

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19

QAT Received 11/07/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Languages for All

Subject(s):

French

Programme(s) / Module(s):

LfA FLTU French modules

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. Good practice:

- Clarity of moderation and sampling of students work.
- Detailed and clear feedback given 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.

Thanks to improvements made in the organisation of sending out draft papers and of the VLE transparency has improved for the external examiner.

I understand that work has started for next year to move from paired to individual orals at the lower levels. This is interesting to me because at my institution we have just this year moved from individual to paired orals. The advantages of the paired orals for the students are that the assessment more closely aligns with class practice, the disadvantage is that the performance can be influenced by the pairing. Also consider if you have two members of staff marking the oral in real time, if the orals remain as long, it will be more time consuming for staff.

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

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

| | | |
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| 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 |

| | | |
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| 3. | Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor? | Y /N |
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For Examiners completing their term of appointment only

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| 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

During the three years that I have acted as external examiner, the team have introduced incremental changes. Most notably the phasing out the portfolios for the beginners level to be replaced by an in class test, which has been piloted during my time as external. This change was in response to issues around plagiarism and also the sheer weight of assessment load for students and marking and feedback for staff. This is in line with other programmes offering LfA modules.

There has been year on year improvement in the organisation of samples on the VLE. This year I was able to view samples for all modules and navigate easily, which meant that the marking and moderation process is now more transparent to the external across the programme. For the first time this year, where relevant and if necessary, tutors wrote short guidance notes or asked me to look at particular samples, also helpful. My thanks to the French team for these improvements.

Marking and moderation has always been carried out to a high standard.

Drafts of assessments are sent out to me by one member of staff who acts as a coordinator and this is done in a timely manner, in my first year each tutor sent me their assessments and it is much better to have them all sent by a coordinator, it also makes feeding back simpler. The assessments are well designed and when I have had any suggestions these have been responded to appropriately.

Overall the standard of students work is in line with other Languages for All programmes and every year there are examples of outstanding work at every level. The proficiency of the high performing students in the Advanced French module and the Introduction to professional French is impressive.

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 LfA French modules have been designed in accordance with the CEFR. The topics and tasks set are appropriate to the levels and clearly engaging for the students.

At all levels students have the opportunity to present topics of personal interest and they work on group presentations in all but beginners' level.

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| <p>In all the 20 credit modules there is clear progression from one level to the next both in terms of language acquisition and outcomes.</p> <p>In the 10 credit Beginner and Lower Intermediate modules, progression was not so clear and there is less evidence that weaker students had really mastered the material in the speaking tasks. This year in the module FLU 1329 I particular noticed that in the speaking tasks the progression between Beginners and Lower intermediate level was not clear.</p> | | |
| 13. | Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear? | Y |
| <p><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></p> <p>The curriculum is current and comparable to other institutions delivering Languages for All programmes. The materials are engaging and contemporary. Students have the opportunity to present their own research in the target language.</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)? | N |
| <p><i>Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:</i></p> | | |

Assessment and Feedback

| | | |
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| 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 LfA French modules and assessments have been designed in accordance with the CEFR. There is clear evidence that LfA tutors adhere to general university marking criteria, benchmarked against assessment of particular language activities. The marking criteria are transparent and consistently applied. There is good evidence of consistent and thorough moderation.</p> <p>The core tasks assessments for some 20 credit beginners' modules (FLTU1302, FLTU1303 for example) seem to be poor differentiators and the marks are sometimes very high. This is not unusual for this type of test at an early stage in the course, one option could be to reduce the weighting of the core tasks from 30% to 20% in order to reduce the impact of the high marks on the overall final mark.</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 |

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:

There are some excellent performances at every level and at the higher levels, students are able to speak and write freely, in the correct register, on a variety of topics.

Overall the spread of marks is good, which means that students of all abilities are able to demonstrate what they have learnt by the end of the course.

Only the 10 credit one semester modules seemed to present challenges to students in some of the groups and this appears to some extent to be linked to their linguistic background. The team might like to review these modules and how they are assessed. The speaking tasks for the module FLTU 1329 demonstrate some of the difficulties these students have in responding to questions.

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

Across the programme I saw examples of very thorough and comprehensive feedback, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement for the students. An example of good practice.

The Progression and Awards Process

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| 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 |

| | | |
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| 35. | Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board? | N/A |
| <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

As this is my last year as External for the LfA programme in Leeds, I would like to say how much I have enjoyed working with the French team and the discussions we have had over the years. The programme is well organised and every year there is evidence of excellence in teaching and learning. Most students perform well and are engaged, marking and feedback is also very thorough. I hope your assessment reforms next year go well and your programme continues to go from strength to strength.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

French

Programme(s) / Module(s):

LfA FLTU French modules

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

Title and Name of Responder:

Position:*

LCS Assessment Lead & Director of Languages for All

Faculty / School of:

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Languages Cultures and Societies

Address for communication:

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

Email:

Telephone:

0113 343 3570

**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**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:

It is very pleasing that the External Examiner found our French modules to be well organised and that every year there is evidence of excellence in teaching and learning. We are also very pleased to see that the External Examiner is very happy with the clarity of moderation of student work and the detailed and constructive feedback provided to students.

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 pleased that our response to the last year's report has helped the External Examiner to access materials on Minerva ahead of her visit in a time-efficient way.

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:

We appreciate the External Examiner's positive comments on the high standard of our marking and moderation. It is also satisfying that the External Examiner observed that overall the standard of

students' work is in line with other Languages for All programmes, and that every year there are examples of outstanding work at every level.

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:

The External Examiner noted the core tasks assessments for some 20 credit beginners' modules (FLTU1302, FLTU1303 for example) seem to be poor differentiators and the marks are sometimes very high. This is not unusual for this type of test at an early stage in the course, one option could be to reduce the weighting of the core tasks from 30% to 20% in order to reduce the impact of the high marks on the overall final mark.

In response to the external's recommendation, the weighting of the core tasks (for Beginners & Elementary) have been reduced from 30% to 20% from this academic year 2019-2020.

- The External Examiner observed that the 10 credit modules one semester seemed to present challenges in some of the groups and this appears to some extent to be linked to their linguistic background. In response to this comment, tutors will actively encourage students to consolidate

and extend the learning done in class by uploading supplementary digital learning materials on Minerva and providing additional one-to-one consultation.

- The External Examiner suggested that the team might like to review these modules and how they are assessed. The speaking tasks for the module FLTU 1329 demonstrate some of the difficulties these students have in responding to questions. In response to the external's recommendation, the speaking task has now been removed from the 1329 module, and replaced with a writing task.
- The External Examiner remarked that this year in the module FLU 1329, in the speaking tasks the progression between Beginners and Lower intermediate level was not clear.

This year due to the high number of students enrolling on this module in semester 1, a second group (1329-Group 2) was created for a group of exchange students with a common mother tongue (Mandarin) who had been struggling in the first 1329 group. We recognised that some of these students would need greater support and a revision has been provided to get them up to the level required. This year, no second group was created. 1329 students are all taught at Lower Intermediate level. Exchange students who wish to enrol on a 10-credit module at elementary level are now being allowed by their home university to enrol on the 20-credit elementary module.

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:

We are very pleased that the External Examiner found that there are some excellent performances at every level, and that students are able to speak and write freely, in the correct register, on a variety of topics.

We will continue to do all we can to ensure that students of all abilities are able to demonstrate what they have learnt in their course.

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 very positive comments on our programme. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her work and recommendations, which have helped to strengthen our FLTU French modules.