

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19 QAT Received 12/08/2019

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):

Academic Study Skills (ELU 0025), Academic Study skills for Medicine and Dentistry (ELU 0026), Academic Study Skills for Science, Technology and Engineering (ELU 0027), English for Communication (ELU 1002 & ELU 1003) and English for Academic Study (ELU 2002 & ELU 2003).

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.

- A good range of assessment types;
- Clear and appropriate marking criteria; and
- Excellent feedback to students.

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 use of electronic marking.

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

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

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 only

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

My experience of the courses delivered through the Language Centre has been a very positive one. I have been impressed by the willingness of staff to listen to suggestions regarding changes to assessment etc. and by their willingness to improve the student experience. See my comments later in this report

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

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

In terms of programme structure, design, aims and learning outcomes these courses are appropriately designed and have learning outcomes which fit very well with the target groups. The aims of these courses are entirely suitable and mirror the aims of other similar courses in the UK HE sector. See my more detailed comments later in this report.

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)

As I have indicated in previous reports, the courses seem to me to be based on current good practice in the teaching of academic skills, English language and study skills.

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:

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	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)?	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
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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.

The assessment methods are usefully varied and clearly focused on an assessment of the relevant learning outcomes.		
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 standard of student attainment as demonstrated by their performance in the various assessments was high and certainly the equal of that of students in similar courses in the UK HE sector.</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>Students across all these courses are given regular, extensive and focused feedback and, in my meeting with students during my visit to the University on the 13th and 14th of June it was clear that students were very happy with their feedback some of which, of course, is delivered orally and is not recorded.</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?	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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

I have always felt that communication between me and the Language Centre and, of course, vice versa, was of a high standard and I felt that I was always kept abreast of changes and of the rationale for changes etc.

Other comments

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

Academic Study Skills (ELU0025) IFY Programme

This core module contains regular elements of reflection. The assessments – there are five of them - include an Essay and a Presentation. The teaching staff feel that it is important to regularly refresh or update the topics for the presentations and the essay. Current topics include *Urban Development* and the *Globalisation of English*. The staff involved in teaching this module feel that they exploited a good bank of materials which adequately prepares students (93 enrolled in this academic year) for their assessments. Staff also felt that there was clear evidence of student engagement with the objectives, activities and assessments of the course. The course in 2019/20 will move from 50 to 40 credits and the teaching time will be reduced to 6 hours per week. The course should continue to assess the same language and study skills but there may be some reduction in the number of assessment elements. It was suggested that this might require more by way of time management from the students involved. There has been some reduction in the number and frequency of reflective elements on this course and a push – part of a university-wide development – for electronic marking. The teaching team is confident that this will not reduce the quality or the quantity of feedback they are able to provide. It is very good to see the reference in the Course Handbook to “classroom observations” as a means of standardising the student experience. It is also good to see clear evidence of double marking and an emphasis on moving towards a *paperless classroom*. Focussing only on one of the assessment elements, good candidates produced essays which showed a good level of understanding of the relevant issues and a good exploitation of sources. These candidates produced essays which showed a good sense of relevance and focus. Weaker candidates struggled with coherence and produced work which lacked somewhat in logic and structure.

Academic Study Skills for Medicine and Dentistry (ELU0026)

26 students enrolled for this course in 2018/19. The learning Outcomes for this module are very relevant and extensive and include **understanding the conventions of academic style, conducting research using specific healthcare databases and writing reflectively on the learning experiences**. The assessment elements for this course include an Abstract, a Discussion, a Report, an Annotated Bibliography and a Presentation.. For next session it is likely that the number of assessment elements will be reduced from five to four by combining the annotated bibliography with the presentation. The important elements of reflection will be retained to a large extent. It may be that more nursing students could be recruited to this module in the future, a development which may require a change of name to reflect a wider appeal to the healthcare professions. Electronic marking has been introduced for this module and its impact is likely to become even greater as staff become more familiar with its capabilities. Feedback from students has been very positive. The Handbook for this course is excellent. Project titles were interesting and thought-provoking and included *Global Health Issues* and *Healthcare Systems*. The Group Discussion (20 – 25 minutes) is an example of an innovative form of assessment whereby students are given roles and a lot of core sources for information. It is good that while group feedback is provided candidates are also given important individual feedback on their work.

Academic Study Skills for Science, Technology and Engineering (ELU0027)

This module has a good range of assessment types (five in total) including the Annotated Bibliography, the Presentation and an Abstract. All assessments contain an important element of reflection which has a weighting of 10% in each assessment element. It is clear that contact with the destination departments is important but this is not always easy to create. This module currently has six teaching hours per week and attracts 50 credits. It is proposed that this will be reduced to 40 credits for session 2019/20. All assessments are submitted to Turnitin including the presentations: feedback is provided on the presentation slides. I thought that the way in which the presentations were shown – with a *split* screen with one half containing the presentation itself and the other half of the screen showing the appropriate slides – worked very well. As with the other courses from the Language Centre there is an on-going focus on the important skill of reflection. It was pleasing to see in the Course Handbook that there is a clear indication that the students have responsibilities such as to check e-mail regularly, respect others and so on. The feedback provided to students is positive, realistic, focused on the relevant criteria and on-going. The marking criteria are very clear, and it is good to see the use of drafts as a way of raising student awareness and of increasing the quality of the end product.

