



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Phil Scarf		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Salford		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	BSc / MMath in Mathematics; BSc in Mathematics & its Applications; BSc in Mathematics, Operational Research & Statistics		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014/15	Date of Report:	26/8/15

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

1. Programme Structure

Appropriate.

2. Academic Standards

Appropriate.

3. The Assessment Process (including dissertations, if appropriate)

I have a number of issues with the assessment process, in particular, the rules for determining degree classification and the scaling of marks.

Regarding the rules for degree classification:

- a) It appears to be possible for a candidate A with a higher overall average than a candidate B to be awarded a lower classification. This can arise when A and B are both borderline on the primary rule, but B has sufficient module marks at the higher level on the secondary rule while A does not. This outcome strikes me as odd.
- b) It would be less problematic if the secondary rule did not possess particular defects: i) it is not discounted when a PMC is considered in the same way that the primary rule is discounted; ii) it requires a level of precision in the marking

of module assessments that I think is unachievable—for example, a candidate could miss out on a first class honours on the basis of one module at 69, and this module might have been sat some 18 months earlier so that no review of that mark is possible—I do not believe that assessments can be marked to a level of accuracy of 1 or 2 marks—therefore the secondary rule is not robust; iii) scaling can exacerbate this issue.

Regarding scaling, I think this process should be avoided, for reasons in b)ii), and also because it should only be done if it is done well. To do scaling well, one needs to account for at least the strength of the candidates on the module. Thus, viewing assessment as the process of estimating the strength of each candidate in each subject, a statistical model of assessment needs to be used that accounts for multiple sources of variability: module variability, examiner variability, and marking variability (viz: subject A is known to be hard, examiner B sets difficult papers, and marking accuracy is +/- Z). Then scaling can be performed objectively. Then again, it would be simpler and more transparent to all to insist that examiners set papers that are appropriate for the subject, and commensurate with other modules; and to acknowledge that assessment is imprecise.

Returning to my point about classification rules, it is important that rules acknowledge marking imprecision. The current secondary rule, in my view, does not, and so therefore should not be used.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

None.

5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)

Fine.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Some excellent dissertations.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	x		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		x	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	x		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	x		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	x		
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	x		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	x		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	x		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	x		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	x		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	x		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	x		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	x		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?			
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	x		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	x		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	x		
8.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, to the work of the Examining Board. Have you had adequate opportunities to discuss the Programme and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	x		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?	x		
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?	x		
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?	x		

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

Quality and Standards, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE