

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2022

External examiner name:	Prof James Robinson	
External examiner home institution:	University of Warwick	
Course(s) examined:	Mathematics Part C (Year 4) and MSc in Mathematical Sciences. Maths and Philosophy Year 4.	
Level: (please delete as appropriate)	Undergraduate	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? <i>[Please refer to paragraph 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>		Yes		
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 7 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>		Yes - MMath	No – outstanding query on MSc	
A3.	Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?		Yes		But see later on projects
A4.	Is the assessment process conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations?		Yes		
A5.	Did you receive sufficient information and evidence in a timely manner to be able to carry out the role of External Examiner effectively?		Yes		
A6.	Did you receive a written response to your previous report?		Yes		

A7.	Are you satisfied that comments in your previous report have been properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon?	Mostly (A2 query outsta nding)		
* If you answer “No” to any question, you should provide further comments when you complete Part B.				

Part B

In your responses to these questions, please could you include comments on the effectiveness of any changes made to the course or processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic where appropriate.

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?*

Standards are very high. A wide variety of modules are offered, the papers are challenging, and the students clearly very able.

- 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).*

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 scaling process was improved this year. But I was again surprised at how much time was taken up at the final exam board by discussing the scalings. I think we finally ended up with a potentially more efficient method: all scalings should be finalised before the exam board, and reviewed if possible on the day before by the externals. The best way to do this seems to be via plot of “mark of this paper vs average mark over all papers”; this seemed to pick up anomalies quickly.

The marking of projects – worth twice the credit of standard modules – seemed to be somewhat inconsistent. It would be worth trying to find a way to ensure some uniformity, e.g. a very quick look over projects in batches of ten (say) in a similar mark bracket. For example, I saw two “fail mark” projects, one of which was clearly the product of almost no work and the other, although poor, which would have taken significant time and effort; they obtained a similar mark (in fact, the worse project obtained a slightly better mark). At the other end of the scale, there is a prize for the “best project”, and this was awarded based entirely on the mark, when it would be preferable to have somebody look at the five (?) projects with the best marks and make a more qualitative judgment.

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?

I was extremely surprised at the University-wide (?) regulation that a student who misses an exam without permission should fail their entire course. This seems extremely unfair. It would be possible, for example, for a student to have performed excellently on enough units to obtain a distinction, then not to have attended one exam, and to fail. Surely this needs revising?

There was some discussion of the final grading for MMath students, and what options were available if, for example, their final MMath result was significantly worse than their BSc would have been. It seemed to me that a little more clarity in here (for both examiners and students) would be useful.

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.*

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.

As for last year, I am surprised that it is possible to award an MSc for a year that contains no more material than the final year of an integrated Masters. I do not raise this to be destructive – we would love to be able to do something similar at Warwick.

I would like to express my gratitude to Anwen Amos for being continually helpful throughout the year, and Prof Eamonn Gaffney (Part C examiner) for the smooth running of the exam boards.

Signed:	
Date:	1 st August 2022

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.