

# EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2017

<b>External examiner name:</b>	Dr Warren Smith	
<b>External examiner home institution:</b>	University of Birmingham	
<b>Course examined:</b>	Part A of the School of Mathematics and the School of Mathematics and Philosophy	
<b>Level:</b> (please delete as appropriate)	Undergraduate	

**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?	✓			
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 syllabi for Part A are at least comparable with those offered by the other leading UK Universities and most likely broader. There was a good coverage of the syllabi of Part A in all examinations. The examiners maintained the highest academic standards.

- 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).*

Student achievement was similar to other UK Universities with many excellent scripts ranked in the first class. The performance of the small number of students in the School of Mathematics and Philosophy were similar to those in the School of Mathematics.

### **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 undergraduates sat three core papers, one paper consisting of short optional courses and five or six papers from a list of long options. Detailed marking schemes assisted in producing an equitable assessment process throughout the different papers.

Considerable efforts were made to ensure that the students were treated fairly. The examiners took care to ensure that within each question there was a balance of bookwork, seen and new material. As a result, many exams showed a good spread of marks.

A provisional scaling of raw marks to USMs was provided to the external examiners on the day before the Part A examiners' meeting. This scaling was assessed by the detailed scrutiny of the scripts adjacent to the class borderlines and was modified during the examiners' meeting taking into account this feedback from the scripts.

### **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?*

One of the applied mathematics short optional questions had by far the lowest marks of all of the short optional questions. It lacked the usual number of straightforward marks. As a result, the students' marks on this question had a much lower mean than the other short optional questions. In order to ensure equity of treatment for students, the marks were raised by a constant to bring the mean more in line with the mean for the other questions in this exam. I recommend that students should be given more practice in the general type of exam questions to be expected. This is particularly important when the students do not have access to sufficient past exam questions.

One of the applied mathematics long options had by far the lowest marks of all the Part A exams. This issue was mitigated by the use of scaling. I recommend that the questions on this course should be made less challenging to discriminate more accurately between the many excellent students. This should reduce the requirement for scaling in subsequent years.

#### **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.*

As in previous years, there were numerous examples of good practice: (i) the balance of bookwork, seen and new material within each question; (ii) the careful scrutiny of examination questions; (iii) detailed reports on each examination question; and (iv) the judicious use of scaling maps. The administrative support was also excellent throughout the assessment process.

Two of the applied mathematics papers, A1 core paper and the A10 optional paper, are notable as the scaling was very close to linear. These two courses are working very well.

#### **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.*

My term of office has now concluded. My overall opinion is that the Part A examination process was well organized and well conducted.

<b>Signed:</b>	W R Smith
<b>Date:</b>	10/07/17

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.