

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2018

External examiner name:	Corina Cirstea		
External examiner home institution:	University of Southampton		
Course examined:	MSc in Mathematics and Foundations of Computer Science		
Level: (please delete as appropriate)		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?	✓		
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>* 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".</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 standards achieved by the students are very high, and exceed those achieved at the majority of other UK institutions. By the end of the course students have an in-depth understanding of a range of topics in advanced mathematics and theoretical computer science, have been exposed to state-of-the-art research in these areas, and many have already carried out research of a publishable level.

- 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 course attracts very strong students and challenges them further. As a result, performance and achievement are excellent, with the large majority of students graduating with distinction.

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.

Assessment was rigorous and students were treated fairly. Cases of students with mitigating circumstances were carefully considered. The examiners' meetings were extremely well organised, with all the required information made available to the 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?

No.

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.*

The way the course is assessed encourages students to go beyond the taught material and acquire a deep understanding of the subject areas.

The recent introduction of practice vivas, mid-way through the project, has had a very positive effect on the quality of the final project vivas.

One small area of improvement is in recording the outcomes of assessment: when reconciliation between assessors is needed, or in the rare cases when scaling of the marks is required, more details of the decisions taken would make the assessment process more transparent and allow the examiners to carefully scrutinise the process.

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.

Signed:	C. Gupta
Date:	2 November 2018

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.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2018

External examiner name:	Ivan Tomasic		
External examiner home institution:	Queen Mary University of London		
Course examined:	MSc in Mathematics and Foundations of Computer Science		
Level: (please delete as appropriate)		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?	✓		
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>* 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".</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 institutions.

- 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).*

Most students achieve a remarkable level of understanding of the research area associated with their project, and many even engage in original research of publishable quality. It is perfectly natural and fully deserved that almost all students achieve a distinction.

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 is conducted rigorously. There are some fluctuations in marking criteria in the sense that some assessors tend to assign consistently lower or consistently higher marks than others, but in the end this does not seem to affect the overall degree classification. I would say that percentage marks are typically lower in Pure Mathematics projects than Computer Science projects.

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.

The presence of assessors during vivas was helpful to interpret the numerical grades and comments made on projects, especially in cases where there was a significant gap between the first and second assessor's marks.

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.

Signed:	
Date:	06 Nov 2018

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