

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017-18

QAT Received 18/02/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	EDUCATION
Subject(s):	TESOL
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MA Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) MEd Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA/MEd

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.

Within the module specifications, there is scope for module tutors to read and give advice upon drafts of student assignments. This is unusual and commendably resource intensive on a programme of this type – and is a remarkable aspect of the Leeds provision compared with most other comparable UK institutions. In particular, it enables the MATESOL programme to fulfil a core objective of enhancing the experience of international PG students in keeping with UK university policy of internationalisation. The success of this may be reflected in the extremely high recruitment to the programme for 2017-8 – both absolutely and in comparison with some other PGT programmes in the sector.

On many modules very well staged progression through different assessment points enable students to establish core skills early on in the module, and then develop them to a more advanced PG level in their summative assessment.

There is widespread use of portfolio work in for assessing modules, and for their summative 'critical study'. This enables students to embed their theoretical knowledge in suitably 'applied' type of work, such as materials development or language analysis. The use of this format for the extended piece over work completed over the summer to finish off the programme also gives those participants who have their eyes set on enhancing their teaching career (rather than going down the research track) the opportunity to thoroughly develop, practical skills and knowledge which they have acquired on the taught part of the programme with respect to a particular practical pedagogical problem or issue.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

The year 2017-8 saw the rolling out of a new and refreshed iteration of the MA TESOL programme. The course team are to be commended with carrying out a radical review of the programme in consultation with all stakeholders. For the most part the new iteration of the programme has worked well in a/y 2017-8. In particular the meetings that we organised for me with student representatives indicated very few issues arising which related to course delivery this year, and fewer than in previous years.

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

Resolved: I am happy to say that the course leader and the course team responded rapidly to the issues raised around standardisation and protocol relating to drafts in the a/y 2016-7. Guidance was given on course descriptions to students on how to complete drafts and consult course tutors, and in the 2017-2108 session, students reported much greater clarity about their expectations relating to the drafting procedures on the programme.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment

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

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

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

N/A

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.

The programme's Aims and ILOs are entirely comparable with similar programmes at other institutions and against national benchmarks.

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)

As in previous years, the curriculum of the programme influenced by current research as follows:

- In its unswerving commitment to maintain the links between theory and practice in keeping with the best pedagogic research in the field;
- In its deployment of progressive assessment techniques such as portfolio learning.

Learning and teaching is influenced by current research as follows:

- In the use of a VLE to ensure that students can access and engage with their learning materials at all times and in all places

The use of a varied range of teaching contexts in order to address the individualised needs of learners: from lectures, to seminars, to tutorials, to small group conferencing, to individual conferencing.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
N/A		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
N/A		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:		
N/A		

Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As in previous years, all assignments tasks were well-conceived and the rubric well set out on assignment sheets, which were particularly well set out, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Excellent paperwork and proforma: o Well designed and clear proforma for marking o Tightly specified criteria for marking o Detailed grade sheets o Good presentation of course assignments o Well-designed assignment sheets - There was a good range of assessment tasks on the programme , including expository assignments, analytical assignments, and portfolios of pedagogic tasks and assessed presentations. - Assessment tasks were well designed in relation to the practical context of language teaching and learning. In this there was a very good attempt to contextualise the knowledge and skills which the students were learning on the programme. - On the whole there was very thoroughgoing feedback on assignments, and year on year this is becoming more consistent across modules. <p>The overall high level of student performance reflected a good quality of teaching and learning across all modules.</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>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:</p> <p>The students demonstrated the full range of academic standards, with the top performing students were amongst the best I have seen in 20 years in the UK HE sector. In this respect the student performance was broadly comparable with other courses in the field. As in previous years, the strengths of the students as a cohort included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to relate theory to academic practice; - ability to understand assessment task and execute it; - ability to analyse the data set; - good academic skills. 		

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

The one weakness – as in previous years - was probably in critical thinking. This unfortunately, is a perennial challenge given the diversity of students on the programme, and I know that members of the course team at Leeds (as with in comparable institutions) are working hard to address this challenge. But I would say that the 2017-8 cohort appeared relatively stronger than the 2016-7 cohort in this respect.

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:

I would like to reiterate my view that, as in previous years, the administrative arrangements for convening the PGT Exam Board at Leeds School of Education were indisputably the best I have come across in UK HE, and indeed in HE internationally. It displays the highest levels of excellence and is a sure-fire indicator of the maintenance of standards across PGT programmes in the School.

Other comments

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

I attended each of the two programme boards in a/y 2017-8. Each visit I met a group of elected representatives from the two programmes for which I have oversight. While there are one or two minutiae of operational issues which arise, which I fed back immediately to the programme leaders, the students have regularly endorsed both programmes and the experience which they have on them. Despite the fact that a new version of the programme was being rolled out, feedback was remarkably positive with remarkably few operational issues to take note of. In

particular, students remain highly appreciative of the commitment and professionalism of the program tutors who support them on their modules.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Responder:	
Position*:	Programme Director MA TESOL
Faculty / School of:	<i>ESSL/Education</i>
Address for communication:	School of Education, University of Leeds
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 delighted that recognition has been given to the use of a range of assessment modes on the programme and to a widespread and effective use of portfolio work for assessing modules.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We are pleased that the External Examiner is happy with the iteration of the MA TESOL programme. We are also delighted to know that "very few issues arising related to course delivery this year, and fewer than in previous years."

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:

We are pleased that the External Examiner's response to 'Standard'-related questions is positive. The External Examiner has given recognition to the fact that "progressive assessment techniques such as portfolio learning" are currently being used on TESOL modules. The Examiner has also highlighted the value of using a VLE since it helps students better engage with learning materials both in-class and outside of the classroom.

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:

We are delighted to know that the External Examiner is pleased with our assessment and feedback on the programme. We are particularly happy that the External Examiner has commented as follows: "The overall high level of student performance reflected a good quality of teaching and learning across all modules." It is also very reassuring for us to see the External Examiner's comment on the feedback: "On the whole there was very thoroughgoing feedback on assignments, and year on year this is becoming more consistent across modules." The External Examiner has been slightly concerned about students' weakness in critical thinking. We are trying to address this challenge by raising students' awareness of the importance of demonstrating critical thinking and argumentation in their assignments and designing practical tasks and discussion activities that should help them become better critical thinkers.

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:

We are grateful to the External Examiner for giving recognition to the continuous support that has received from at Student Education Office. We are particularly delighted to hear that "it displays the highest levels of excellence and is a sure-fire indicator of the maintenance of standards across PGT programmes in the School."

Other comments

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

We are deeply grateful to for very positive feedback on the commitment and professionalism of programme tutors, who, as pointed out by the External Examiner, support students on their modules.