is something I raised with _____ when we met. This is an ongoing project between the 3 module leaders (ELU0025, 26 and 27).
7. There is a need to look again at the role of the second marker so as to make her/his role more obvious or visible to the External Examiner and to the candidates where appropriate.
I have already commented on this and whilst I understand that there needs to be a visible train of thought and action between the 2 assessors on the moderation form, surely this is only necessary when there are disagreements over marks. If this does happen I am not convinced that the candidate should be party to it, but should be given the final mark agreed upon by both assessors.

ELU0027

Response: As the reflection component is 10% in all assessments apart from the report task it is not clear how students will have seen this as being high. Nevertheless, as outlined in the module review the

criteria and objectives of reflections will be more explicitly stated and introduced at an earlier point in the module.

The poster presentation was valued by students, staff and progression department staff so it is also good to see this acknowledged by the external examiner.

ELU1002 & 1003

No further comments

ELU2002 & 2003

No further comments