

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2022

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

Please complete both Parts A and B.

Part A					
		<i>Please (✓) as applicable*</i>	Yes	No	N/A / Other
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 the frameworks for higher education qualifications and 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

*** If you answer "No" to any question, you should provide further comments when you**

complete Part B.

Part B

In your responses to these questions, please could you include comments on the effectiveness of any changes made to the course or processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic where appropriate.

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 was hugely impressed by the standard of work I saw in the sample I read, and this was definitely comparable with other institutions with which I am familiar. The programmes are demanding, but students are clearly well-supported and given the academic training to excel.

- 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 rigorous programmes, and as I would expect, students achieve results across the range of marks; assessments are appropriately challenging, and in line with comparable institutions. The best students are working at a very high level, and are also making helpful connections between the different subjects they study. At the top of the marks range, work is extremely well-informed and critically sophisticated, and shows great academic ambition.

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.

Across all of the courses I saw, assessment is careful, thoughtful and rigorous, and it is clear that staff have thought carefully about the best way to assess different knowledge and understanding. Marks are fair and consistent, with markers' comments making it clear why particular marks have been assigned. The exam board showed that the whole process is conducted with attention to the appropriate guidance.

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?

The examining process seemed very compressed, and this gave very little time for me to look at work; a clearer timetable which allowed me to plan for tight deadlines would have been very helpful.

During the exam board, we discussed the confirmation of marks from the first year of the MPhil; it is unclear whether marks confirmed at the end of the first year can be changed if deemed appropriate for borderline candidates at the end of the course. It would be helpful to clarify this, and make sure that 1st year marks are treated consistently with 2nd year marks when assessments for borderline candidates are reviewed.

I saw very detailed comments on the work for some papers but not all, since some mark sheets were not made available or did not include comments, and this made it difficult to see how marks had been arrived at, especially where 2 markers disagreed. It was clear from the board that all markers do keep records of their comments on individual pieces of work, but a better system for sharing these could be established.

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.*

I was pleased to see that candidates on these programmes are assessed by a mixture of take-home assessments and in-person examinations, since this seems the best way to test the different kinds of skills and knowledge required.

I strongly support the double marking of assessments, which many institutions no longer undertake – this is demanding for staff, but seems much fairer, especially for longer essays.

The range of courses offered to students is excellent, and I am impressed that the University continues to offer courses where classes are very small; this provides students with important opportunities which in some cases are not available in many other institutions.

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.

Overall, I was very impressed with the way the examination process was conducted, and staff were very helpful throughout. As commented above, there were very short deadlines for some externalising work, and this made the experience slightly stressful, partly because this was my first year as external; a clearer timetable for the process would be helpful in future.

I felt that the marking for Paper A was consistent within each section, but marks were rather conservative in comparison to other papers (with the exception of the Semantics and Pragmatics section); I don't feel that this was a problem, but it would be worth reviewing marking practices for this paper in future.

Signed:	Kathryn Allan
Date:	1 October 2022

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