

**THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL  
SCIENCE**  
**External examiner's report form 2006/07 (undergraduate)**

Dear colleague

Attached is the form for our annual external examiner's report.

All information submitted on this report form will be used for internal purposes only. Between 2003-2006 there was a requirement for a summary of all external examiners' reports to be published externally on the HEFCE 'Teaching Quality Information' web site; this ceased in the 2006/7 academic session.

It would be a great help to us if you were able to complete the form in an electronic version. If you are willing to do so, please email Clair Simmonds at [c.t.simmonds@lse.ac.uk](mailto:c.t.simmonds@lse.ac.uk) and a copy will be sent by return.

We do however recognise that for some examiners the paper version is easier to use, in which case please complete the attached form and return it to Clair Simmonds, Student Services Centre, LSE, Houghton St, London WC2A 2AE.

If at all possible we would like to receive your form within two weeks of the final examiners' meeting.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact Simeon Underwood, Academic Registrar. ([s.underwood@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.underwood@lse.ac.uk)).

Instructions to examiners and electronic copies of all report and payment forms are also available on the following web site address:  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/studentServicesCentre/examinationsAndResults/Examiners.htm>

**Please consider carefully whether the report you are providing is full enough for the purpose. Some of the reports we have received in the recent past have been cursory. On the one hand this may be because things are generally satisfactory and there is not much for the examiner to say. On the other hand we regard these reports as probably the most important piece of evidence available to us in demonstrating our academic standards and the quality of our provision, both to ourselves and the outside world; and we would ask that you write your report with this in mind.**

**Thank you for the time and trouble you take over these reports.**

Ray Richardson  
Deputy Director (Teaching and Learning)  
February 2007

# THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

## External examiner's report form 2006/07 (undergraduate)

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: **Dr Peter Jackson**

Department responsible for examining: **International History**

Degree(s) being examined (e.g. BSc in Economics): **Various combinations with International History including International Relations and Government.**

Course(s) being examined (e.g. EC102, Economics B): **HY101, HY116 , HY206, HY208, HY209, HY226, HY232, HY238, HY300, HY303, HY311, HY320**

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?

**Undergraduate studies at the Department of International History has a range of strengths. Among the foremost are the wide range of courses on offer and especially the commitment of members of staff to maintaining the highest standards of teaching. The range of courses over geographical regions, time periods and themes is unrivalled. The quality of teaching on offer is very clearly first rate. The scripts I have seen demonstrate that the vast majority of students have developed all of the key historical skills: the ability to understand and engage with historical debates as well; the ability to assess the relative persuasiveness of historical arguments based on evidence and, particularly in the second and third year, the ability to assume clear positions within these debates and in some cases to develop original interpretations. Some of the examinations scripts and dissertations sent to me are of the very highest standard. Many of the dissertations were remarkable for the level of primary research, including archival material, upon which they were based. This is evidence of exemplary teaching. I saw no significant weaknesses whatever in my scrutiny of the department's assessment procedures.**

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

**Based on the quality of material I saw and impressions gained at the departmental examination board, teaching in the Department of International History is of a very high standard. My clear impression is that students are given ample advice and support by staff who are genuinely committed to both academic development and pastoral care.**

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

**Yes. The examination process works very well. I was particularly impressed with the standard of commentary on exam scripts and dissertations. This is evidence of a high-level of staff commitment to student development.**

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

**Yes. The procedures employed by the department are changing with regard to the way marks formerly treated as 'borderline' are considered. This is sensible. Great care is taken by staff at the exam board to ensure fairness within and across years and degree schemes. This is also reassuring.**

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?

**Yes, the standards of student achievement compare favourably with those at my own institution and those at Keele University (where I am also external examiner). Students are receiving a very high standard of tuition.**

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

**Yes. I was sent all First Class material, all fails and a sample of work across the other classes. I was also offered the opportunity to see any other script if I wished.**

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

**Yes, without exception.**

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

**Yes. All scripts were anonymously double-marked.**

10 Were you satisfied with the standard of internal marking?

**Yes. This is a particular strength of the assessment procedures in the department. As already mentioned, I was particularly impressed with the care taken by examiners over each script and the quality of the commentary. This was most helpful.**

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

**N/A**

#### **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): 4 July 2007**

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

# THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

## External examiner's report form 2006/07 (undergraduate)

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: MARTIN THOMAS

Department responsible for examining: DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

Degree(s) being examined (e.g. BSc in Economics): BA IN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

Course(s) being examined (e.g. EC102, Economics B): HY113, HY203, HY222, HY235, HY233, HY237, HY312, HY304, HY316, HY313, undergraduate Dissertations

- 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?

