

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 06/01/2020

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

English Language Centre

Subject(s):

Pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Academic English for Economics & Finance

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

N/A

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.

Student Autonomy

Students new to the UK universities may be unfamiliar with the levels of autonomy expected in their new academic context, this pre-sessional course demands high levels of autonomy from the students and supports them with this both through a reading group on autonomy at the course outset and the VLE. The VLE explicitly states that high levels of student autonomy are expected and details what exactly that means.

Students complete independent study tasks before classes. They come to class and self check-in so attendance can be monitored.

Disciplinarity

The close working relationship and collaboration between the economics and finance pre-sessional strand and the university department ensures that course content and assessment are fully aligned and provide the best possible orientation for the students.

Virtual Learning Environment

The economics and finance VLE is an essential resource for students, it conveys aspects of UK academic culture, especially those of autonomy and partnership in a culturally appropriate manner. Students are given information and detailed guidance regarding the outcomes of the independent study tasks.

As a review tool for 114 students, it is used effectively, detailed annotated texts are used to support challenging academic reading and provide students with excellent materials to review course content. Overall, the VLE is an excellent repository of all course information and content, it is easy to navigate and ensures that the large cohort of students are appropriately supported. The VLE is of a high-standard and one which I wish to emulate in my own institution.

Enhancements made from the previous year

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

This is my first year as external examiner.

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 currently

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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

For Examiners completing their term of appointment only

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)?	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.

This was my first year as an external examiner however I can confirm that the learning outcomes are appropriate for preparing students well for future UK postgraduate study within the discipline of economics and finance. Students are asked to complete a range of appropriate and demanding tasks that include extensive reading and writing; scaffolded support is provided at appropriate times throughout. The programme compares well in terms of workload, rigour and academic literacy skill preparation to similar programmes at my own institution.

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)

The economics and finance strand of the pre-sessional is clearly informed by current EAP

<p>research. The course materials and assessment are closely aligned with those from the future department of study and so students may be best prepared for their academic future. Assiduous use of the VLE ensures that students with a diversity of needs are well catered for. Flipped learning tasks also ensure that students have the opportunity to engage with both the language and course concepts before encountering them in the classroom.</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)?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i> The programme is accredited by both The British Council and BALEAP. Accreditation from both is valuable and may be used by prospective students as a gauge to programme quality. The class size within the Economics and Finance strand this year greatly exceeded the maximum size recommended by both professional bodies; this may be an issue during future inspections.</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 range of assessment methods is appropriate and produces student work that demonstrates an understanding of academic language and academic conventions appropriate to the disciplines of economics and finance. Students are provided with feedback on their performance both generally via the VLE and individually, they are then able to discuss this individual feedback in small group consultations. Formative feedback is provided on written work at several points during the drafting stage and most students are well supported, students who miss out this drafting stage do however miss receiving quality feedback. The small group consultation feedback sessions certainly seem to be innovative and effective way to provide sufficiently robust feedback to a large cohort of students.</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>The students performed well generally and produced assignments which demonstrated an engagement with the reading and an ability to structure academic texts appropriate to the task. Those at the higher end of the mark scale demonstrated academic literacy skills and a conceptual understanding that would suggest a readiness to engage with post-graduate level study. Engagement with the ideas in the reading underpin all assessment including the presentation which involves a close examination of a text related to macro-economic cycles.</p>		

The assessment criteria are clear, thorough and student-facing.

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

On large UK pre-sessional courses, recruitment of EAP specialists during the summer months can be challenging as demand exceeds supply. On most pre-sessionals, including my own, the recruitment of significant numbers of ELT specialists allow demand to be met.' This is not an issue as such but may mean that during induction sufficient time is allowed for teachers new to EAP to understand how they might best support students and move the focus of their written feedback from language and grammar issues to content and source use. Although much of the feedback provided to students engaged with content and sources, I did notice some feedback that dealt largely with language and grammar issues and wonder if further training and guidance might be given during induction and during feedback sessions. Some of the feedback I read was deeply academically invested and it would be of benefit to all your students to receive such detailed information about how they might improve.

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:

Other comments

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

The EAP pre-sessional team closely focusses on the student experience and the improvement of course quality; this is to be commended. Working at scale however, I do wonder how a large team of teachers can continue to be supported appropriately. On pre-sessionals, teachers are often employed from outwith the institution on a contractual basis and therefore need extra levels of support both in terms of the curriculum and logistics. Support is often provided informally from peers and so ensuring that teachers have a permanent base classroom might be a solution to managing larger teams of teachers and providing them with supportive and co-operative environment in which to work.

I would like to thank the English Language Centre and especially _____ for the many positive and productive conversations I had regarding pre-sessional courses. It was of great interest to me to see the challenges of delivering a pre-sessional course at scale and the innovations made to ensure students are fully prepared for their academic future.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Academic English for Economics & Finance

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

n/a

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Module lead

Faculty / School of:

The Language Centre

Address for communication:

Parkinson Building
Woodhouse Lane
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) must be sent 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

Thanks. A great deal of time was devoted to making the best use of the VLE for the 2019 cohort.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

N/A.

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:

No response to make as no comment left.

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:

Thanks. It is pleasing to note that the course is comparable in standard to other institutions.

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:

In response to comments made regarding the consistency of feedback, more time will be devoted in induction week and through standardisation sessions on the 2020 programme to address these issues.

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. No additional comments made.

Other comments

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

I agree that having a permanent course base is essential for teacher morale and allowing informal peer learning especially with teachers who may be new to the university and/or EAP.