

# EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2017

<b>External examiner name:</b>	Alexei Skorobogatov	
<b>External examiner home institution:</b>	Imperial College London	
<b>Course examined:</b>	Mathematics Part B	
<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?	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 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>	yes		
A3.	Does the assessment process measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)?	yes		
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?	yes		
<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 quite high. They are the same or a bit higher compared to similar courses in Imperial College.

- 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).*

Oxford has many very able students who do very well. I was particularly impressed with the students' performance in pure maths courses. Maths and Philosophy students normally perform very well in mathematical courses.

### 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 assessment process is rigorous and the treatment of all students is equal and fair.

### 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?*

Exam setting. I would encourage putting a bit more effort to ensure that the exams have similar level of difficulty. Such feedback can be provided to the exam setter by the checker, or, failing that, by the exams committee.

Errors and typos. I believe that a more rigorous checking of exams by setters and checkers can help reduce the number of errors and typos. This is one aspect of the examination process that should be improved. You could experiment with various ideas, e.g. ask all setters to double check their exam a couple of weeks before the exam, or ask a junior member of the exam board to actually do the exam. To make sure that students' questions are answered as quickly as possible, you may consider asking the setter to be present throughout the exam.

The algorithm. This is a unique feature of the Oxford examination model. On the whole it seems to be working very well. My only suggestion is that the exam board could consider giving a bit more weight to the assessors' suggestions of pass, 2.1 and 1 class marks, compared with those provided by the algorithm.

### 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.*

I am very much impressed by the excellent IT and secretarial support. The possibility of viewing the exam results on a screen (in particular, after their fine tuning by the committee) is very helpful. This is one piece of good practice and innovation that should be used by other universities.

### 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.*

This is my final report as an external examiner in Oxford. I covered Part C during my first two years and Part B during the last year. Here is a short summary of my experience.

The examination process is well organised. I always received the relevant materials on time, even when I was outside of the UK. The meetings were well prepared and efficiently run. I am satisfied with how my comments have been taken into account.

The standard of courses is high and the breadth of mathematical areas covered is amazing. The students do perform very well. I would encourage the exam committee to pay more attention to typos in the exams (see my comments above), though I understand that there is no magic solution to this well-known problem.

Mathematics and Philosophy degree is unique to Oxford and is doing very well.

My overall impression of Parts B and C in Oxford is very good indeed.

<b>Signed:</b>	Alexei Skorobogatov
<b>Date:</b>	14 July 2017

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.