

Arab Open University

Summary of External Examiners Reports

Academic Year: 2022-2023

Semester: Summer

Programme: ELL

Tracks: ELLT

Number of Modules Examined by the External Examiners: 13

1. Chief External Examiners response and Comments:

Please confirm that the assessment and standards set for the programme are consistent and appropriate, and that the processes for assessment and determination of awards are fair, reliable across the provision.

- I can confirm that the standards set at the AOU are appropriate for the award, based on my knowledge of the appropriate documentation shared with me during my term of office as EE and, latterly, as CEE.
- I was happy to note that the assessment and standards set for these modules (and, indeed, for the programmes as a whole) are consistent and appropriate, and that the processes for assessment and determination of awards, certainly inasmuch as they are reflected in these modules, are reliable, fair and transparent.
- “I commend the range of assessment, course materials, and texts on the modules.”

- The assessments can be clearly mapped against the stated objectives and outcomes of the modules, and of the programme as a whole.
- I agreed with the grading and commentary throughout. The grading criteria, which are made explicit to students, are consistently applied throughout all forms of assessment.
- The administration of the assessments of these modules is very efficient. The FEC and CEC are chaired very well and efficiently by Professor Aziz Thabit Saeed. The EEs are given sight of all essential materials.

Please confirm that sufficient information and evidence of professional work and students' assessment were -received by the programmes' external examiners to enable them to t fulfill their role.

- I can confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable External Examiner's duties to be fulfilled.
- This is good and I have no issues to raise this Summer Semester. I saw, approved and commented upon TMA, MTA and examination scripts in advance.
- The quality of teaching and learning is high. The students on the course indubitably think so, on the evidence of the highly laudatory things said at the CEE and EE meeting with them.

Commendations:

- FLS students speak very positively about the detailed feedback on their written assignments but also on the subsequent 1:1 chats which are also offered. They also speak very highly of the Writing Centre, the Reading Centre, workshops on academic writing, tips on common errors in writing and advice on composition. FLS has a commendable mixture of innovation and the continuance of good practice, and I **commend** this balance.

Suggestions for Enhancement

Weaker candidates do not address the questions posed them or are poor in terms of the quality of their English.

FLS's response endorsed by Prof. Strachan:

Weaker students receive consistent support through weekly follow-up sessions at the Writing Centre. In particular, those who tend to stray from the main topic and "do not address the questions posed them" are guided towards a more focused approach, with reminders of the foundational principles taught in their EL121 and EL117 courses.

2. Extracts from External Examiners report form

External Examiner Name: Prof. John Strachan

Examined Modules: EA300A/ EA300B Children's Literature

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

a. The academic standards for the programme/module.

"These modules are of a high quality, with good, well put together course materials. I commend the range of assessment, course materials, and texts on the modules (from YA novels to infants' picture books)."

b. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes

- "The quality of students' work in A300A and A300B is very similar to comparable courses on Children's Literature in the United Kingdom."

c. The quality of students' work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes

- "The examples of students' work which I read offered detailed evidence of a well-designed module, which is delivered to students with real insight, enthusiasm, and patience. The assessments can be clearly mapped against the stated objectives and outcomes of the modules, and of the programme as a whole.
- The quality of students' work in A300A and A300B is very similar to comparable courses on Children's Literature in the United Kingdom."

d. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

Strengths

- "The strong students engage carefully and judiciously with the texts at hand.
- I met several of FLS's students on the Bahrain campus and they were highly complementary about the university, the faculty and their teachers. I was struck by the intelligence, curiosity, and confidence of the FLS students. Many of them had a number of strings to their bow; as well as students of literature they were translators, creative writers, musicians, gamers and, in one case, a marine biologist. They all had a very clear sense of what the Arab Open University could add to their careers and a clear sense of why they were studying at the university. One female student said that she had found studying at AOU a 'life-changing experience' and it had given her the confidence to believe that she could do anything during her future career."

Weaknesses:

- "Weaker candidates do not address the questions posed them or are poor in terms of the quality of their English."

e. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)

“I was happy to note that the assessment and standards set for these modules (and, indeed, for the programmes as a whole) are consistent and appropriate, and that the processes for assessment and determination of awards, certainly inasmuch as they are reflected in these modules, are reliable, fair and transparent.”

f. Standards of Marking and grading students' assessments

“I agreed with the grading and commentary throughout. The grading criteria, which are made explicit to students, are consistently applied throughout all forms of assessment. All students, however, whether excellent or not-quite-so-good, are given the chance to develop and improve their interpretive and hermeneutical skills.”

