

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

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 29/07/2019

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

*Subject(s):*

Mandarin Chinese

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

All LfA Mandarin Chinese modules

*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.*

The speaking components at the lower intermediate and upper intermediate levels are well structured and have continued the good practice from 2017/18. The pair presentation task in semester 1 has also facilitated students to cultivate transferable skills, for example, team work, presentation skills, research skills, digital skills etc. The materials/contents of the final speaking task in semester 2 are relatively reflective to the current affairs which encourage students to be engaged in and be aware of what is happening in the target language speaking world and its relation to the world.

**Enhancements made from the previous year**

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

It was appreciated to see that the marked and annotated/ in-text commented portfolio project work samples were made available on the VLE after my suggestion last year. This has helped external understand tutor's approach to marking and tutor's feedback in the portfolio project component and prepare ahead of final discussion with tutor on the day of the external board meeting.

**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
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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 a External Examiner Mentor? Yes: <i>In my first year as external in 2015-16</i>	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 / 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*

My experience of the LfA programme over my four years of appointment has been extremely positive. I have enjoyed working with LfA colleagues and carrying out my role as external. It has provided me opportunity to see the excellent quality and professional organisation of the LfA language programme delivering in both academic and administrative areas. Over the years, I have found that the tutors' commitments to their work and students' learning experience impressive. The amendment of the number of tasks in the portfolio project component (reducing to Reading task x 1 and Writing task x 1 from 2018/19 onwards) at beginners and elementary levels has provided students a clear focus and platform to demonstrate their awareness and understanding of the TL in depth as well as in breadth in the portfolio component.

**Standards**

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y / N
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y / N
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y / N
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y / N
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y / N

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

The structure, content and design of module curriculum are appropriate to facilitate students to achieve ILOs set out in each module at different levels.  
The Aims and ILOs of the modules at different levels are comparable to the Institution-Wide Language Programme at other UK HE institutions that I have worked for and experienced as external.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y / N N/A
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<i>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)</i>		
14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	Y / N N/A
<i>Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:</i>		
15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	Y / N
<i>Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:</i>		
16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y / N
<i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i>		

## 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>The curriculum design (teaching, learning and assessment) of the modules has aligned with the ILOs. The design and structure of the assessment method are appropriate to assist students to achieve the module ILOs set out at different levels. The arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards are executed based on the institutional benchmark (e.g. marking criteria). There is consistency across all LfA Mandarin Chinese modules.</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>The structure of assessments was well put together. It has provided students adequate opportunity and platform in each aspect of the target language to display their achievement of the Aims and ILOs. The overall standard of students' performance is very good with a healthy number of students achieving first class on the final module mark.</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 portfolio project work, in my view as external, can be viewed as a pedagogically sound component and a task which also facilitate students to become autonomous learners. With a clear focus on each task</p>		

(Reading task x 1 and Writing task x 1) within the component, students are now well in place to demonstrate their awareness and understanding of the TL in depth as well as in breadth in the portfolio component.

### Suggestion

I would like to suggest that Leeds LfA may wish to look into how students can be supported with guidance/ advice in terms of choosing appropriate reading materials to complete their reading task/ portfolio project work. There was a number of cases in 2018-19 where students had chosen reading materials either well above their level or inappropriate (e.g. lyrics, poems, dialogues, etc) to be used in the task. This has resulted some students not being able to reflect and produce a piece of writing work at the required level. The challenging level, authenticity, expression and accuracy of the reading material could be reviewed by and agreed with the tutor before students completing the portfolio project work in order to facilitate students to achieve the ILOs of his component.

## 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 / N
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y / N
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y / N
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y / N
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y / N
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y / N
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y / N
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	Y / N
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	<del>Y / N</del> N/A
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	<del>Y / N</del> N/A
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting? <i>I attended the LfA External Examiners meeting.</i>	Y / N
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board? <i>I was satisfied with the recommendations of the LfA External Examiners meeting.</i>	Y / N
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y / N

*Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:*

I have attended the Board of external Examiners Meeting only. Therefore, question 33, 34 and 35 are not applicable.

## Other comments

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

It is a delight to see that there were new modules added to LfA Mandarin Chinese in 2018-19: Upper Intermediate and Beginners 10 credits in S2.

I would like to suggest that Leeds LfA may wish to look into how to make the materials on the VLE site more user-friendly. This means to name each file of exam papers, tutor feedback forms, speaking recordings/ filmings etc in a more 'consistent and user-friendly' way e.g. by using student number. There is a huge number of documents, sample exam papers, recordings, filmings available on the VLE site. In particular, asking students to state their student number at the beginning of each sub-task of their speaking assessment (e.g. presentation, role-play, Q&A) will be much appreciated. External receives voice recordings only and is completely new to students' voice. Sometimes, it is difficult to identify who is speaking without clear identity giving in the recordings.

