

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 23/12/2019

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 Marketing

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.

Disciplinarity

The close relationship and collaboration between this pre-sessional strand and the university marketing department ensures that course content and assessment are fully aligned and provide the best possible orientation for the students. This disciplinarity is considered best practice in EAP and the marketing strand provides an excellent model.

Virtual Learning Environment

Due to the recent increase in class sizes, the new module leader has ensured that the virtual learning environment (VLE) contains comprehensive content and is a useful tool for the 246 students on the marketing strand of the pre-sessional. The VLE immediately conveys aspects of UK academic culture, especially those of autonomy and partnership in a culturally appropriate manner. The high levels of autonomy expected are explicitly stated as are the outcomes of the independent study tasks. As a cohort communication tool, it is used effectively, an example observed was of a gentle rebuttal to student feedback complaining about the quantity of reading. The VLE is of a high-standard and one which I wish to emulate in my own institution.

Moderation

Moderation is carried out and recorded thoroughly on Minerva. Detailed explanation is given as to any disagreements regarding the grading. All borderline/fails are checked.

Academic Integrity

Potential issues with plagiarism are dealt with positively and constructively. Students are given extra support if needed though attendance of an academic integrity workshop held by the module leader. The use of sources in the writing process is framed positively and the intervention is carried out at an early stage in the writing process. There is a clear expectation that those invited to the workshop should attend.

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.

The programme is designed to provide students with the academic language and literacy skills so that they may be suitably prepared for post-graduate marketing study. There are appropriate learning outcomes that ensure that students engage fully with the reading process in order to complete assignments. There is a range of assessment types that are well-planned, support is scaffolded and students are provided with feedback at appropriate times during the writing process.

I can confirm that that this programme compares well with similar programmes at my 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)

<p>Principles of EAP scholarship are embedded into the teaching and learning. Students are given the opportunity of engaging with language, literature and ideas from marketing, indeed, students are encouraged to look at the future assessment types from their target discipline. Again, the close ties with the marketing department ensure that students have the best possible preparation for their academic future.</p> <p>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></p> <p>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 marketing strand this year greatly exceeded the maximum size recommended by both professional bodies. Although the new module leader has made positive changes to the programme in light of this increase, the professional bodies may not view large class sizes favourably.</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 marketing discipline. 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. This certainly seems to be innovative and effective way to provide sufficiently robust feedback to a large cohort of students.</p> <p>The increased marks awarded to both content and sources (now 50%) is a fairly significant change to the marking criteria and is in line with EAP practice. Although much of the feedback to students engaged with content and sources, I did notice some feedback that dealt largely with language and grammar issues. This could be due to the employment of non-EAP specialists on summer pre-sessionals and can be an issue on the summer pre-sessional at my own institution. I wonder if changes need to be made to teacher induction and in particular teacher feedback training. I know that the module leader is aware of the effect this is having on student success and that she has plans for changes to the programme to ensure that there is a continued focus on sources and content both by the students and teachers.</p> <p>Marking is in line with assessment criteria.</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. The assessment criteria are thorough but student-facing. 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.</p> <p>I noted that the students who had grades at the lower end of the mark scale often had marks deducted for late submission, perhaps suggesting a lack of engagement with the programme or poor time-management. The feedback provided to these students gave clear information as to the lack of success and how to improve their performance.</p> <p>The presentations recorded demonstrated both effective communication skills and an engagement with disciplinary content.</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>		

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?	N/A
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
<i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i>		

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 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):*

Summer pre-sessional courses

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Language for Marketing (six-week pre-sessional course)

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

N/A

*Title and Name of Responder:**Position*:*

Module leader

Faculty / School of:

Language Centre; School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

*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

Thank you for the feedback.

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:

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:

Thank you for the feedback. It is true that our class sizes greatly exceeded the size recommended by professional bodies and that this is less than ideal, although as noted, we have implemented various solutions to address this issue.

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:

Thank you for the feedback. We will ensure that there is a greater focus on feedback in pre-course training in future so that less experienced EAP tutors are aware of the importance of focussing on content, structure and use of sources rather than minor language points.

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:

Thank you for your feedback.

Other comments

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

Thanks again, _____, for your encouraging and constructive feedback on the course. This year, there will be two co-leads rather than one lead, which should mean that we are better able to support our large team of teachers. I agree with your comments about providing teachers on temporary contracts with a permanent base. Obviously, this will be less relevant this summer due to current circumstances, but I am sure that the Language Centre will work towards this in future summers when we are 'back to normal'.