

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 17/09/2019

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

The Language Centre

*Subject(s):*

*Academic English for Undergraduate Students*

*Programme(s) / Module(s):*

10 and 6 week pre-sessionals

*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.*

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

Due to the course undergoing substantial revisions during 2017-18 academic year, only minor tweaks have been made this year based on external examiner recommendations.

1. The integration earlier in the course of more language that will help with essay writing which previously was introduced too late for the draft.
2. The data project in the first weeks that didn't seem to be aligning with the skills required for the summative assessment has been replaced with a group poster. The data project has been moved to the interim where teachers are marking summative assignments.
3. Deadlines have been moved so that students submit the draft and the final written assignment a week later so there is more time for students to work on their essay after draft feedback. Reports were made by course convenors that this has increased the quality of work.

**Matters for Urgent Attention**

No matters for urgent attention

**For Examiners in the first year of appointment only**

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 a External Examiner Mentor?	N/A

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment only**

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	N/A
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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

## 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

The course is broken down into topics (which deal with the four language skills of reading, listening speaking and writing) and plenaries (interactive lectures on a theme). This simulates the structure of many UG courses so helps students to transition from a more traditional EFL classroom-based course towards a higher education course structure.

The 10-week courses mainly focuses on the language required for academic study rather than skills. Students who take the 10-week course feed into the 6-week course fairly seamlessly, where they practice more research skills and academic writing. Upon recommendations, the academic language required for essay writing appears much earlier in the syllabus, facilitating better writing skills at the draft stage. The learning outcomes in the materials link directly to future learning contexts and are constructively aligned with the assessments while benchmarking well to IELTS. The structure of the course is coherent, allowing transition into UK HE and life in the UK and Leeds.

The content and topics of the course that students will use to demonstrate their understanding of essay writing are both generic enough to allow students to narrow to their own discipline but are specific enough to be relevant to all students who will undertake study in the UK He sector. This is a significant improvement on incarnations of the course prior to 2018, where disciplinary content was minimal. Course content caters well for the wider range of degree programmes that this cohort is progressing onto.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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In addition to the usual research base of EAP and language teaching, there were some excellent examples of a research informed curriculum. This course is focused around culture and culture shock which has a strong research base from intercultural communication and its learning logs facilitates metacognition of the learning process. This is sustained throughout the 6-week course; for example, students are required to come prepared to feedback tutorials prepared to engage actively with their own learning rather than be passive recipients of education. I would particularly commend the introduction of the group poster which not only facilitates group work in a formative and risk free context (something that education research has shown is problematic for UG students) but the fact that posters are shown to the incoming 6-week cohort not only fosters a sense of pride and achievement in 10-week students, but fosters a sense of community and belonging by combining an academic and social interaction.

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

<b>NA</b>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N/A
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
<b>NA</b>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		
<b>NA</b>		

### Assessment and Feedback

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y / N
<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>Overall assessments are aligned to the course learning outcomes, specifically to meet the language requirements of future programmes being keys (hence the benchmarking of the exams to IELTS). The assessments largely simulate authentic academic tasks and assignments that UG students will undertake within disciplinary programmes e.g. group work, posters, presentations, research referenced assignments. The formative assessment tasks in the first 4 weeks align with the summative in that they are also still practising the skills of presenting, and writing summaries for the extended essay. Students are asked to produce a draft in the final 6 weeks of their final written essay which is submitted for tutor feedback.</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
<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>Grades seem consistent with what should be expected in terms of IELTS and seem consistent with UG international students across the sector. The spread of grades for all assessments (25% each weighting in line with four skills IELTS requirements) was commensurate with IELTS language levels as determined by university admissions. This year, a reading mock has been introduced to help practice reading exam skills.</p> <p>There are many examples of good formative assessment practices. Reflection is facilitated though the use of learning logs. All students have to hand in plans and drafts for tutor feedback. Face-to-face tutorials are given in addition to written comments on drafts. There is a good balance between providing feedback/feedforward and helping students become evaluative judges of their own work by only providing close language level marking on 500 words of drafts.</p> <p>However, on summative assessments, some teachers' feedback did not seem to be consistent with or reflective of the awarded grade. This is something that students often complain about and hinders their ability to improve for future work if only positive comments are given. However, perhaps this is reflective of the fact that students have met the grade they require for progression and a higher grade would be unrealistic given their language level so positive comments only might be justified. If this is clearly communicated to students and is not raised as an issue by them, I would not suggest changes.</p> <p>The programme has excellent standardisation and moderation procedures. Standardisation documents reflect an impressively high level of accuracy. Writing assessment is double-marked where two markers</p>		

give grades blind, and both markers meet to discuss the grades. Records of this kept. Listening exams where answers may be ambiguous are marked together in a room after the exam.

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

Students are offered resits if they have not met the requirements of their departments. This is not capped due to the linguistic nature of the course.

Plagiarism cases are investigated through a timed writing and looking at other pieces of written work on the course. There was only one instance reported at exam board and I was satisfied with the rigour of the procedure for this.

### 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?	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:*

Upon past recommendations, the provision of draft exams is now standard practice and has been working well.

This year, everything has gone paperless with the university policy on sustainability and students are required to bring laptops in class to access the VLE. In turn, this allows for accessibility as students can

access material in advance as part of disability and inclusivity best practice. Written assessments are marked on Turnitin using the rubrics and Feedback Studio.

As always with this course, pastoral care and the concern for student transition and welfare is exemplary. The first week orientation/induction gives extensive advice about life in the UK accommodation support and advice about safety and scams. There are plenty of opportunities provided to students for language exchange and community activities.

#### Other comments

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

As discussed at exam board, I made the recommendation that accessibility of online materials and materials in general is considered in line with Online Accessibility regulations coming from UK govt that relate to the HE sector. Plans are already in place for this. <https://abilitynet.org.uk/webinars/new-uk-web-accessibility-regulations-he-and-public-sector>

**Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)**

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

*English for Academic Purposes*

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Academic English for Undergraduate Studies

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position\*:

Programme Leader; DSE

Faculty / School of:

*Language Centre*

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) must be sent directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at [gat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto: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**

The major innovations were instigated in the previous year. As noted, elsewhere good practice has been maintained.

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

The changes brought about in response to previous feedback have benefitted the course, noticeably the deadlines now seem much more appropriate to help meet course aims.

**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:

None

**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:

NA

**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 also pleased with the content and structure of the course and will continue to apply research to the curriculum design.

## 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:*

Each iteration of the course enables us to improve our assessments such that they approach the reliability of IELTS while maintaining the validity of EAP.

Regarding tutor comments for students' final submissions, we will look to introduce a template to ensure all tutors provide appropriate feedback and feedforward which reflect the grade awarded.

## 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 pleased that moving to VLE-based assessment and results recording has gone well and will continue to use this in future iterations of the course.

## Other comments

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

As part of Language Centre developments, this course will endeavour to be as inclusive as practicable and enhance accessibility of online materials.