

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

External examiner's report form 2006/07 (graduate)

The School sees it as important that there should be a three-way dialogue on standards and assessment between you as the external examiner, the Department concerned and the central School bodies. If the space provided in the box is not large enough for your answers please continue on a separate sheet or expand the box as appropriate.

Name of examiner:

Professor Glyn Stone

Department responsible for examining:

Department of International History

Degree(s) being examined (e.g. MSc in Economics):

MA in History of International Relations

MSc in Theory and History of International Relations

MSc in History of International Relations

Course(s) being examined (e.g. EC484, Econometric Analysis):

HY 408: Nationalism, Communism and Conflict in East Asia, 1931-1954

HY 409: Origins and Conduct of the Second World War, 1935-1945

HY 411: European Integration in the Twentieth Century

HY 422: Presidents, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: From Roosevelt to Regan, 1933-1989

HY 423: Empire, Colonialism and Globalisation

HY 429: Anglo-American Relations from World War to Cold War, 1939-1991

HY 430: The Marshall Plan, the Cold War and the Making of Post-War Europe

HY 431: The Cold War and Third World Revolutions, 1960-1990

HY 434: The Rise and Fall of Communism in Europe, 1917-1990

HY 436: Race, Violence and Colonial Rule in Africa

HY 451: Persecution in Europe: From Witch Hunts to Ethnic Cleansing

HY 461: East Asia in the Age of High Imperialism

Dissertation

- 1 Is the level of this degree consistent with the level set in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications ? The relevant section of the Framework is attached.

YES

- 2 What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and its component courses?

As I reported last year there continues to be no discernible weaknesses in the programme or in its component courses. The impressive range of courses, much larger than the equivalent Masters awards of my acquaintance, provides LSE students with an enviable choice with regard to content and exposes them to a number of variable and challenging forms of assessment. The demands of the Masters awards in the History of International Relations at the LSE in terms of their structure – four courses including a compulsory dissertation – remain appropriate.

- 3 Judging by the standards achieved by candidates, do you think the methods of teaching are suitable and adequate?

Nothing has happened this year to change my view that, judging by the standards achieved by students, the teaching methods in the Department of International History are anything other than suitable and far more than adequate. It is certain that the teaching staff make a positive contribution to the achievement of their students.

- 4 Do you think the method(s) of assessment is/are appropriate for this programme?

With the exception of the dissertation there is a strong emphasis on examinations though coursework essays also play a significant part in some cases. These methods of assessment are certainly appropriate, make the Masters awards highly credible and provide students with the opportunity to develop and play to their strengths. I continue to be impressed by the high quality of many of the dissertations, a number of which achieve publishable standards providing clear evidence of the appropriateness of this method of assessment.

- 5 Do you think the marking scheme and arrangements for the award of degree classifications are appropriate?

I repeat what I said last year. The marking scheme and arrangements for the award of degree classification are appropriate. I was pleased to see that students who now achieve a merit, a distinction and two passes are awarded a merit. This change is entirely appropriate and provides justice to those students who fall into this category. I still think that there is some inconsistency in that students who achieve two distinctions and two merits achieve a distinction, quite properly in my mind, while those who achieve two merits and two passes are awarded only a pass. As I suggested last year, provided the overall mark is 60 or above students who achieve two merits and two passes should be awarded a merit.

- 6 Do you think that the standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which you are familiar?

I have absolutely no doubt that the standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions with which I am familiar. The standards set by the International History Department are rigorous and challenging and the students live up to them with various degrees of success, in some cases exceptionally so.

- 7 Did you have sufficient access to the material you needed to make the required judgements?

The International History Department are meticulous in providing me with all the material I need to make the required judgements. In all cases I was provided with appropriate samples of examination scripts, essays and dissertations in sufficient time along with markers comments and recommended internally agreed marks or in a few cases, fewer than last year, disagreed marks requiring my adjudication.

- 8 Did you think the examination process was carried out properly and in a manner consistent with the Instructions for Examiners?

I am certain that the examination process was carried out properly and in a manner consistent with the instructions for examiners.

9 Did you think the assessment procedures were fair and impartial?

I continue to believe that the assessment procedures are fair and impartial. As I reported last year the use of anonymous marking provides one guarantee of this. I also continue to be impressed by the scrupulousness of the Board of Examiners in making its recommendations and its concern to ensure fairness and impartiality. There were more cases this year compared to last year of students who had extenuating circumstances and I thought the Board, particularly the Chairman, handled these cases with sensitivity, knowledge and appropriate care.

10 Were you satisfied with the standard of internal marking?

I continue to be very satisfied with the standard of internal marking in the various modes of assessment. As last year, the double marking and internal examiners' comments were well considered and appropriate in virtually all cases. I was pleased to see that the internal examiners' accepted the advice of their external examiners to reward really impressive work with a mark well beyond the 70 borderline and that in the case of dissertations which were considered to be of publishable standard to award a mark in the very high seventies and beyond.

11 If you made any suggestions about the examination process last year, are you satisfied that these were considered properly ?

I am satisfied that the suggestions I made last year about the examination process were considered properly. I was pleased to see that students who achieve a distinction, a merit and two passes are now awarded an overall merit. However, I continue to think that some students who achieve two merits and two passes are deserving of the award of a merit overall. Admittedly, it is a large category of students but in cases where an individual achieves two high merits marks, say 66/67 and two high pass marks, say 57/58 and thereby achieves an average mark over 60 they should, in my view, be considered for an overall merit. For this category of students perhaps a little more mathematical sophistication is required to ensure that justice is done.

Supplementary question

Finally, for administrative purposes (including calculating the appropriate payment) we need to know whether you were able to attend the final examiners' meeting(s).

YES

DATE(S):

Thursday, 25 October 2007

Thank you for your time and trouble in completing this form.