

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM FOR TAUGHT COURSES 2019-20

Name	Alice Wilson		
Home Institution	University of Sussex		
Email Address	Alice.wilson@sussex.ac.uk		
Name(s) of course(s) examined <i>e.g. Tripos Part/ MPhil</i>	Part IIB Social Anthropology		
Level (<i>Delete as appropriate</i>)	Undergraduate		
Year of Appointment		2 nd	

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Are the academic standards set for the award appropriate for the qualification, and comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions?	Yes		
2. Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (handbooks, regulations, marking and classing criteria) in a timely manner?	Yes		
3. Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that your comments and suggestions were taken into consideration?	Yes		
4. Are you satisfied that the assessment was pitched at the appropriate level?	Yes		
5. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Yes		
6. Do the assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme?	Yes		
7. Are you satisfied that issues raised on your previous report form have been properly considered and, where applicable, acted upon?	Yes		
8. Did you receive a written response from the Department to your previous report form?	Yes		

Do you have any concerns about the course, including standards and quality? No.

Are you satisfied that the procedures associated with the assessment are efficient (e.g. timeframes, draft papers, questions, design and conduct of exam, meetings, vivas)? Yes.

Do you have any comments on marking and classing (e.g. range of marks, action around borderline marks, penalties, moderation, double marking, reconciliation of marks)?

The range of marks this year contained a higher proportion of first class marks, and there was an absence of overall lower second marks or below. This is likely to relate to the fact that, due to the measures taken to adapt the assessment process to covid 19, stronger papers were submitted:

- 1) the papers for external assessment included only Part 2B students, so all the students were at the finalist stage of performance, rather than a mix of finalist and Part 2A.
- 2) students had had the opportunity to drop one paper, and thus students had probably dropped their "weakest" paper, and had the chance to focus on their strongest work.
- 3) There was a relatively high uptake of the dissertation, and thus many students were in the position of having already progressed significantly with one of their papers, and could focus on only two written examinations.

It was helpful to have a brief comment sheet from examiners in the case of disputed marks (and this was one of the suggestions from my report last year.) Thank you.

Do you have any comments on the student experience of the course and/or their experience of the assessment process?

The Department made significant and appropriate adjustments to take into account the disruption to students from illness, travel, family disruption, lack of access to libraries and other work spaces etc. The teaching and professional staff did their very best to make the experience as smooth as possible for the students. I think that the high quality of the scripts showed how much professional and teaching staff had been able to support students through this difficult time. All the staff are to be congratulated on this great work, undertaken in very difficult circumstances.

Do you have any comments on University policies (e.g. the role of the external examiner, policies around plagiarism, script annotation)?

The University policies to cope with the emergency situation and changes to examination were appropriate, and well explained and communicated to the students.

Please describe here any recommendations for improvement.

The measures undertaken this year were appropriate and effective. I have some suggestions below for longer term conversations of what the University could draw from this unusual year.

Please highlight any good practice you encountered.

The Department was very clear in its communication with students, and I especially praise the work of the professional services staff in this Department and the Internal Examiner in this regard.

Have you seen any evidence of grade inflation?

I have not seen evidence of grade inflation. There were a higher proportion of first class degrees this year than would normally be expected, but as explained above I think that this reflects the fact that students were able to focus on their strongest work.

If this is your final year as external examiner? If so, have you seen improvements over your tenure?
Has the Department acted on your advice?

I will act as examiner again next year. Compared to last year, within the constraints of what was possible in this unusual year the Department had acted on my advice from last year.

Do you have any other comments?

- The emergency situation led to students having the choice to hand write their examination responses or to type them. This choice – in these unusual circumstances – worked well. I encourage the University to continue looking into possibilities to make this choice more readily available to students, outside emergency circumstances.
- Whilst of course we all hope that there will not be equivalent disruptions again in the near future, the fact that face to face teaching and examining became unfeasible this year adds to the reasons to keep going with conversations about the feasibility to diversity assessment, such as to include a coursework component. This will accommodate assessment adapted to different styles of learning, and it also means that there is a more formalised means of a student being able to call upon their track record to contribute towards their final classmark.
- There was a notable greater presence of discussion of ethics in the dissertations that I looked at this year. The work of the Tutor who is training UG dissertation students in ethics is beginning to show in the cohort. In addition to the important work that this Tutor is doing, I also encourage supervisors of UG dissertations to support students with incorporating this discussion into their final write up.

Thank you for completing the Examiners Report form.

Please now forward to vcexternalexaminers@admin.cam.ac.uk by July 31st for undergraduate examinations, **1st October** for Masters Degrees, and **12th October** for resits.

Please also forward copies to your Chair of Examiners.