

ANNUAL EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

Name of Institution Examined: INTO UEA

Faculty/School:

Course Title(s):

International Pre-Sessional English Programme
Language and Study Skills Modules

Academic Year:

2020/21

External Examiner Name:

Jane Sjoberg

**External Examiner's home
University / College or Other
Professional / Institutional
Affiliation:**

University of Birmingham

NB – External Examiner reports are widely circulated, therefore students and staff should not be individually identified. Course Teams will respond to the recommendations made by the External Examiner in the boxes provided. The response should be counter signed by the Head of HE or equivalent within ten working days.

An electronic copy of this report should be emailed to the Head of HE (or equivalent) at the partner institution, to arrive no later than one month after the main assessment board meeting. You will receive a copy of the report with the Course Team's response completed.

Sufficient Evidence Checklist

Please can you confirm the following:

Programme materials

| Did you receive: | Y | N | N/A |
|--|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Programme handbook(s)? | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Programme regulations (these may be in the programme handbook)? | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Module descriptions (these may be in the programme handbook)? | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Assessment briefs/marketing criteria? | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Draft examination papers

a. (i) Did you receive all the draft papers? * X

- (ii) If not, was this at your request? X
- b. (i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? X
- (ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? X
- c. Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? X

* I did not receive the essay titles for the 4-week course this year as they were included for assessment under special circumstances (7 students with 0.5 below in one skill were enrolled onto this normally unconditional course). All other draft assessments were provided.

Marking examination scripts

- a. (i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts? X
- (ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory? X
- b. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate? X
- c. Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks? X

Dissertations/project reports

- a. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? X
- b. Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate? X

Coursework/continuously assessed work

- a. Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment? X
- b. Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory? X

Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements

- a. Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements? X

Final examiners' meeting

- a. Were you able to attend the meeting? X
- b. Was the meeting conducted to your satisfaction? X

c. Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board of Examiners?

X

Maintaining Threshold Academic Standards

Please provide feedback on whether:

The programme and its component parts are coherent with learning outcomes aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor and subject benchmark statements where applicable

Programmes and module learning outcomes were adapted to reflect online delivery (where necessary) while maintaining a high level of learning and teaching. Course structure, skills balance and language focus are consistent with similar courses in other institutions and are

The programme reflects appropriate PSRB requirements where applicable

N/A

Assessments in modules of the same level are of a comparable standard to those in other UK HEIs

Assessments were thoughtfully adapted to provide a rounded picture of student ability in core skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing reflecting assessments in similar UK HEI pre-sessionals.

The curriculum is current

Course input and assessments both reflect a careful approach to using up to date, relevant materials that reflect core interests of students going on to a variety of discipline majors while supporting language skills. Students and staff feedback shows high levels of satisfaction with the curriculum and associated materials and there is scope for teachers to adapt and tailor these to the needs of their particular cohort whilst maintaining core learning outcomes.

Assessment criteria, marking schemes and arrangements for classification are set at the appropriate level

All assessments are in line with threshold benchmarks required for UKVI. Criteria have improved considerably since I joined the team as EE and this is very good to see. Mark schemes and criteria are clear and appear easy to use for markers as well as being easy to understand for students. Some work remains to ensure that the whole range of marks is reflected below 45%. Where the range of marks is not used at the top and bottom end of the criteria, this should be clearly signalled.

Measuring Achievement, Rigour and Fairness

Please provide feedback on whether:

The types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students, the level of study and the expected outcomes

Changes to the assessment process this year have been generally successful. Particularly impressive were the speaking assessments that assessed students' ability to interact in a semi-academic conversational context (reflecting the authentic situation of a seminar) as well as ability to give more scripted formal presentations. I support the decision to replace the long written research paper with a timed writing text with reading input as students are sufficiently prepared for the study skills required for researching and writing up longer pieces of work elsewhere in the curriculum. Perhaps consider using short extracts from a variety of papers for the timed writing test as this will ensure 1) that writing performance does not rely too heavily on the ability to read and assimilate the input texts 2) copy-paste plagiarism will be easier to identify.

The marking scheme/grading criteria have been properly and consistently applied, and internal marking is of an appropriate standard, fair and reliable

Design of exam-style assessments has improved considerably to ensure that marking is consistent, fair and reliable. Rigorous procedures of double marking and moderation are evident and assessments of all skills are graded in a fair and consistent manner. Second marker judgements rarely appear to differ greatly with first markers, indicating good training and moderation has taken place before the marking process begins.

