

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2020

External examiner name:	Ianthi Maria Tsimpli	
External examiner home institution:	University of Cambridge	
Course(s) examined:	MPhil and 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?	✓		
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 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>	✓		
A3.	Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?	✓		
A4.	Is the assessment process conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations?	✓		
A5.	Did you receive sufficient information and evidence in a timely manner to be able to carry out the role of External Examiner effectively?	✓		
A6.	Did you receive a written response to your previous report?	✓		
A7.	Are you satisfied that comments in your previous report have been properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon?	✓		
<p>* If you answer "No" to any question, you should provide further comments when you complete 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?*

Academic standards achieved by the students are comparable to those achieved by students at other 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).*

Twenty-three MPhil candidates and 12 M.St. candidates were examined this year. In the examiners' meeting in July, decisions on awards were made on nine of the MSt candidates and ten of 10/15 second year MPhil candidates. Award decisions for the remaining candidates were made at later dates (August, September, October) because of the extensions that had been granted for submission of dissertations and coursework. Before the examiners' meeting I was asked to look at all cases where students were awarded marks below the pass mark and at scripts or submissions which received the highest and the lowest marks in the MSt or the MPhil. There was one case in which a third marker had been invited to adjudicate and I looked at this case too. I also read a good sample of other scripts and submissions as well as the comments provided by the markers. Last year I had commented on the Syntax part of Paper A. This year I also looked at the range of marks and question choices that students answered in this Paper. In terms of student performance and achievement, a cohort-wide safety-net policy was applied which led to a few changes to student classification. Since the examiners' meeting in July 2020, I have been in touch with the Chair of Examiners and the other examiners to discuss the remaining students' submissions and final awards.

Student performance was of expected academic standards. There was a good distribution of marks in the MPhil cohort with 2 candidates were awarded Distinction, 4 were awarded Merit, 6 gained a Pass and none failed. Regarding the MSt students 5 candidates were awarded Distinction, 4 were awarded Merit, 3 gained a Pass and none failed. The quality of the work across the two degrees and the level of performance is largely consistent with some of the previous years. I am confident that the classification represents work quality in a fair and rigorous way.

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.

The assessment process was rigorous; the students' lists were anonymized and there was equity of treatment for students. Mitigating Circumstances were included in the Examiners' meeting rather

than as a prior meeting of the panel (in which I was one of the members). As I mentioned in my previous report, it would be good to provide separate marks to different answers in a paper and comments on each of these answers. This year borderline, failing or cases where markers disagree were overall provided with comments and justification of the mark awarded. My suggestion is that there should be consistency across papers and markers in terms of the feedback provided in accordance with the marking criteria. As I mentioned last year in my report, it would be helpful to examiners and to students to be able to have some justification of the marks in each paper.

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?

2020 was a highly unusual year with many students applying for mitigating circumstances, extension and a number of health and personal issues. Notwithstanding all of these factors, I would like to point out that the process of assessment and examination was carried out in a rigorous and fair way. There are no issues that should be brought to the attention of supervising committees.

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 topics that students can choose from both in terms of paper choice and dissertation topics as well as the impressive level of research and learning outcomes that some of the students achieve are commendable. My comment on the Syntax part of Paper A mentioned in my last year's report seems to have been addressed in this year's cohort, which is a very welcome outcome.

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 year has been extremely challenging for students and examiners given the lengthy and difficult process of adjudicating marks and classification based on student performance, mitigating circumstances and the adaptation of assessment methods required because of the pandemic. I am grateful to the Chair and the Board of Examiners as well as the Faculty administrator for the outstanding support they offered me with detailed information, explanations and timely responses which enabled me to contribute to discussions and award decisions.

Signed:



Date:	1/4/2021
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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.