

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

External examiner's report form 2011/12

If the space provided in the box is not large enough for your answers please continue on a separate sheet.

Your name, institution and email address:

Dr William O'Reilly
University of Cambridge, Trinity Hall
wto21@cam.ac.uk

Department you are responsible for examining (eg Economics):

History

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

BA History; BSc International Relations and History

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

HY114 War and Society, from the Renaissance to the Napoleonic Era, c.1500-1815

HY208 The History of the United States since 1783

HY216 Four Reichs: Austria and Prussia and the Contest for Germany since 1618

HY221 The History of Russia, c.1682-1825

HY314 Representing the Past: Historiography and the Historical Methods

HY315 The European Enlightenment, c.1680-1799

HY319 Napoleon and Europe

Final year free-standing Dissertations

Were you able to attend the final examiners' meeting(s)?

YES/

DATE(S): 27 and 28 June 2012

PART C

Comments in this part of the form will be shared with students, usually through departmental Staff:Student Liaison Committees. You are asked to provide a brief summary of your comments from Parts A and B that might be of particular interest to students. We would also ask that you restrict your comments to those that would be of primary interest to students, rather than, for example, technical points on assessment schemes. What you have written will not be changed, though it may be accompanied by a statement of the actions the Department or School has taken in response to your comments.

Please use the space below to provide commentary on any or all of the following topics:

- Strengths/weaknesses of the programme/course
- Methods of teaching (judging by standards achieved by students)
- Methods of assessment
- Standard of the student performance

We would particularly appreciate a full statement in this part of the form.

Let me begin by stating that I do not have an interest to declare. The quality of examination papers reviewed by me in this academic session has been of a very high standard. The range of courses on offer and the scope and breath of those subject areas they address is wonderfully challenging and academically rewarding: political and cultural history, as well as social modules are on offer. I found that all are comprehensively planned with clear academic aims and expectations and propose critical engagement with the subject broadly and the relevant historiography specifically. I also examined free-standing work and ten dissertations.

In some 90% of cases, agreed internal marks were confirmed, about 10% of marks were referred for adjudication and were raised and moderated. All work was read. The examination papers were generally of a high standard with – as reflects a quality and percentage slightly higher than the national average – and some 15-20% of all finalists attained First-class degrees, with the majority of candidates falling in the 2:1 category. Marks awarded by the Internal Examiners were fair and honest: Firsts were a true expression of high-quality, critical and analytic work of a first-class range. Those few candidates who performed poorly typically did so (and I saw a sample of such scripts), because they signalled a more general lack of engagement with the subject in the particular academic session, as well as, typically, a failure to produce any required supplementary work. This is not reflective of the average. Those candidates who did very well were very impressive indeed; this was particularly evident in dissertation work where independent research work was of a very high standard. I do, however, have some reservations about the range of marks awarded for dissertation work. Internal examining and marking was seen and adjudged to be fair and scrupulous. Examination scripts showed evidence of candidates drawing, in some instances, on a wide range of reading and composing sharp and analytical responses to challenging, but fair, questions. The length of answers varied, but was typically of the order of four pages, and candidates of the first order showed evidence of preparedness, reflection, critical evaluation, control of evidence, apposite referencing and stylistic competence, if not flair. Internal examiners were fair and consistent and appropriate in their comments. Internal examiners should be congratulated on the achievements of their students in the academic session 2011-12.

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External examiner's report form 2011/12

If the space provided in the box is not large enough for your answers please continue on a separate sheet.

Your name, institution and email address:

Dr Simon Potter
Department of History
University of Bristol

simon.potter@bristol.ac.uk

Department you are responsible for examining (eg Economics):
International History

Degree(s) being examined (e.g. MSc/BSc in Economics):
BA/BSc International History / International Relations

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

HY113

HY117

HY203

HY233

HY235

HY239

HY321

HY300

(plus dissertations and assessed essays)

Were you able to attend the final examiners' meeting(s)?

YES

DATE(S): 27/28 June 2012

PART C

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We would particularly appreciate a full statement in this part of the form.

This is an extremely strong and impressive programme, which covers a diverse range of places and issues. Courses focus on political and economic history, and give students a real opportunity to master their chosen fields of study.

Judging by the standards achieved by students, methods of teaching are exemplary. In particular, students benefit from being able to take courses that span multiple academic terms, and thus to develop a real depth of understanding and breadth of knowledge. The opportunity to submit un-assessed, formative coursework really benefits the students, who are able to take risks and work in a creative fashion, without fear that a wrong step will lower their final marks. This shows in their assessed essays and exams, where they carry their creativity over into their summative work, and display the originality that marks out the really excellent scripts.

The department's rigorous internal marking procedures have ensured that student work is assessed in a fair and consistent manner. There is a great deal of transparency when it comes to presenting work and justification for marking decisions to the external examiners. The assessment process is scrupulous and extremely well-run.

The standard of student performance is extremely impressive. Most students are performing to a consistently high standard, and among the best students the level of attainment is very high indeed. I saw some excellent work, and students are able to assess historiography in a critical fashion and deploy a great deal of detailed evidence in a structured way, in order to support their own arguments. Dissertation work often shows a real ability to deploy the historian's scholarly tools in working with primary sources.

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External examiner's report form 2011/12

If the space provided in the box is not large enough for your answers please continue on a separate sheet.

Your name, institution and email address:

Dr Matthew Seligmann
University of Northampton
msseligmann@yahoo.com

Department you are responsible for examining (eg Economics):

International History

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

BA History, BSc International Relations and History

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

HY116, HY206, HY226, HY232, HY238, HY300, HY303, HY304, HY311, HY320

Were you able to attend the final examiners' meeting(s)?

YES

DATE(S): 28 June 2012

PART C

Comments in this part of the form will be shared with students, usually through departmental Staff:Student Liaison Committees. You are asked to provide a brief summary of your comments from Parts A and B that might be of particular interest to students. We would also ask that you restrict your comments to those that would be of primary interest to students, rather than, for example, technical points on assessment schemes. What you have written will not be changed, though it may be accompanied by a statement of the actions the Department or School has taken in response to your comments.

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We would particularly appreciate a full statement in this part of the form.

The programme on offer to the students is an extremely rich and varied one. It contains no obvious weaknesses. The strengths are many. The students seem extremely well informed, very well read and exceptionally aware of the nature and importance of the historiographies they encounter. As a result, they are not only well placed to describe and comment on debates, they also frequently make penetrating judgments on the state of the discipline and the nature of contemporary scholarship. This is much to be commended. The students are also adept at handling primary sources, which they find in large quantities for their dissertations.

Overall, I would say that the students face an interesting, challenging and well crafted programme of study. Much is expected of them by the department, but almost without exception they rise to this challenge.

