

Title of Examination(s):		M.Phil/Mst General Linguistics and Comparative Philology
External Examiner Details	Title:	Professor
	Name:	Kersti
	Position:	Börjars
	Home Institution:	The University of Manchester

Please complete both Parts A and B.

Part A				
<i>Please (✓) as applicable*</i>		Yes	No	N/A / Other
A1.	Did you receive sufficient information and evidence in a timely manner to be able to carry out the role of External Examiner effectively?	X		
A2.	Are the academic standards and the achievements of students comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which you have experience?	X		
A3.	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 3(b) of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>	X		
A4.	Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?	X		
A5.	Is the assessment process conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations?	X		
A6.	Did you receive a written response to your previous report?			N/A
A7.	Are you satisfied that comments in your previous report have been properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon?			N/A
<p>* If you answer "No" to any question, please provide further comments in Part B. Further comments may also be given in Part B, if desired, if you answer "Yes" or "N/A / Other".</p>				

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?*

The students' achievements are generally of a high standard, in line with what would be expected at comparator institutions.

- b. *Please comment on student performance and achievement across the relevant programmes or parts of programmes (those examining in joint schools are particularly asked to comment on their subject in relation to the whole award).*

An impressively broad range of options are offered within the programme and students do well across the piece.

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.

Throughout the process, students' work was anonymised. None of the students we dealt with had recognised mitigating circumstances, so I have no experience with how that process works. Rules for classification of degrees, how to deal with fail marks, how to use the opportunity to viva students etc were applied consistently across the cohort.

Three vivas were held and also here proper process was followed, with respect both to notifying the students and to the way in which the Chair managed the viva itself.

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?

No.

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.*

The breadth of options available to students is impressive, this and the expertise available in each area, are real strengths of the programme. Colleagues should be commended for co-ordinating and delivering this.

I have only minor suggestions for changes that colleagues may wish to consider. Paper A is a general paper, which covers a range of topics across the field. This is entirely appropriate for a programme like this. However, a number of the students had done noticeably worse in Paper A than in their other papers. This may have been a feature of this particular cohort, but if it is a persistent trend, then colleagues may wish to give some thought to the teaching and assessing of this paper. I think the content of the course is appropriate, as is the development from breadth in the early stage of the degree to the more specialised courses at the later stage, so I would not suggest changes to content.

In one or two cases, the questions were phrased so that if taken literally, a basic answer could be deemed to have answered it exhaustively, whereas in reality, more is expected for a high mark. In many cases, it would be sufficient to add something like 'comment on the problems

with this definition’, ‘what additional information would help you assess the structure of this language in more detail’ etc. It would make sure that a student could not argue that a basic answer should have had a higher mark because it had done everything that was explicitly asked for.

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.

This is not a comment on Oxford particularly, but applies across the sector: marking to a 1-100 is fraught with difficulties. As everywhere else, it is difficult to get all colleagues to use the full range of marks, and it is impossible (except possibly in purely numerical subjects) to define the difference between, say, 62 and 63, or even 62 and 64. While we wait for the outcome of the government’s proposal for a 13 point GPA scale, might it be worth considering using a narrower scale locally (as some institutions do), for instance 1-10 and rewrite classification guidelines accordingly?

One practical suggestion is that it would be convenient to have a copy of the student handbook available on the WebLearn site. Apologies if it is there and it is just that I have not found it.

This is my first year as external examiner, and it was a very pleasant experience.

Signature:	
Date:	8 July 2016
<p>Please email your completed form (preferably as a word document attachment) to: external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk and copied to the applicable divisional contact.</p> <p>Alternatively, please return a copy by post to: The Vice-Chancellor c/o Catherine Whalley, Head of Education Planning & Quality Review, Education Policy Support, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD.</p>	