

# EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2020

<b>External examiner name:</b>	Igor Potapov	
<b>External examiner home institution:</b>	University of Liverpool	
<b>Course(s) examined:</b>	MSc in Mathematics and Foundations of Computer Science	
<b>Level:</b> (please delete as appropriate)		Postgraduate

**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, you should provide further comments when you complete 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 academic standard achieved by the students on this course is exceptionally high comparing to the Russell Group in the UK and equivalent international programs. The academics also have very high expectations from students, providing challenging mini-projects and dissertation topics supporting the well-balanced development of a talented cohort of students on the program.

- 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).*

Student performance and achievement was excellent, with a large proportion of the students being awarded distinction. The firm background in mathematics and computer science has been confirmed by mini-projects, and in-depth knowledge of the subject has been examined during oral presentations as part of MSc project assessment. Majority of the students are well prepared for research study at doctoral level. Several students have already made research contributions that are of publishable quality as a part of their MSc projects.

### **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 whole assessment process was rigorous. All students have been treated fairly and within the University's regulations and guidance. The classification requirements for grading mini-projects and the dissertation have been slightly adjusted this year to address COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, all mitigating cases have been assessed both fairly and anonymously.

Mini projects were double-blind marked by either two assessors independently or a single assessor for mini projects which had a model solution. In all cases with two assessors, they were asked to discuss the mini projects to agree on a final USM. All mini projects have been clearly marked by assessors, allowing external examiners to check the consistency of marking.

The oral examinations have been organised online and all students were engaged in a scientific dialogue related to the results of the dissertation, in the presence of the second reader, internal and external examiners.

### **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 have no academic issues to raise. The examinations ran smoothly.

### **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.

Most of the mini projects have a marking scheme, either in the form of a detailed marking scheme with provided model solutions or specific guidelines for marking in case of essay type questions. I would recommend continuing this practice across all modules as it can guarantee the more adequate marking and an opportunity for external examiners to check the consistency of the marking scheme.

#### **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.*

Both face-to-face and online exam board meetings have been very well organized.

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	30 October 2020

Please ensure you have completed parts A & B, and 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.

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2020**

<b>External examiner name:</b>	Dr Ivan Tomasic		
<b>External examiner home institution:</b>	Queen Mary University of London		
<b>Course(s) examined:</b>	MSc in Mathematics and Foundations of Computer Science		
<b>Level:</b> (please delete as appropriate)		Postgraduate	

**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, you should provide further comments when you complete 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 extremely high compared to most other UK and international institutions.

- 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).*

Most MFOCS student achieve a deep understanding of the subject of their project and develop the ability to pursue research in that area. There were fewer theses this year that in my opinion attained the level of publishable research than usual, but this was a very unusual year, and there were fewer candidates in total. In any case, the standards of work achieved were very high and students who achieved distinctions thoroughly deserved them.

### 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 remarked in previous years, the assessment is conducted rigorously, although the level of rigour and criteria vary between different assessors. However, these differences would be difficult to eliminate, and they do not affect the degree classification but only possibly marks above 80 or 90.*

*There was a positive movement this year to introduce an open-ended component/opportunity for independent research into every project, in order to minimise the differences in the interpretation of the very top marks between very open-ended projects and projects with a marking scheme. In my opinion, efforts in this direction are beneficial and they should be continued.*

### 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.*


*This is a well-designed programme that attracts very strong students and helps them make their first steps toward independent research, preparing them well for pursuing either PhD studies or a career in industry research.*

*In my opinion, the modified marking scheme to account for the effects of the pandemic was beneficial and appropriate. Online vivas worked very well, and the presence of assessors was useful. The online presentations used a range of different technologies, and some worked better than others, so there may be room for improvement in the direction of ensuring that all candidates have suitable technology solutions and equipment for delivering their presentation. One can hope that next year vivas will return to being in person.*

**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.*

None.

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	22 October 2020

Please ensure you have completed parts A & B, and 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.