“FLS students speak very positively about the detailed feedback on their written assignments but also on the subsequent 1:1 chats which are also offered.”

External Examiner Name: Prof. John Strachan

Examined Modules: A230 Reading and Studying Literature (I and II)

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

a. The academic standards for the programme/module.

- “I can confirm that the standards set at the AOU are appropriate for the award, based on my knowledge of the appropriate documentation shared with me.

- I can also confirm that the standards set are equivalent to comparable courses of study in English Literature in the United Kingdom, based on my knowledge of teaching and examining, including an extensive amount of external examining, over the last thirty years.”

b. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes

“I examined a good range of scripts from both A230A and A230B. I can confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable my External Examiner’s duties to be fulfilled.”... the best scripts were impressive in terms of analysis and well written in terms of their English.”

c. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes

“I saw A samples, F samples and in-betweeners, so to speak. I agreed with the marking – the best scripts were impressive in terms of analysis and well written in terms of their English.”

“In terms of the scripts which I read this time around, I saw real consistency in terms of marking – there was no sense of ‘oh, it’s summer I can’t really be bothered with this’ about the marking, which was, as ever scrupulous.”

d. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

The best scripts were impressive in terms of analysis and well written in terms of their English.”

“The F scripts were irredeemable: on attention to the texts nominally under discussion and weak in terms of English. I was, nonetheless, pleased to see direct advice to the failed students as to how to improve matters.”

e. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)

- “I confirm that the assessment and standards for A230A and A230B are appropriate, fair and fairly and consistently applied throughout.”

f. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments

“I confirm that the processes for assessment and the determination of marks are reliable, transparent, and fair throughout the provision.”

External Examiner Name: Dr. Gabriel Ozon

Examined Modules: E304A & B: Exploring English Grammar I & II

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

a. The academic standards for the programme/module.

- “The standards set are appropriate for the award, or award element.”

b. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes

- “The quality of student work is varied, which is likely a reflection of varying skillsets and/or level of engagement on the part of the students. This variation is certainly comparable to that of similar programmes elsewhere.”

c. The quality of students' work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes

- "The overall impression is that students do better at completing concept-checks and similar exercises than at writing and analysis.
- Some students (who married linguistic knowledge with language skills) produced excellent and insightful analyses."

d. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

Strength:

- "Some students (who married linguistic knowledge with language skills) produced excellent and insightful analyses."

Weakness:

- "Some students struggled when asked to put their thinking into words.

I believe a very strong emphasis on writing skills may well hold the key for improving student performance all round."

e. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)

- "The assessments are well designed. I have made a number of suggestions, but overall, they were minor and more relevant to marking considerations.
- The various assignments together prod, examine, and satisfy the stated objectives and learning outcomes.
- I confirm that the assessment and standards are appropriate and consistently applied throughout. I would also confirm that the

processes for assessment and the determination of marks are transparent, reliable, and fair.”

f. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments

- “The marking is fair.
- Marking guidelines and rubrics are provided to all branches, and an exercise of marking consistency (CBM) is carried out scrupulously. This is geared towards ensuring parity across branches in the marking of these modules, which (besides the occasional mistake) is very clearly achieved.
- I was sent detailed documentation of the modules and had access to an appropriate number of scripts (from first class to fails).”

External Examiner Name: Dr. Sarah Etchells

Examined Modules: U214 A & B Worlds of English (I) & (II)

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

a. The academic standards for the programme/module.

- “I can confirm that the standards set are appropriate for the subject benchmarks, with the most able students achieving well along with those that are willing to engage thoroughly with course. There is a clear progression from one module to the next in content, academic and transferable skills and that able engaged students’ progress well.”

b. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes

- “The bell curve of marks follows a comparable trajectory to British HEIs and students’ work continues to be on a par with students in the UK in terms of both knowledge and subject skills.”

c. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes

- “The work at the top end of the range was extremely articulate and showed a full understanding of the content of the course and an ability to engage critically.
- This use of analysis and evaluation at the higher end of scripts evidences that the students have been taught well including getting students from fail grades to pass grades.”

d. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

Strength:

- “Use of analysis and evaluation at the higher end of scripts evidences that the students have been taught well including getting students from fail grades to pass grades.”

