

SECTION 10

APPENDIX (A10.6) EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM – examiners in the final year of their appointment



Durham University
External Examiner Annual Report Form
www.durham.ac.uk/external.examiners/

The University is grateful to its external examiners for their completion in full of this report. The report consists of questions where external examiners are asked to choose from a fixed range of responses, and questions where free text comments are requested. In respect of the latter this form includes a number of prompts for consideration/discussion as 'greyed out' text. These are intended to be suggestive rather than prescriptive, and external examiners are invited to comment on any issue they feel is relevant. To complete the free text questions, please click on the relevant section and you will automatically 'over-type' 'greyed-out' text.

External Examiners should feel free to make any comments they wish, including observations on teaching, module/programme structure and content, and degree schemes as well as assessment procedures. As the reports of external examiners are discussed widely within the University, we should be most grateful if external examiners would ensure that individual staff members or students are not referred to by name in their reports. Reports will normally be available for discussion widely within the University (including with student representatives via staff-student consultative committees), and may also be requested by certain external bodies, including the Quality Assurance Agency. An additional separate and confidential report may be sent to the Vice-Chancellor if the examiner considers this to be appropriate.

In accordance with the practice at most universities, payment of the examiner's fee is conditional upon receipt of satisfactorily completed Annual Report Forms and at the end of term of office of the separate final report. External examiners are requested to submit their forms within 4 weeks of the final meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Note: moderators of undergraduate programmes in Combined Honours and Natural Sciences are asked to complete only the sections of this form which are applicable.

Further information on External Examiner's Report, Fee and Claim forms, and on the External Examining process in general, can be found at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/external.examiners/>

Please email completed report forms to external.examiners@durham.ac.uk

To ensure that you are paid correctly, please enter all of the programme(s) for which you acted as external examiner

Name of External Examiner	
Academic Year	2013/14
Level of Programmes Examined*	UNDERGRADUATE
Programme(s) Examined	Law

* external examiners who consider both undergraduate/integrated masters programmes *and* taught postgraduate programmes should complete two report forms

External Examiner's Annual Report Form

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1:

Delete as appropriate

a	Did you receive University policy and procedures relating to examinations and assessment?	YES
b	Did you receive the external examiners' handbook and/or documentation on the University code of practice on external examining / moderating?	YES
c	Did you receive the relevant core regulations (including university level and qualification descriptors and generic assessment criteria)?	YES
d	Did you receive the relevant degree Programme Regulations?	YES
e	Did you receive the relevant Programme Specification(s) and module outlines from the Department?	YES
f	Did you receive the Programme Assessment Criteria from the Department?	YES
g	Did you receive all the draft examination papers for comment?	YES
h	Was the nature and level of the questions on draft examination papers appropriate?	YES
i	If you had comments on draft examination papers, were these addressed to your satisfaction?	YES
j	Was a sufficient sample of examination scripts made available to you?	YES
k	Was a sufficient sample of assessed coursework made available to you?	YES
l	Was assessed work marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for award of given marks?	YES
k	Please give further details below about any aspects of the issues referred to above. In particular, if you were not satisfied in relation to any of these issues please explain what you felt could be improved, if you found any aspect of this provision especially useful you may wish to give some examples of good practice.	
	I have no particular comments or concerns to add here.	

QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE AWARD

For the questions that follow please use the following scale:

1 (no/hardly at all)

2 (generally)

3 (consistently/fully)

2:

Delete as appropriate

a	To what extent do the aims and objectives (intended learning outcomes) of the programme align with the subject benchmarks?	3
b	To what extent does the design of the curriculum enable the intended learning outcomes of the programme to be met?	3
c	Are the standards of the programme consistent with those required by the university qualification descriptors and so with the QAA Framework	3

External Examiner's Annual Report Form

	for Higher Education Qualifications?	
d	Were the academic standards of student work comparable with similar programmes with which you are familiar?	3
e	Do the assessment criteria permit a confident judgement of student achievement against the learning outcomes?	3
f	Was the marking consistent with the assessment criteria?	3
g	Did the assessment policies and procedures appear to you to be appropriate?	3
h	Were the assessment policies and procedures adhered to?	3
i	Was the choice of subjects for dissertations/major projects appropriate?	3

3. Please give further details about any aspects of the programme or its assessment relevant to the topics covered in question 2a-2i above. In particular where you have indicated 1 or 2 on the scale to questions 2a-2i please explain what you felt could be improved; where you have indicated 3 it would be helpful if you could particularly highlight examples of good practice.

Re 'd', I actually feel (and have felt in previous years) that the standard of student work, at the top end is perhaps slightly higher than it is at my own institution. This is largely rewarded appropriately, although I do still feel that it could be better rewarded at the very top of the high end (see below).

Re 'f', in particular, I felt the marking was appropriate and notably *consistent* across modules and scripts. It was also comparable with marking at other institutions – my one concern here, again, relates to marking at the very top end (see below).

4. Please comment on the quality of students' work, the quality of the awards made (including the classes for undergraduate degrees and distinction for postgraduate degrees) and comparability with other institutions.

The general standard of the work I reviewed was strong. In this context, I was pleased to see a number of first class marks awarded. As was the case last year, the work submitted for the 'Interscholastic Mooting' module in particular was exceptional. This year, there were also some notably excellent papers in the Jurisprudence module.

