

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2023**

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| <b>External examiner name:</b>               | Kathryn Allan  |              |
| <b>External examiner home institution:</b>   | UCL  |              |
| <b>Course(s) examined:</b>                   | MPhil in Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, MSt in Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics |              |
| <b>Level:</b> (please delete as appropriate) | <u>Undergraduate</u>   | Postgraduate |

**Please complete both Parts A and B.**

| <b>Part A</b>   |  |                                  |            |           |                    |
|---|--|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|
|   |  | <i>Please (✓) as applicable*</i> | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>N/A / Other</b> |
| A1.   | Are the academic standards and the achievements of students comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which you have experience? <i>[Please refer to paragraph 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>                                      |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| A2.   | Do the threshold standards for the programme appropriately reflect:<br><br>(i) the frameworks for higher education qualifications, and<br><br>(ii) any applicable subject benchmark statement? <i>[Please refer to paragraph 7 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i> |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| A3.   | Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?   |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| A4.   | Is the assessment process conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations?  |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| A5.   | Did you receive sufficient information and evidence in a timely manner to be able to carry out the role of External Examiner effectively?  |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| A6.   | Did you receive a written response to your previous report?  |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| A7.   | Are you satisfied that comments in your previous report have been properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon?   |                                  | x          |           |                    |
| * <b>If you answer "No" to any question, you should provide further comments when you</b> |  |                                  |            |           |                    |

**complete Part B.**

## **Part B**

### **B1. Academic standards**

- a. *How do academic standards achieved by the students compare with those achieved by students at other higher education institutions of which you have experience?*

I believe that on these programmes academic standards are carefully upheld at all times, and are in line with other comparable higher education institutions.

- b. *Please comment on student performance and achievement across the relevant programmes or parts of programmes and with reference to academic standards and student performance of other higher education institutions of which you have experience (those examining in joint schools are particularly asked to comment on their subject in relation to the whole award).*

These are challenging, demanding programmes, as they should be, and students are clearly well-supported to meet these challenges and demands. The highest-achieving students are submitting very impressive work, and weaker work often still shows ambition and thought. Marks are awarded appropriately and consistently.

### **B2. Rigour and conduct of the assessment process**

*Please comment on the rigour and conduct of the assessment process, including whether it ensures equity of treatment for students, and whether it has been conducted fairly and within the University's regulations and guidance.*

I am hugely impressed with the care and thoroughness that all examiners give to the assessment process, and with their efforts to make sure that marks are fair and consistent. Markers' comments show that work is read with real thought and attention to detail, and co-markers clearly take time to discuss how marks should be allocated. The exam board is also conducted with professionalism and sensitivity to individual students' circumstances.

### **B3. Issues**

*Are there any issues which you feel should be brought to the attention of supervising committees in the faculty/department, division or wider University?*

As I noted last year, very little time was allowed in the examining process for me to look at samples; this meant that I looked at slightly fewer pieces of work across different papers than I would have liked, including very few theses.

I noted last year that comments were not made available to me on all pieces of work. This year this was much improved, which I appreciated, but it would be helpful see very brief comments on all work on Paper A to clarify why particular marks are assigned; currently it is optional for markers to provide comments on some pieces, and practice varied across different sections of Paper A.

During the exam board we had a lengthy discussion about the policy on theses which are awarded fail marks between 40 and 50; it is unclear whether these can be condoned. The wording of the regulations needs to be improved here to avoid confusion.

#### **B4. Good practice and enhancement opportunities**

*Please comment/provide recommendations on any **good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment**, and any **opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities** provided to students that should be noted and disseminated more widely as appropriate.*

As last year, I was enormously impressed by how thorough and thoughtful all examiners are throughout the marking process. Markers' comments showed how carefully they read work and allocate marks, and the conduct of the exam board was exemplary. It is also clear from feedback and from discussions at the board that students are extremely well supported in their research, and encouraged to be ambitious in their assessments. I also note, as last year, how valuable double marking of assessments is; many institutions no longer mark in this way, but it seems to me to result in much fairer and more consistent results. Again, the additional time that this takes shows how seriously examiners treat the assessment process.

The range of papers that is offered to students on these programmes is excellent, and includes specialist areas that are not available in many other universities.

#### **B5. Any other comments**

*Please provide any other comments you may have about any aspect of the examination process. Please also use this space to address any issues specifically required by any applicable professional body. If your term of office is now concluded, please provide an overview here.*

I was pleased to see how sensitively the University treated the problems presented by the Marking and Assessment Boycott; I appreciate the difficulty the boycott presented to the Chief Examiner and to other examiners, but feel strongly that the University was right not to heavily penalize colleagues who took part in the action.

In my report last year I noted that the marking of some sections of Paper A seemed rather conservative, though consistent within each section; I feel that this is still something that could be considered and addressed for future years.

This year the Board received a number of very late Mitigating Circumstances applications, and this meant that examiners' work continued through the summer. The Chief Examiner proposed at the Board that guidance might be circulated to students explaining that late applications of this kind might result in delayed results, and I would support this; examiners cannot always be available during the summer to consider late applications very promptly, and it would be helpful to make this clear to students.

The examination process was administered extremely efficiently by Camilla Rock and her colleagues, and it was much easier for me to navigate documentation and deadlines this year; they also provided help and advice extremely promptly whenever asked. I am hugely grateful to her, to Liberty Braddyll, and to Martin Maiden for all their work throughout the year.

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| <b>Signed:</b> | Kathryn Allan  |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 3 October 2023 |

**Please ensure you have completed parts A & B, and email your completed form to: [external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk) AND copy it to the applicable divisional contact set out in the guidelines.**