The assessment processes are carried out in accordance with the institution's regulations and procedures

I confirm that INTO UEA has made every effort ensure that all assessments and any changes due to Covid 19 were in line with wider UEA regulations and procedures.

Procedures governing mitigating/extenuating circumstances, academic integrity/misconduct and borderline performances have been considered fairly and equitably applying institutional regulations

A fair approach was taken to ensure that one student experiencing technical challenges could repeat the exam. This was an exceptional circumstance and I commend the team's willingness to extend every opportunity to the student concerned. Plagiarism procedures are not subject to UEA regulations as the university deems the pre-session course as formative. Poor academic practice is highlighted in feedback to students in planning and drafting stages of their writing. However, I suggest that instances of poor academic practice be indicated more specifically in written feedback to students as this is insufficiently highlighted in the gradesheet which is currently the only feedback provided to students in the final submission for summative assessments. This should not be too onerous a task for teachers, many of whom already write comments on the mark sheet recording 1st, 2nd and final grades. Space could be included on the gradesheet for a few lines of feedback which should include as appropriate a warning to students against excessive copy-paste, inappropriately signalled long block quotations and other instances of poor academic practice identified.

Borderlines were considered and grades adjusted as appropriate based on teacher and programme director judgements on individual performance. It is important to have a clear and transparent trail of assessment judgements. Where grades for borderline cases and marginal fails have been changed based on tutor recommendations and/or grades for formative work, this should therefore be accompanied by a written rationale justifying the changes made. This should be done by the teacher for each individual concerned and signed and dated both by the teacher and by the programme director.

Comparability of Standards and Student Performance

Reflecting on your experience at other institutions please provide feedback on:

The comparability of standards and student achievement:

- **across the modules within a single programme**
- **across programmes within a single subject area in an awarding institution**
- **across programmes within a single subject area across institutions of which you have experience**
- **any of the above, across cohorts during your period of appointment**

Standards of marks and pass-rates are comparable with other preessional programmes. I note with pleasure that teachers are willing to award higher grades (where appropriate). The 6-week cohorts (online and on campus) have tended to have fewer borderline cases than 10-week courses. This is to be expected as their IELTS scores reflect a higher level of language ability at the start of the course.

Enhancement of Quality

Please provide comment and recommendations on:

Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment you have observed

Responses to COVID-19 in terms of course delivery and assessment practices have been excellent, with adaptations to ensure quality of teaching and learning in both the online and F2F environment. As mentioned above, the inclusion of different types of speaking assessment ensures a rounded picture of spoken competence. The structured approach to assessments (with teachers' notes) facilitates consistency and clarifies processes to ensure that assessments run smoothly. The decision to get students to speak individually first before engaging in the discussion is excellent practice, as is the requirement of the student to answer a question from the assessor at the end of the discussion as this allows students every opportunity to showcase their oral ability.

The choice of a timed writing assessment to replace the longer researched report is also good practice. Instead of providing whole texts that students prepare, you could consider make the test a 'reading into writing' test which involves providing a series of short extracts (5-8 lines) from a variety of sources that students can draw upon in the exam. It means giving a bit of extra time for the 'reading' part as these extracts would be unseen before the exam, but it does mean that it is easier to spot copy-paste and really does show where students are able to make a coherent argument and where instead they simply string a load of quotes/paraphrases/copy-paste together and hope for the best.

Instructions of assessments to students were very clear and well formulated. I would, however, continue to recommend that both upper and lower word count limits be specified on writing assessments. This was highlighted earlier on draft assessments and the upper

word limit was specified but not the lower. Justification for this was given that under-length writing should be penalised in the criterion for task achievement. However, this may not be obvious to the student taking the test and in some cases, grades awarded on under-length scripts did not always signal this specifically (as the task achievement criterion includes several aspects of writing, not just length).

Student feedback provided in the form of notes from focus groups indicates a high level of satisfaction and a good student experience.

Opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students

Feedback at the summative stage in the form of a short comment will enhance learning as student can use this to feed forward into their first assignments as they progress onto their chosen courses.