English for Communication (ELU1002) & English for Communication (ELU1003)

The purpose of this module is to create “confidence” in participants in the use in communicative contexts of “real” English. 17 students were enrolled on to ELU 1002 and 11 on to ELU 1003. The Poster Presentation – as I have made clear in previous reports - is a very good way of allowing ideas, information and opinions to be expressed in both a written and visual way. The topics chosen by the candidates included Motivation in SLA, Open-mindedness and the Features of Biomass. The other element of the assessment is an oral presentation (or viva) which must be accompanied by an appropriate set of references. The marking criteria are clear and appropriate, and I particularly liked the idea that the purpose of the presentation/viva has a lot to do with summarising ideas and in finding a succinct and focused way of expressing oneself. The feedback provided to students on this course is of a high quality and even when less positive news is delivered this is done with tact and sensitivity.

English for Academic Study (ELU 2002) & English for Academic Study (ELU 2003)

These are “discovery” module which have as an objective the development of both English language and study skills of the sort that are required in undergraduate study. The new reflective element works very well although it is likely that some modification to the marking criteria for this will be introduced in 2019/20. The assessed seminar produced some good student performances and allowed students to work with some interesting and challenging topics. This is a conference-type academic presentation. The Annotated Bibliography is linked through the Research Question to the Seminar. The student survey indicated that some students would have liked a greater emphasis on language but, quite clearly, an important part of the rationale for this course is the development of important academic skills such as critical thinking, the analysis and synthesis of information, the appropriate exploitation of a range of sources and so on. Electronic marking and feedback was introduced in Semester 2 and it is anticipated that greater use will be made of this next academic session.

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Some important themes.

As this is my last year as an External with the Language Centre, I would like to conclude this report with a number of ideas or “themes”.

- 1 I have been very impressed with the enthusiasm of Language Centre staff to embrace electronic marking.
2. I am pleased that reflection is likely to remain an important element in the assessment of these modules. Reflection is an important life, work and academic skill. Reflection will therefore remain an important part of the LC student experience.
3. There will clearly be implications for assessments as the LC moves to a 40-credit regime.
4. There is clearly a shared understanding that materials/topics as well as assessment approaches need to be regularly refreshed.
5. If numbers continue to be high or even higher than they are at the moment, there will be an increased need to ensure that there is in place a range of systems which standardise important aspects of the student experience such as delivery, marking, feedback and so on. This in no way should limit the opportunities for teaching staff to be innovative in terms of how they deliver their material and how they assess student work and provide feedback.
6. Foundation students put a great deal of store by the opportunities presented to them to meet with academics and students from the departments/faculties they wish to progress into. These opportunities clearly exist but perhaps more could be done to embed such opportunities within the experience of all such students.
7. The marking criteria and feedback provided to students in the LC are of a very high standard.

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As in previous years I expressed a wish this year to spend some time with LC students. This was a pleasant and informative experience and quite clearly there was a lot of satisfaction with the feedback provided, the materials which were used in teaching, the way in which teamwork was encouraged and the general university facilities such as cluster areas and computer rooms. They enjoyed the opportunities presented to them to study in the UK but found some of the cultural experiences they encountered somewhat challenging. They expressed the idea that differences in teaching style could cause problems but that this also created opportunities for them to encounter a range of teaching and learning methods. The students I met were surprised that a mark was not given for attendance.

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Finally, I would like to express my thanks to all colleagues in the Language Centre for their professionalism and their willingness to listen to the suggestions and/or comments I had. I have enjoyed very much my visits to the Language Centre at both a personal and a professional level and I wish staff (both administrative and academic) and students the very best for the future.

External Examiner, August 7th, 2019

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

English language

Programme(s) / Module(s):

ELU0025 Academic Study Skills
 ELU0026 Academic Study Skills for Dentistry and Medicine
 ELU0027 Academic Study Skills for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
 ELU1002/3 English for Communication
 ELU2002/3 English for Academic Study

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

n/a

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Director of Student Education / Module Leaders

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures / Language Centre / 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) 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

We would like to thank _____ for positive feedback on each of the ELU modules and the work _____ has done with module leaders to contribute to the development of these modules over the last four years. We continually strive to improve the student experience and welcome the acknowledgement that there is good range of assessment types, clear and appropriate marking criteria, and excellent feedback to students.

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

ELU0025

EE comment: *It is very good to see the reference in the Course Handbook to “classroom observations” as a means of standardising the student experience. It is also good to see clear evidence of double marking and an emphasis on moving towards a paperless classroom.*

Response: We have buzz observations carried out by the module leader and are working on ideas for how other teachers, in addition to a peer observation, might be able to take part in observing a number of classes across the programme in order to get an overview of how other teachers and groups are working out. This would be useful for both new and returning staff in terms of professional development.