By making access to relevant documents, exam papers, recordings, forms etc on the VLE site in a consistent and clear way will reduce the amount of time external spend on trying to match e.g. which tutor feedback form goes with which exam paper/ recording.

Many thanks for Leeds LfA's consideration about above in advance.

Finally, It has been a great pleasure working with LfA colleagues in the past four years in my role as external. I wish Leeds LfA every success in the future.

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

*Title and Name of Examiner:*

*Faculty / School of:*

*Subject(s):*

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

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

*Title and Name of Responder:*

*Position\*:*

*Faculty / School of:*

*Address for communication:*

*Email:*

*Telephone:*

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Mandarin Chinese
All LfA Mandarin Chinese modules
LCS Assessment Lead
Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies
University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT

*\*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 [qat@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:qat@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****LCS collective response:**

We are grateful to all those External Examiners (21/22) who identified evidence of innovation and/or good practice in their reports. It is clear that overall the School's programmes are regarded very positively and are identified as being of high quality. Externals were impressed with the high levels of knowledge, critical engagement, attainment and linguistic competence evidenced by our students.

In terms of innovation, Examiners highlighted new modules which better prepare students for developing research skills from as early as Level 1, modules which offered the opportunity for public engagement and new modes of assessment which were described as 'imaginative', offering students the chance to develop transferable skills.

The curriculum was described as 'dynamic', 'fresh' and 'relevant' and was commended for its coverage of contemporary developments and for being research-informed in terms of content and/or pedagogical approach. There were very positive comments on the diversity, variety and ambition of our modules.

The reports identified a number of areas where there is evidence of good practice: high quality research-informed teaching; programmes offering a diverse curriculum which covers a broad range of disciplines; and variety of assessment styles which stretch and challenge students. The commitment to embedding research elements in our undergraduate programme was seen as an excellent means of developing students' skills in preparation for the Final Year Project (FYP). Our students' engagement with this substantial piece of work and the impressive standard of performance were also highlighted.

Staff were commended for their commitment to their students and to refining their practice in a variety of areas. There was praise for their excellent teaching, their commitment to ensuring the curriculum is up-

to-date, and the quality of their guidance and feedback was seen as 'thorough', 'rich' and 'constructive'. The high level of support, particularly in helping Level 1 students' transition to the University, also received praise.

Assessment was found to be 'rigorous'. Marking was described as 'rigorous', 'robust', 'reliable', 'thorough' and 'consistent' and similarly the moderation process was identified as 'thorough' and 'transparent'.

**LfA response:**

We are very pleased that the External Examiner has identified our speaking components at the Lower and Intermediate and pair presentations to be examples of good practice.

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

**LCS collective response:**

Regarding enhancements from the previous year, it was encouraging to see evidence of subject areas responding to previous comments.

The reports commented on the following examples:

- research-inspired modules which are "a point of distinction" and attractive to potential students
- new modules which were a welcome addition to the curriculum and impress in terms of the design and delivery
- assessment elements which encourage students to communicate their work via public engagement
- encouraging students to formulate their own essay question at Level 2 in preparation for developing their research question for their FYP
- better use of the full range of marks
- increased use of online marking
- more assessment available on Minerva, making it easier for Externals to access the material ahead of their visit to Leeds in a time-efficient way
- a move towards less exam-based assessment and an increase in the amount of formative assessment in some parts of the School

**LfA response:**

We are very pleased that the External Examiner was happy with our response to her last year's report of reducing the workload at the portfolio task. This has been taken on board and all beginner and elementary students are now required to provide only 1 piece of reading task and 1 piece of writing task. We have also responded positively to the external Examiner's request of making marked portfolio samples available on Minerva for her scrutiny.

***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:*

**LCS collective response:**

Four matters for urgent attention were identified:

1. Two External Examiners raised concerns regarding the procedures for marking and moderating the FYP. As discussed at the MODL Exam Board, which was attended by one of the External Examiners who expressed concern, the School is proactively reviewing the procedures for marking and moderating the FYP now that it has been running successfully for three years. The FYP should be seen as a School-wide module and this is the approach that will be taken from 2019-20. With this in mind, the size of the

moderation team is to be increased to enable timely moderation across the School and to ensure consistency of marking. Please see the institutional response.

