

SECTION 10

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



Durham
University

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

[REDACTED]

Academic Year

2013/14

Level of Programmes Examined*

UNDERGRADUATE

Programme(s) Examined

LLB

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

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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	<p>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.</p> <p>I was particularly impressed with the draft land law and trusts and equity papers as they came with a document setting out what the internal examiners were looking for and explaining the general approach to be taken to the marking of the questions. This was very helpful when making comments on the draft paper.</p>	

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

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c	Are the standards of the programme consistent with those required by the university qualification descriptors and so with the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications?	3
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?	2
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.

As for 2f, there were two concerns. First, with the dissertation element. Marks given for the dissertations were generally higher than those given to the students' other papers. This may well be a product of students performing better, given the extra time available for dissertations, so it is not necessarily a cause for concern but it would be useful for detailed statistics to be available recording general performance in dissertation as against other papers. Second, in relation to the Trusts and Equity paper (LAW2211) I felt that one particular first marker had given some marks lower than those that would be expected, given the assessment criteria. Remarking of those papers was suggested as a specific step to address this issue, and was carried out, so I am satisfied that the final marks awarded were consistent with the assessment criteria.

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.

I was generally impressed by the quality of the work. It was notable that none of the students taking the Trusts and Equity module scored a mark of below 40: those teaching the course are to be congratulated on this.

MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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

- I was generally impressed with the process. There is however a continuing problem as to timing. I think the model whereby the external cannot change marks for individual papers but instead takes a view of the general marking of a set of papers is a good one. It does mean, however, that if a particular issue is identified by an external, the systematic steps required to address that issue may involve further work by the internal examiners (eg remarking). In order for there to be sufficient time to carry out such steps, external examiners need to be able to read and form judgments on the papers sent to them well in advance of the date of the final exam board. This should be borne in mind when exams are scheduled. The Board of Examiners meeting was generally well managed, and I was

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impressed that medical evidence had been systematically handled before the Board itself. I do think however that there are some unresolved issues that could usefully be settled before the Board meeting. For example, it seems clear to me that, when exercising its discretion in light of academic factors alone, it is open for the Board to attach less weight to marks gained in modules that are not core to a programme. Yet there was a concern that such an approach could only be adopted if students had been aware of it when choosing their modules. I think that concern is unfounded, as there can be no expectation that discretion can be exercised only according to pre-announced criteria. It also seemed to me that more attention could be paid to the reference in the Learning and Teaching Handbook (6.3.7) to "the positioning of students module mark(s) relevant to each module's standard deviation": the current problem is that the standard deviation for each module is not provided at the Board meeting (although there is a breakdown of marks for the Dissertation module, the standard deviation is not set out).

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 was generally impressed by the curriculums and the impact of current research on them. I was somewhat surprised that the Land Law course retains unregistered land as a subject, given that its practical and academic relevance is now minimal.
- I do have a slight concern about how topics are chosen for dissertations. In some cases, there was a risk that students chose topics involving relatively little discussion of the existing law. Students should be given clear guidance as to whether their intended topic will allow them to demonstrate the learning outcomes of the module.

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?

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.

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- I was impressed with the handling of medical information and its presentation to the Board of Examiners.

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?

I haven't received a specific response as to a point made in my report last year as to students' awareness of possible ethical issues raised by research undertaken for their dissertation.

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.

As ever, timing is a crucial issue. It would also be very beneficial if core undergraduate subjects, such as Land Law and Trusts & Equity are taught by those with a research interest in those areas. This is something that should be borne in mind at the recruitment stage.

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