ELU0026

EE comment: *Electronic marking has been introduced for this module and its impact is likely to become even greater as staff become more familiar with its capabilities. Feedback from students has been very positive.*

Response: Electronic marking is far quicker than the previous method of annotating word documents and emailing back to students. However, it is the *quality* of the feedback that my students appreciate, not necessarily the medium through which it is provided.

ELU0027

EE comment: *The feedback provided to students is positive, realistic, focused on the relevant criteria and on-going.*

Response: It is good to see the quality of the feedback being praised and tutors worked hard to provide helpful, comprehensive and timely feedback to students.

ELU1002 & 1003

EE comment: *The marking criteria are clear and appropriate, and I particularly liked the idea that the purpose of the presentation/viva has a lot to do with summarising ideas and in finding a succinct and focused way of expressing oneself. The feedback provided to students on this course is of a high quality and even when less positive news is delivered this is done with tact and sensitivity.*

Response: It is always pleasing to hear that students have appreciated and are pleased with the feedback given, orally and written.

ELU2002 & 2003

EE comment: *The new reflective element works very well although it is likely that some modification to the marking criteria for this will be introduced in 2019/20.*

Response:

It is encouraging to have support for new elements to the Module, and I will refer to other Modules for guidance with more detailed criteria on reflective writing.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year**ELU0027**

EE comment: *The use of electronic marking.*

Response: The introduction of electronic marking has been highly successful and has cut down the amount of admin required, leaving more time for giving high quality feedback.

ELU1002 & 1003

EE comment: *I have been very impressed with the enthusiasm of Language Centre staff to embrace electronic marking.*

Response: It is gratifying to see that the move to digital submission and marking was highlighted. This required support from other sectors of the university and was much appreciated.

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:

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:

ELU0027

EE comment: *My experience of the courses delivered through the Language Centre has been a very positive one.*

Response: We are pleased that the external examiner had a positive experience and appreciated the opportunity to speak to both staff and students.

ELU1002 & 1003

EE comment: *I have been impressed by the willingness of staff to listen to suggestions regarding changes to assessment etc. and by their willingness to improve the student experience.*

Response: It was gratifying to learn that the examiner has a positive experience here and that feels the communication between and the staff was impressive.

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 welcome feedback that the design, aims and learning outcomes of these modules are appropriately designed and have learning outcomes which fit very well with the target groups, and that they are comparable with those of similar modules in the UK HE sector.

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

ELU0027

EE comment: As I have indicated in previous reports, the courses seem to me to be based on current good practice in the teaching of academic skills, English language and study skills.

Response: We are pleased to see that the programme allows students to meet intended learning outcomes and is comparable with other similar programmes.

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:

EE comment: The marking criteria and feedback provided to students in the LC are of a very high standard.

We are pleased to receive comments about the high standards achieved across LC modules in terms of the assessment criteria and student feedback, and feel that the comments given below reflect the consideration that went into assessment organisation on this module.

ELU0026

EE comment: The Group Discussion (20 – 25 minutes) is an example of an innovative form of assessment whereby students are given roles and a lot of core sources for information. It is good that while group feedback is provided candidates are also given important individual feedback on their work.

Response: It's encouraging to see that the quality of the feedback is valued, as I feel it's very important and is something we pride ourselves on.

ELU0027

EE comment: The feedback provided to students is positive, realistic, focused on the relevant criteria and on-going. The marking criteria are very clear, and it is good to see the use of drafts as a way of raising student awareness and of increasing the quality of the end product.

Response: The external examiner's comments about the appropriacy and range of assessments are well received and we are pleased that the role of reflection is recognised within assessment as we feel this is an important component of the course.

ELU1002 & 1003

EE comment: The Poster Presentation – as I have made clear in previous reports - is a very good way of allowing ideas, information and opinions to be expressed in both a written and visual way.

Response: It is pleasing to hear that the examiner considers the poster presentations to be a good way of assessing the students' ability to demonstrate the results of their research in a focused way. The addition in semester two of

asking students to compile their posters on a power point slide has resulted in very professional and even better designed posters.

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 to read found that communications with the Language Centre were of a high standard, and that felt was kept informed about the introduction of any changes and the rationale for those changes.

Other comments

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

ELU0026

EE comment: It may be that more nursing students could be recruited to this module in the future, a development which may require a change of name to reflect a wider appeal to the healthcare professions.

Response: I informed the external examiner that the change of module name had already been put in place – it is now Academic Study Skills for Dentistry, Medicine and Healthcare Professions, and we have been pleased to welcome both nursing and audiology students this year.

ELU0027

EE comment: Foundation students put a great deal of store by the opportunities presented to them to meet with academics and students from the departments/faculties they wish to progress into. These opportunities clearly exist but perhaps more could be done to embed such opportunities within the experience of all such students.

As commented, making and maintaining connections with departments is often challenging, particularly when designing a course which is intended to be as specific in its content as this is. Relatedly, the external examiner mentioned the perceived benefit of interaction with academics and former students by the current students on the course. We agree with this but acknowledge that this is also difficult to cultivate and maintain but is worthwhile pursuing. We thank for encouraging comments and helpful feedback.