2. Two External Examiners commented on the withdrawal of programmes and expressed their regret about the decision. These decisions were taken by the School with much regret following consistently low recruitment. It is hoped, however, that our new undergraduate programmes in Languages and Cultures will both protect and strengthen our disciplines – and we are actively discussing ways to enhance access and widen participation – not least by reconsidering the binary distinction between languages taught ab initio and from advanced levels. We are also considering ways in which we might innovate in our taught postgraduate offer. We are exploring opportunities to make greater use of the existing MA in Social Research, which forms the foundational part of the ESRC-funded White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership (WRDTP) and provides a route for conversion from arts and humanities study at undergraduate level towards social science research. Our students will continue to be able to undertake Masters by Research as part of our School-wide programme and that this will form a solid foundation for PhD study.

3. One External Examiner commented on the difficulty matching coursework on Turnitin with the information on the marksheet. Greater use of the Student ID would address this issue. This will be discussed with the relevant Subject Area.

4. The fourth matter concerned a discrepancy between markers - this will be addressed in the Subject Area concerned.

**LfA response:**

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:*

**LCS collective response:**

We are very grateful to those External Examiners who have reached the end of their term of appointment. We thank you for your support, feedback, suggestions and collegiality during your tenure. We are also very grateful to those of you who acted as mentors for External Examiners who are new to the role.

It is very pleasing to have positive feedback on the FYP and in particular the diversity of topics offered and the students' engagement with our research ethos. Regarding moderation, we are currently reviewing the process but remain of the view that School-wide moderation is important for a number of reasons, not least of all because it should be regarded as a School module.

We appreciate the positive comments on the high standard of learning and teaching, student performance, greater transparency in the marking and moderation processes, and feedback which feeds forward to enhance student learning and performance.

As suggested by one of our Externals, since moving to the 0-100 marking scale and being encouraged to use the full scale, we will continue to monitor the impact of marks at the higher end of the scale. We will also compare mark ranges and profiles across the School to ensure we have a School-wide sense of the distribution of marks.

**LfA response:**

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:*

**LCS collective response:**



It is once again very pleasing to have confirmation of the strong influence of Research on the teaching at all levels of our programmes and for our approaches to Learning and Teaching to be recognised as inspiring students to engage in their own research. Our programmes are seen as well designed, balanced, diverse and yet intellectually coherent. The ILOs are confirmed as consistent with the level of award and meet the expectations of subject benchmarks. The assessment is perceived as well designed and effective in enabling students to demonstrate their achievement of the ILOs. It was felt that there is clear progression too. Student performance is confirmed as comparable to that of similar institutions. The curriculum emphasises critical thinking and independence and encourages students to take responsibility for their learning. The range of topics chosen for the FYP reflect the diversity of staff research interests in the School. The quality of the supervision of the FYP was commended.

One External encouraged staff to explore how our students can showcase their work. In this context we note the very positive engagement with the School-wide FYP conference at which all students have the opportunity to present and to receive feedback on their work from peers and tutors. We will also continue to encourage students to participate in the University's annual UG Research Experience to share ideas regarding further opportunities.

Another External commented on the 'deep knowledge' of the subject matter and of relevant teaching methods and encouraged staff to disseminate their practice more widely. Here we note the priority given by the School to supporting scholarship – and the opportunities given for dissemination through both local events and publications – as well as financial support provided for activities further afield.

One External questioned the 'extensive use of formal exams above other forms of assessment' – this will be addressed by the relevant Subject Area but this is one of the aspects which the University's Leeds Expectations for Assessment and Feedback project is expected to highlight.

Regarding marking, one External felt that the marking of the essay component was rather harsh and should be reviewed – this will be addressed by the relevant Subject Area.

Progression was raised by one External with respect to 10-credit language modules – this will be addressed by the relevant Subject Area. On a positive note, it was pleasing to see recognition of the 'perfect example' of integrating research skills into language learning and evidence of students developing a deeper awareness of the culture and society.

#### **LfA response:**

We are glad that the External Examiner found the structure and design of the module curriculum to be appropriate.

## **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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It is encouraging to note that our assessment and feedback processes and the quality of marking are deemed robust. Marking and moderation processes are described as 'rigorous', 'consistent', 'detailed'; and 'transparent'.

The variety of assessment tasks was praised, with the assessment allowing students to demonstrate their learning. Module moderation procedures are seen as robust, clear, well documented and thorough. Marking was felt to be fair and transparent and moderation was felt to be detailed and transparent – there is clear evidence of improvement in this area. Overall student performance was seen as very good with some students performing "exceptionally well"; some of the work in the target language, in spoken

and written form, was seen as particularly impressive. Feedback was often described as 'excellent' and was praised for being framed in a positive, supportive way to the student.