Also, please:

State whether you received sufficient evidence to enable your role to be fulfilled. If not, please provide details

Yes. I was provided with everything I required with the exception of the draft essay titles for the 4-week course (see comment above).

State whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to your satisfaction

The recording of grades and criteria have greatly improved so that it is much easier to track students' achievement across all modes of assessment. It is also a pleasure to see how the crafting of exam-style test items (reading and listening) has improved in response to feedback.

Use this space to address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body

N/A

Give an overview of your term of office if this is your final year

RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN

Please list your recommendations for action by the course team:

| External Examiner's Recommendations for action <i>(to be completed by External Examiner)</i> | Course Team's Response (action to be taken and measurable outcomes) <i>(to be completed by Course Leader)</i> | By whom <i>(to be completed by Course Leader)</i> | By when <i>(to be completed by Course Leader)</i> | Progress as of February 2022__ <i>(to be completed by Course Leader)</i> | Progress as of end of Year <i>(to be completed by Course Leader)</i> |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| Indicate on criteria clearly where grades/bands below and above those available are not used. | Agreed. | Rosalind Boote | May 2022 | Will review in May | |
| Provide a written rationale to justify change in final grade based on tutor recommendations/formative grades. This should be done for each student concerned and signed and dated by the teacher and the programme director. | I have already made such a document ready to use in 2022. This is a new recommendation from Jane. | Rosalind Boote | On -going | The document is ready for this year | |
| Please indicate both upper and lower word limits on writing assessments and the penalties incurred for exceeding these. | The upper limit and penalty was indicated but not the lower level. However, this can be done for next year. | Rosalind Boote | May 2022 | This will be done when writing the new assessments | |
| Include space on the gradesheet for a few lines of feedback which should include as appropriate a warning to students against excessive copy-paste, inappropriately signalled long block | Will need to think about this as we do give feedback in the formative tasks but not in the summative as students do not get their work returned. However, if we do act on | | | As above | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------|---|--|
| quotations and other instances of poor academic practice identified. | Jane's recommendation to change the summative writing, it may not be such an issue going forward. | | | | |
| Please ensure that all teachers follow the same procedures regarding filming (to ensure consistent conditions for all candidates) and recording grades of assessments. It is hard to notice discrepancies and missing elements if teachers are doing things differently. Please ensure that student names are visible on recordings and that students who have a nickname also give their given name – this makes for easier identification when EE is moderating assessments. | A good recommendation. These discrepancies came out various IT capabilities of the teachers and the resources in the room. | Rosalind Boote | On-going | This issue will be addressed with teachers during exam training | |

Report completed by:

Signature

Jane Sjoberg

Date: 17/09/21

COURSE TEAM'S GENERAL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Jane has given us fair and constructive recommendations most of which are straightforward for us to implement for next year. They should ensure our procedures are more robust and fair.

Responses and Action Plan completed by:

Course Leader:

Date: 27/10/21

Rosalind Boote

(Please print name and sign)

Countersigned by:

Head of HE (or equivalent)

Date:

Jeremy Moyle

26/10/21

MID-YEAR REVIEW OF ACTIONS (FEBRUARY 20 22)

To be completed by Course Leader:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Mid-Year Review of Actions Completed: | Signature: Rosalind Boote | Date: 4/2/22 |
| External Examiner Notified: | Signature: | Date: |

YEAR END REVIEW OF ACTIONS (MONTH 20)

To be completed by Course Leader:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| Year End Review of Actions Completed: | Signature: | Date: |
| External Examiner Notified: | Signature: | Date: |

To be completed by the Academic Partnerships:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| A | No action identified | |
| B | Identified action and picked up appropriately | |
| C | Identified action and not picked up appropriately or action not identified | |
| | | |

To be completed by Academic Director of Partnerships:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| A | No action identified | |
| B | Identified action and picked up appropriately | |
| C | Identified action and not picked up appropriately or action not identified | |
| | | |

DOCUMENT OWNER: Academic Partnerships

DOCUMENT TYPE: Form

APPROVED BY: Academic Partnerships

VERSION NUMBER: 2

DUE FOR REVIEW: June 2020

VERSION LOG:

| Date | Version no. | Summary of changes | Author | Approved by |
|-------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| May 2019 | 2 | Updated to include table for mid-year review of action plan | Academic Partnerships | Academic Partnerships |