

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	<div style="background-color: black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>
Academic Year	2011/12
Level of Programmes Examined*	UNDERGRADUATE
Programme(s) Examined	LLB LAW (M101) & LLB LAW (EUROPEAN LEGAL STUDIES (M155)
* external examiners who consider both undergraduate/integrated masters programmes <i>and</i> taught postgraduate programmes should complete two report forms	

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1:

Delete as appropriate

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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>The documentation I received was clear and helpful and the sample of scripts and coursework I received enabled me to fulfil my role as External Examiner.</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
c	Are the standards of the programme consistent with those required by the university qualification descriptors and so with the QAA Framework	3

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	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.

Academic departments/schools are asked to comment on, and respond to, any area where an external examiner has given a 1 or 2 on questions 2a – 2i. Consequently if you are able to explain the reasons why you have given a 1 or 2 response this will be of significant value to the academic department/school in which you are examining.

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 found the students' work to be generally of a high quality with some outstanding pieces of work (particularly in respect of the dissertations). As with any cohort of students, there will be those who fail to reach the standard necessary for a pass mark.

Overall, I found the standard of work and marks awarded to be consistent with my experience of other assessment schemes.

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.

The assessment process was managed very well and praise should go to [REDACTED] and his team including, in particular, [REDACTED] the UG exams secretary. I was asked to comment upon draft examination papers and would consider this level of involvement to be appropriate.

In respect of the sample of assessed work received, in addition to all firsts, fails and borderlines I requested and received a small sample of scripts. This was due, in part, to the change in the University's rules so that External Examiners are no longer permitted to change agreed individual marks unless they have seen all the scripts in a given module - which was not the case. (Externals still resolve the mark where the two internal markers have disagreed). The External's role therefore is to verify whether the standards being applied are appropriate and broadly comparable with those of our own institution. I am in favour of this new approach as it allows External Examiners to evaluate and comment upon the marking scheme and standards as a whole (rather than trying to second guess the judgement of those

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more closely associated with the teaching and marking of the module).

However, given that External Examiners are no longer allowed to change individual marks but should look rather at broader issues in terms of the standard of marking employed, it would be helpful to have slightly more detail/commentary from the examiners as to why certain marks were awarded. For example, it was, on occasion, difficult to identify why one candidate received 72 while another received 68 or 65.

The information I received in respect of my duties was comprehensive and clear. The outline answers were particularly useful in allowing me to understand what the module team expected from candidates in respect of each question. I received also, shortly before the Board of Examiners, detailed information on the practical details of the operation of the board including:

- An agenda for the meeting,
- A memo explaining how the Board will deal with Serious Adverse Circumstances;
- "Precedents" for the exercise of discretion at the First and 2:1 borderlines, from 2010 and 2011
- A document explaining both the rules governing classification of degrees at Durham and an analysis of how Boards in the last three years exercised this discretion;
- The programme learning outcomes for the main law degree and a document showing the results in the dissertation module (Doc-F);
- A record of degree classifications in the last three years.

The processes for assuring the quality of assessment seem appropriate.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the board of examiners and so cannot comment on it.

Overall, the examination process at Durham Law School is extremely well organised.

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).

The curriculum for the modules and programmes under consideration remain current, valid and relevant, particularly given the requirements that must be met in respect of qualifying law degrees.

The standard of work produced by the candidates suggests that the learning, teaching and assessment methods support students in achieving the ILOs for the programme(s).

It is sometimes difficult to detect research-led teaching in 'core modules' on law programmes given the restrictions placed upon the curriculum by external/professional bodies but the work produced on the dissertation module suggested that students are able to undertake their own independent research (and to do so to a high standard).

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?

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Key issues include:

- were you informed of the respective roles of Durham and its collaborative partner in the programme(s)?
- were you advised of any variations between the programme offered through the collaborative partnership, and the same or similar programmes offered solely by the University?

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?

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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.

The annotated examination papers and documents prior to the exam board were particularly helpful.

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 raised one issue of particular importance for further consideration in my report last year:

'The board of examiners was managed in an efficient and effective manner with each candidate receiving the consideration of the board. External examiners were asked for their opinion on the less straightforward/controversial cases and our opinion was treated seriously and in a respectful manner. In relation to one case, however, all four external examiners indicated that they did not consider that the candidate should be awarded a first class degree (i.e. that the candidate would not have received a first class degree in our own institutions and, perhaps more importantly, would not have received one on the basis of any objective criteria). The board voted in favour of awarding the first class degree. While I understand that the views of external examiners are not binding, the Law School must be careful to ensure that, in their efforts to do justice to individual students and to be 'generous' in respect of borderline first class candidates, they do not undermine the value of a first class degree from Durham. I am not suggesting that this is the case at the moment, merely that caution must be exercised at all times to ensure that standards (both within Durham University and between universities) are maintained.'

I understand that, following the expression of my concerns in my 2010 report regarding the use of unstructured discretion in the classification of degrees, new guidelines have come into effect in the 2011/12 session. As I was not able to attend the exam board this year I cannot vouch for whether these new guidelines were implemented or how effectively they were used.

I did not receive a response from the academic department or faculty in relation to my report.

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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.

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