

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	2014/15
Level of Programmes Examined*	UG Final Honours
Programme(s) Examined	Employment Law (<i>UK</i>), Advanced Issues in Employment and Discrimination Law; English Legal System; European Internal Market and its Citizens; Law of Family Relationships; Dissertations

* 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
m	<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>The information provided both before and during the assessment period was extremely clear and the process was very efficiently administered by both academic and support staff. I really could not fault the administration and highly commend [REDACTED] for their meticulous preparation and responsiveness. The updated website was a particularly useful, accessible resource.</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
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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 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?	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.

N/A

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 sample of work reviewed evidenced thorough and consistent marking and moderation with clear and, in most cases, detailed feedback justifying the marks awarded. I was impressed, as always, with how confidently the students engaged with the academic commentary, case law and primary law and with the clarity of their presentation. The minor concerns I raised last year in relation to the first year English legal system/skills module (regarding the significant proportion of fails and whether expectations were too high) appear to have been fully addressed this year. The marks were much more consistent with comparable institutions and reflected more fairly the very early stage of the students' learning.

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 am entirely satisfied with my level of involvement in the entire assessment process. The guidance was very clear and the process efficiently managed. The skeleton answers provided for the assessment questions were very useful indeed. I am particularly impressed that the Law School made an effort to impose a realistic timetable on assessment/externalling, in accordance with the Gender Equality Mark (GEM) objectives. It is an excellent example to other institutions and I have already suggested that a similar sensitivity to work/family life balance be embedded in the assessment process at

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More generally, I am satisfied that the students were treated equitably and that the internal moderation and review protocols were fully adhered to.

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).

All of the modules I reviewed adopted a fairly traditional pattern of assessment (essay questions/case studies that demand independent research; or exam-style format). It might be worth considering how to embrace group work/presentations and other forms of assessment within these modules to advance broader skills, but the existing models work perfectly well in enabling the students to meet the learning objectives.

COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

7. *n/a: collaborative provision not considered.*

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.

Good practice lay in the administration of the assessment process. The Chair, [REDACTED] provided clear guidance at the beginning of the year and maintained good communication throughout the year. The administrative assistants, [REDACTED] should also be commended on their efficiency. Consistent with previous experience, all of the module teams were rigorous and consistent in their assessment.

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 above para 2.4 relating to the first year English Legal Skills module.

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.

N/A.

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.

I would perhaps suggest that the School consider developing more creative and modern forms of assessment to advance and test other skills of students and prepare them for an increasingly competitive and demanding labour market. For instance, as I am sure you are aware, any Russell Group Law Schools now actively nurture undergraduates' clinical legal skills through more practice-based components to complement and, indeed, apply, the knowledge they acquire in the more desk-based academic modules. My understanding is that Durham's provision in clinical legal education remains limited, so perhaps some thought could be given to the academic (as well, of course, as the social) merits of developing a Law Clinic or more advanced pro bono activities. We have developed a highly successful model of this [REDACTED] which has undoubtedly enhanced the student experience, prepared them better for the world of work and further study, and plugged a critical gap in community legal advice provision. We would be very happy indeed to offer help in navigating the regulatory, financial and administrative framework underpinning this if staff at Durham were interested in setting up their own law clinic, although of course there are many other good models in the UK they could draw on (Northumbria; Manchester; Kent, University College Cork, for instance).

On a more general level, I adapted over time to the scope of the external's authority at Durham, specifically the convention that individual marks cannot be amended without systematic review of all scripts on the module/marked at a particular level. In practice, this meant that the threshold for suggesting changes was really very high, bearing in mind what this would impose on internal examiners, inevitably within a short timeframe. Fortunately, none of the modules I reviewed presented serious concerns in this regard.