Weaknesses:

“The weaker students struggled as usual, with their language use as well as lower engagement with the content of the course. The results at the lower end were inconsistent, either answers too brief to make a reasonable assessment of, or the students had not read the questions carefully and their answers were ‘off task’ and in some cases the language used by some of the very low end students was just too weak to assess.

I think work needs to be done in looking at students English Language levels at point of entry and this being recorded as it would be useful for the

programme to see if this accounts for some of the weaker work seen in the scripts examined.”

e. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and marking schemes)

- “The staff should be applauded in their efforts. There is clear co-operation across branches and it was good to see minutes of the Cross Branch Marking meetings and see the discussions within the teams around standardisation and other issues.”

f. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments

- “For both modules scripts were generally smaller batches of scripts due to summer condensed delivery and not all marking ranges were identified.
- Assessment remains challenging for weaker students.”

External Examiner Name: Dr. Sarah Etchells

Examined Modules: L201 A & B English in the World (I) & (II)

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

a. The academic standards for the programme/module.

- “For L201A and B I saw work from 2 branches Kuwait and Jordan and I can confirm that the standards set are appropriate for the subject benchmarks. There are more opportunities now to assess the students using the fundamental skills of comparison, discussion, evaluation and

critically analysing data, with full examples of theories and concepts and an ability to relate the content to relevant examples.”

b. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes

- “The students’ work appears to be on a par with students in the UK HEIs in terms of both knowledge, general and subject skills.”

c. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes

- “The work at the top end of the range was extremely articulate and showed a full understanding of the content of the course and an ability to engage critically. It is to be commended that the writing.”

d. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

Strengths:

- “There were some extremely good responses at the top end of the range demonstrating critical engagement, using pertinent examples and thorough discussion of linguistic concepts. There were some excellent responses for the quizzes and the FEs. The answers given in some cases show that the students have a good grasp of the fundamental terminology around linguistics that will set them in good stead for the rest of their course. This use of analysis and evaluation at the higher end of scripts evidences that the students have been taught well. Good practice in assessment.”

Weaknesses:

- “The weaker students struggled as usual, with their language use as well as lower engagement with the content of the course.
- The midrange assessments, which were the majority of the scripts, did not have the breath of engagement or enough examples to illustrate their points.”

e. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and marking schemes)

- “There is clear co-operation across branches and it was good to see minutes of the Cross Branch Marking meetings and see the discussions within the teams around standardisation and other issues.”
- For both modules scripts were still seen from the whole range of marks but as these were generally smaller batches of scripts due to summer condensed delivery not all marking ranges were identified. All A scripts and F scripts were seen and 10% of the average scripts as agreed.
- “There continues to be ongoing work within the teams to make the assessments diverse and relevant to necessary skills but as always do remain challenging for weaker students”

f. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments

- “This use of analysis and evaluation at the higher end of scripts evidences that the students have been taught well. Good practice in assessment.”
- They [tutors] are able to differentiate a broad spectrum of marks, with the most able students achieving well along with those that are willing to engage thoroughly with course.”

External Examiner Name: Dr. Hanem El-Farahaty

Examined Modules: Translation modules -- TR302, TR306 & TR308

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

a. The academic standards for the programme/module.

- “The standards set are appropriate for the subject benchmarks.”

b. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes

- “Students assessed work is comparable to the work submitted in other programmes in the UK and across branches.”

c. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes

- “Work produced at the high level demonstrates the student translation skills at different genres and text types.”

d. The strengths and weaknesses of the students

Strengths:

“Students’ performance, judging by the samples reviewed, showed a good range of marks.

- The wide range of assessment material and the student performance indicate that teaching quality is of a high level.”

- Weaknesses:

“It would be beneficial if AOU could implement a policy concerning the use of AI and chatbots in the evaluation of translation courses and ensure that students are informed about this policy.”

e. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)

- “I was consulted on all the assessments. Tutors are very keen to respond to all my comments and I approved them on the basis that they were well designed and clearly structured. The questions allow students to demonstrate what they have learned.
- I am pleased with the TR302 assessment, where theory and practice are well-integrated, especially with the application of machine translation.
- All the assessments meet the learning outcomes of the programme.”

f. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments

- “In general, marking is detailed, and thorough comments are given.
- I am pleased to see tutors (across the branches) giving constructive feedback and clear annotations alongside suggestions on how to improve.
- Marks and levels of achievement are comparable across the branches, although marks in some branches are higher than in others.”