The International History BA programme is diverse and challenging. The courses on offer enable students to explore a range of specialities through detailed engagement with theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of international systems, diplomacy, inter-state and intra-state conflict.

The courses offered complement one another extremely well. Taken together, they provide a coherent package without significant overlap between individual component elements. There is also ample evidence of progression between levels one to three. The courses become increasingly detailed and theoretical, and the final-year dissertation requires students to demonstrate capacity for independent research and high-level critical analysis. It is also refreshing to see that political theory is integrated into the degree programme, something that is, unfortunately, lacking from a good number of modern history degrees.

I see no significant weaknesses in the programme.

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

I am quite convinced by the exam scripts and dissertations that I have reviewed, as well as by the careful and extensive comments made by markers on them, that the Department's teaching methods are perfectly adequate. It is abundantly clear, both from the contents of exam scripts and from the high mean averages achieved by course cohorts, that the students have been well taught. Without exception, the scripts indicate that students are equipped with a detailed knowledge of their course subject and, more importantly, that they have a clear understanding of the major theoretical debates and arguments that inform their chosen topics. The culture of expectation that pervades the Department's work is to be commended and is borne out by the high quality of student performance.

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

Yes. While the methods of assessment might be characterised as fairly traditional, with a strong onus placed on coursework essays, long examinations, and the dissertation as an independent research element, they are none the worse for that. Students are tested fairly and extensively and the examination component remains highly effective in distinguishing the best from the worst. An argument might be made for consideration of more assessed presentational work as a component of coursework, but I do not think that this should be considered an absolute requirement. It is probably true to say that, while student presentations provide a means to demonstrate the acquisition of transferable skills, they are less intellectually demanding than the completion of more extensive written work. I do not, therefore, recommend any substantial changes to the Department's assessment methods.

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

Yes.  
The marking scheme seems to be transparently clear to staff and students alike. It is applied scrupulously and fairly.  
The combination of a required number of course marks in a particular class and/or an overall aggregate score in order to achieve particular degree classifications is sensible and equitable.  
The change to regarding marks near a classification borderline – 49s, 59s, etc – as just that, i.e. marks near the top of a scale, but nothing more, seems fair to me, although it will, of course, require markers to recognise that awarding such marks can no longer be considered an invitation to think about raising the mark to 50, 60, etc.

- 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?

In my view, the standards of student performance in LSE's Department of International History are among the very best in the country. Indeed, they are quite possibly the very best within the sub-discipline of International History.

There is absolutely no inflation of marks and so this outstanding student performance is testament both to the quality of the intake and to the excellence of the teaching delivered.

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

Yes.

The administrative support that I received this year, both from the Departmental Secretary, Carol Toms, and from the Exams Officer, Dr Kirsten Schulze, was excellent.

Draft examinations were sent in good time. Examination scripts were quickly marked and sent out to me. Sample sizes were sensible and perfectly adequate.

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

Yes.

The examination process appears to have run smoothly this year. The Examination Board was conducted in exemplary fashion with careful consideration given to all instances of aggregate scores, extenuating circumstances and any other problem cases.

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

Yes. There is no question in my mind that the Department takes its responsibilities here very seriously indeed.

The system of anonymous marking contributes to this, as does the consideration of candidates anonymously, rather than by name, at the Examination Board.

10 Were you satisfied with the standard of internal marking?

Yes. The mark-sheets provided for final examination scripts are well designed and thoroughly completed. Indeed, the markers' comments were, by and large, extremely informative. They not only explained what was demanded by a particular exam question, but described how, why, and whether individual candidates had done what was required. This is invaluable to an External Examiner, particularly in those courses in which high levels of specialist knowledge are essential to the achievement of outstanding marks.

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

Yes.

I should point out that I made a minor criticism in my previous year's report relating to a few, rare cases in which internal markers wrote relatively little to explain why a particular mark had been awarded. This was certainly not the case this year. I found abundant evidence of detailed consideration of marks and of consultation between markers over agreed marks and disputed ones.

#### **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): 28 June 2007**

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