We welcome the Examiners' suggestions which included reviewing the rubric for the FYP marking which refers to first and second markers; ensuring that the External is provided with a full set of module marks which includes the average mark; seeking to motivate students who are keen to complete their FYP in the target language; mapping the assessment timeline for students indicating the pressure points; including a broader range of formative assessments to develop transferable skills; making greater use of online marking and feedback; ensuring at least two feed forward points in the feedback.

One External commented on the time commitment required for the individual supervision of FYPs. While this workload is reflected in the School's workload model, the time dedicated to all activities is something we keep under active consideration.

The FYP moderation processes are seen as 'problematic' by a few of our External Examiners. This will be addressed in 2019-20 and one key focus will be on the School taking ownership of the process so it does not sit with Subject Areas given that it is a School module. There was also a suggestion that the School should review the policy of allowing the supervisor to comment on a restricted draft – this will be reviewed in line with University guidelines on this aspect.

One External's comments on the marking of text production i.e. while it is 'not too generous ... it seems to be at the upper limit', will be addressed by the relevant Subject Area.

There was a comment about the use of examination feedback. The School's policy, as per the CoPA 5.4, is to make examination feedback available and information on this should be in the relevant Module Handbook.

There was also a comment about 'harmonising the appearance ... of the VLE' – the new University Minerva template should achieve this.

#### **LfA response:**

It is very pleasing to read that our assessment structures are appropriate, and that our marking is fair and consistent. Regarding how to select the correct reading materials, students have been made aware of the topics to be taught, as highlighted in the Scheme of Work.

Concerning the External Examiner's comment on the assessment of the portfolio, this has been addressed and no portfolio assessment for Mandarin beginner and elementary learners from 2019-20, so no further actions required here.

## **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:*

#### **LCS collective response:**

It was very pleasing to have feedback on our exam boards, confirming that the Boards were run in a smooth and professional manner and were conducted 'appropriately with transparency' Decisions made 'carefully and fairly' and staff were thanked for their 'openness and transparency' during the scrutiny process. It is appreciated that the preparation for the Boards which ensures their smooth-running is recognised.

Greater use of online marking and greater availability of material on Minerva had assisted Examiners with the task of looking at materials and student work ahead of their visit. The University's new Minerva template will help address requests for greater consistency.

We appreciate the positive feedback on the level of support from both support and academic staff. This was described as 'outstanding' with arrangements and processes carried out with 'great efficiency'.

We are grateful for the suggestions regarding enhancements to our procedures and processes for the FYP. Regarding the feedback from one of the Externals who attended the MODL Exam Board which includes the FYP, as discussed, the School will review its procedures for the FYP and the module will be treated as the School module which it is. The size of the moderation team will increase to enable timely moderation across the School. We will review the hand in date and consider whether moving it forward would resolve the issue of the time pressure for marking and moderation to be completed and we will consider whether it is possible for supervisors not to mark FYPs, taking the University's guidelines into consideration. We will clarify the moderation procedure to avoid the issues experienced this year. We will work towards achieving greater flexibility in the way that second markers are appointed i.e. according to their expertise. We plan to continue to invite two Externals to take part in the Board and to feed into the decision-making and discussions. We will ensure that FYP marks are not released to students ahead of the MODL Exam Board.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our External Examiners for the vital role they play in subject exam boards in terms of ratifying module marks and providing the opportunity to discuss matters of comparability of student performance at module level with national benchmarks and other UK institutions.

**LfA response:**

N/A

## Other comments

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

**LCS collective response:**

We appreciate the very positive comments regarding the 'excellent' work produced by students on their FYP and the role of supervisors in this outcome. We are pleased to learn that access to Minerva generally worked better this year. We acknowledge requests for more student work and feedback to be made available and for the naming of files to be user-friendly - we will work towards this.

We thank our Externals for their feedback, suggestions and encouragement in the process of continuous improvement.

As suggested, we will review the marking criteria for 80-100 with the aim of ensuring greater consistency with the award of marks at this level.

As previously acknowledged, decisions to withdraw programmes were taken with much regret following a pattern of a disappointing level of recruitment.

We were sorry to hear of the difficulties one of our new Externals had experienced as regards getting to grips with Minerva. We will ensure that the member of the support staff who liaises with our Externals works more closely with External Examiners in the first year of their appointment.

**LfA response:**

We thank the External Examiner for her comments on making the materials on Minerva more accessible. We will make the changes as requested going forward. Selected samples of students' work in each module will be made available to the External Examiner.