

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM 2021

External examiner name:	Ianthi Maria Tsimpli		
External examiner home institution:	University of Cambridge		
Course(s) examined:	MPhil and MSt in Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics		
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? <i>[Please refer to paragraph 6 of the Guidelines for External Examiner Reports].</i>	✓		
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 7 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.</p>				

Part B

In your responses to these questions, please could you include comments on the effectiveness of any changes made to the course or processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic where appropriate.

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?*

Academic standards achieved by the students of the 2020-21 cohort are comparable to those achieved at other higher education institutions, such as my own University (Cambridge).

- 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).*

There were 15 first-year MPhil candidates, 7 second-year MPhil candidates and 15 candidates for the M.St. Of those candidates two of the 15 M.St. candidates were not made award decisions in the final examiners' meeting due to them having been offered extension to submissions. Of the remaining 13 M.St. candidates the distribution of awards was very well-balanced with 2 candidates having been awarded Distinction, 4 Merit, 7 Pass and none failed. Of the 7 second-year MPhil candidates five were made award decisions at the final examiners' meeting. Two candidates were awarded Distinction, 1 Merit and 2 Pass. The remaining two candidates had extensions for submission of work.

Since the final examiners' meeting in July, one of the remaining MSt students submitted the remaining coursework and was awarded a Pass while the other did not and as a result failed. Of the remaining two MPhil students, one was awarded Merit and the other was offered Merit at the MSt level because of mitigating circumstances that were considered by the board of examiners during the summer.

The distribution of awards was fair and somewhat lower than last year's which was also a pandemic year, when considering the number of Distinctions awarded (four out of twenty-two awards were Distinctions). This was a matter for consideration and the difference in the nature of the exams was discussed.

Overall, the level of performance was very good and similar to the academic standards of my own institution (Cambridge) at postgraduate level of similar, taught courses and perhaps overall slightly higher than in a few other UK academic institutions (Russell Group) in which I have acted as external examiner for their postgraduate taught courses in Linguistics, particularly considering the lower end of the awards, i.e. the quality of student performance within the Pass range.

Finally, of the non-graduating 15 first-year MPhil candidates, 4 of them had marks above 70, 4 within the 65-69 range, 6 with marks between 50 and 64 and only one failed. Again, the distribution of marks seems very appropriate and despite the exceptional circumstances due to the pandemic, the quality of the exams and the spread of marks was not so different from previous years.

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 rigour and conduct of the assessment process are commendable. Markers adhere to the marking criteria and most markers provide feedback especially when the two markers disagree or when the mark is towards the lower end of the scale. Equity and fair treatment of all students is clear and this is also ensured by the scrutiny of the marks for final award decisions also with regard to the overall cohort's performance.

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 was very pleased to see that the comments and feedback were richer than last year's and it was clear that the assessors had taken these recommendations into account. There are still a few assessors who do not provide detailed feedback but I believe that the tendency is for most assessors to appreciate the usefulness of comments and informative feedback justifying the awarded mark; this is very helpful for any third marker that needs to be called in in case of disagreement and for the external examiner to have a better overview of the range and justification of marks awarded by assessors within the same module.

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.*

2021 was again an unusual year albeit with the opportunity to prepare examination format earlier due to the previous year's experience and the ongoing pandemic situation. Nevertheless, there was still a small number of students that requested extensions for submission of coursework. Delayed submissions were assessed and marked in the appropriate way and the chair of examiners was excellent in informing the board of the marks and requesting approval or further discussion of awards. The quality of the learning opportunities and good practice are already in place.

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.

This is my final year as external examiner of the MPhil and MSt in Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department and in particular the administrator Silke Zahrir and the Chair of Examiners Philomen Probert for their help and support, feedback, explanations and collegiate attitude towards everyone in the Examiners Board and myself in particular as external examiner. The quality of the conduct of the examinations, the scrutiny of the final awards, and the fair, strict and compassionate attitude of the examiners' board towards the students were a great pleasure to observe and elements for me to praise. The structures of the MPhil and the MSt are very well balanced and Paper A is, as I've mentioned before, a very good way of ensuring good level of knowledge of core Linguistics areas ensuring that option modules are well-grounded. I hope the courses continue with the same level of success in future years.

Signed:	
Date:	21/11/2021

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.