

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2019



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| <b>External examiner name:</b>               | Alexander Bird             |  |
| <b>External examiner home institution:</b>   | King's College London      |  |
| <b>Course examined:</b>                      | Mathematics and Philosophy |  |
| <b>Level:</b> (please delete as appropriate) | Undergraduate              |  |

**Please complete both Parts A and B.**

| <b>Part A</b>  |   |                                  |            |           |                    |
|--|---|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|
|  |   | <i>Please (✓) as applicable*</i> | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>N/A / Other</b> |
| A1.  | Are the academic standards and the achievements of students comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which you have experience?   |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| 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 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i> |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| A3.  | Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?  |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| A4.  | Is the assessment process conducted in line with the University's policies and regulations?   |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| A5.  | Did you receive sufficient information and evidence in a timely manner to be able to carry out the role of External Examiner effectively?   |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| A6.  | Did you receive a written response to your previous report?   |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| A7.  | Are you satisfied that comments in your previous report have been properly considered, and where applicable, acted upon?  |                                  | ✓          |           |                    |
| <p><b>* If you answer "No" to any question, please provide further comments in Part B. Further comments may also be given in Part B, if desired, if you answer "Yes" or "N/A / Other".</b></p> |   |                                  |            |           |                    |

## Part B

### 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?*

The standards are fully comparable to those at other HEIs of which I have experience (King's College London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Nottingham).

- b. *Please comment on student performance and achievement across the relevant programmes or parts of programmes (those examining in joint schools are particularly asked to comment on their subject in relation to the whole award).*

The student performance was generally very good indeed. There was some tendency to specialise either in philosophy or in maths (though this is perhaps not surprising).

### 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.*

As last year, the examination process was conducted with a high degree of rigour and care. Due consideration was given to individual circumstances in line with the regulations. The regulations were adhered to carefully.

The following is an organisational matter that might be thought about. At one point the (philosophy) examiners thought that it would be helpful to look at a philosophy dissertation by one student. The dissertation was not available at the meeting, and so we had to phone the Faculty Office. Eventually it was possible to track down the dissertation and to bring it over to the Maths building where the meeting was taking place (thankfully not far away). We were able to read the dissertation and to come to a judgment. This struck me as a little haphazard. I cannot help feeling that things might have been different for this candidate had we not been able to contact the right person in the Faculty Office, or if the meeting had been further away (making more difficult to get hold of the paper in the time available). The fact that we had to read this paper (under time pressure) meant that the meeting took longer than expected and we were late for the examiners' meeting for Computer Science and Philosophy. It would not have been practical to have done this for more than one dissertation. Maybe this was a one-off occurrence, unlikely to be repeated, and so is best treated in an ad-hoc manner. On the other hand, at other institutions the practice is to identify in advance cases where a paper might need further scrutiny, rather than at the main meeting itself. (Additionally, in such cases, the external examiner can be used to provide further evaluation of the paper.)

### 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?*

None.

### 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.*

There was nothing in particular that stood out as unusually good practice. Overall the examination process was conducted with a high degree of rigour and care.

## 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.*

One comment I had last year was that in the examiners' meeting the papers were referred to by a code which was meaningless to me. As a result the Faculty of Philosophy Office has sent me a list of codes, which was helpful for the philosophy papers (if not for the computer science papers).

|                |   |
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| <b>Signed:</b> |  |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 31 August 2019  |

Please email your completed form to: [external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:external-examiners@admin.ox.ac.uk), and copy it to the applicable divisional contact set out in the guidelines.