In general I felt that excellent answers were rewarded with excellent grades, and there was a broad and fair spread of marks throughout the grade boundaries, which were all well justified on the marking criteria. Having said this, there were a few instances where a higher first class mark could have been justified, and may have been more appropriate. While the marks awarded were never unfairly harsh, as such (and were certainly within the reasonable realms of marker discretion), there were a few occasions where I personally would have marked answers in the 80s (based on the notion of 'exemplary first' as set out in the marking criteria). I would therefore like to suggest that markers be reminded to use the full range of the mark range at the top end. I made this exact same point last year in my report, so I think it is still something that needs to be addressed. This is not fundamental, but it is something that I think could be improved in a small number of cases, for those students who produce truly exceptional assessments.

The few borderline marks that I saw awarded across modules were just that – I felt that the judgement of the markers with regard to grades falling one side or the other of those all-important grade boundaries was excellent, and comparable with practice at my institution.

MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

5. Please comment on the management of the assessment process, e.g. the provision

External Examiner's Annual Report Form

of samples of student work, the operation of the Board of Examiners and the level of involvement of the external examiner in the assessment process.

My involvement in the approval of assessments was as I would have wished: I was given all draft exam papers to review, along with – and I am very grateful for this – detailed notes on what the question was aiming to achieve and what was expected of students in answering them.

I was able to see an appropriate sample of work so as to have an informed view of the marking standards, practices and consistency.

As has been the case in previous years, the chair of the exam board and – particularly – the School's Undergraduate Examinations Secretary were extremely helpful and efficient at all stages of the examination process. I would like to thank them for making the role of external smooth and as pain-free as possible.

Because of two major deadlines around the time of the exams board, I requested permission to be absent from the meeting itself. I very much appreciate the willingness of the University to compromise on Skype contact and – although this ultimately didn't seem feasible after a trial-run – to thank everyone at the law school for taking the time to try to make this work. My apologies again for not attending the board: however, I was able to meet my deadlines as a result, so really do appreciate this (and was able to be contactable via phone if this became necessary during the board).

PROGRAMME(S) DESIGN AND OPERATION

6. Please add any comments on other aspects of the learning, teaching or assessments of the programme(s). These may include: curriculum design; modes of learning, teaching or assessment; learning resources; links between research and teaching; suitability of the programme as preparation for study at the next level (Masters or PhD as appropriate); suitability of the programme as a preparation for employment; alignment with the requirements of professional bodies (if applicable).

I don't have much to add in this section. The modules I reviewed were all well designed and required a good balance of knowledge within the appropriate subject area. The overall degree programme is broadly comparable with LLB degrees offered by other institutions and has a good mixture of learning outcomes and assessment measures.

One point to note: I think that the Jurisprudence module has a rather more adventurous syllabus than some comparable modules elsewhere. It covers more ground and has a better balance than some modules I have seen: as such it provides students with more scope for engagement and allows the top student to fly.

COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

THESE QUESTIONS NEED ONLY BE ANSWERED BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES (e.g. articulation agreements, validations, multiple awards, joint awards)

7a. Were you offered sufficient information about the collaborative partnership?

N/A

7b. Did you have the opportunity to compare the achievement of students on the collaborative programme with those of students taught on programmes delivered solely by the University? If YES, were the standards achieved by students on the two types of programme comparable? If NO, do the academic standards achieved by the students indicate that appropriate learning opportunities are being provided through the collaborative partnership?

External Examiner's Annual Report Form

N/A

GOOD PRACTICE FOR DISSEMINATION

8. Please highlight any examples of good or effective practice that you have identified in the programmes and modules which you examine, that are worthy of particular commendation and wider dissemination within Durham University.

I'd like to make a comment here on the markers' feedback/comments on the dissertations. Over the last two years I felt that this was rather too brief on occasions, and did not always fully justify the marks awarded (I fed this view back, including in my final reports for both years). I was therefore extremely pleased to see that this year far more detailed comments were provided on the cover sheets of all of the dissertations that I looked at. There has clearly been engagement with this issue in the School to improve this, and I think that the comments are now entirely appropriate and comparable with the sorts of markers' notes you see on dissertations elsewhere. These sorts of detailed comments on the scripts provide feedback for the student and help justify the mark awarded (especially in appeal cases). The previous concern I had about this has been dealt with fully this year – really pleasing to see.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS MADE LAST YEAR

9. If you raised any issues for further consideration or action in your last report, have these been effectively considered by the academic department/school in which you are examining? Have you received a response from the academic department/school indicating the action taken in response to your comments and recommendations? If you raised issues regarding University policy and practice, have you received a response to this from the relevant University faculty?

See points above concerning:

- 1) marking at the top end – I still think that the very best assessments are not rewarded as well as they could be (I would like to have seen, and certainly feel a few of the papers I saw deserved, some marks in the 80s).
- 2) the feedback on dissertations – I feel this issue has been resolved, and was very happy about the practice this year in this regard.

FURTHER COMMENTS – OPTIONAL

10. If you wish to provide any further comments, in relation to the questions above, or to provide additional information not covered in this form, please feel free to do so in the box below.

None.

FINAL OVERVIEW [Please Complete only if this is your final year]

11. At the end of their term of appointment all external examiners are asked to comment on the provision they are responsible for, in relation to their full term of appointment. These comments should relate to the examiner's overall views of issues relating to the quality and standards of the provision for which they are responsible.

N/A