

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

External examiner's report form 2010/11

Dear Colleague

Attached is our annual external examiner's report form. The form comes in four parts: part A asks some basic quality assurance questions; part B is for use by academic departments and/or Boards of Examiners; part C is to be made available to appropriate students, for example through departmental Staff:Student Liaison Committees; part D is for you to make any additional comments to the School. Please complete each of sections A to C; section D is to be completed at your discretion.

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 the completed form to Katrina Etheridge at examinations@lse.ac.uk.

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 Katrina Etheridge, 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 Mark Thomson, Assistant Registrar (m.t.thomson@lse.ac.uk).

Thank you for the time and trouble you take over these reports. We see them as an especially important part of our quality assurance processes; and it is 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.

Janet Hartley
Pro-Director (Teaching and Learning)
July 2011



THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

External examiner's report form 2010/11

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

HY230 The Early Colonial Empires: Europe and the World, 1400-1750

HY234 Muslims, Christians and Jews in the early modern world

HY314 Representing the Past: Historiography and the Historical Methods

HY319 Napoleon and Europe

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

YES

DATE(S): 29 and 30 June 2011

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

V 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. While not wishing to single out particular courses, (I did find HY216, 230, 234 and 319 personally of greatest interest) 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:i 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 2010-11.

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

External examiner's report form 2010/11

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:

Ian Phimister, University of Sheffield [i.phimister@sheffield.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 Relationsi

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

HY 235

HY239

HY117

HY113

HY233

HY312

(plus dissertations and assessed essays)

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

YES/

DATE(S): 29/30 June 2011

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:

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- Methods of teaching (judging by standards achieved by students)
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We would particularly appreciate a full statement in this part of the form.

If there are weaknesses in the courses I examined, they are not immediately apparent to an outsider.

The range and depth of the courses I saw are hugely impressive. The very best students are outstanding, and this shows up particularly in the research-based dissertations. Several of the ones I read were very close to being publishable in scholarly journals – a level rarely achieved by undergraduate work.

Overall, the courses I externalised struck me as having been excellently taught. There is no doubt in my mind that they are rigorously assessed. The feedback for external examiners and students alike is clear and comprehensive.

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External examiner's report form 2010/11

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 S. Seligmann, University of Northampton,
matthew.seligmann@northampton.ac.uk

Department you are responsible for examining (eg Economics):

International History

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

BA in History

BA in International Relations and History

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

HY101, HY116, HY206, HY209, HY226, HY232, HY238, HY300, HY303, HY304,
HY311, HY320

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

YES

DATE(S): 30 June 2011

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.

I am not aware of any weaknesses in the history programme. The strengths of the course are many. To begin with, the students appear exceptionally well read and, therefore, well equipped to engage with the debates that exist in their chosen subjects. The level of familiarity with the historiography was impressive, but even more pleasing was the willingness of students to evaluate the different viewpoints within debates and to make informed judgments about the validity of different schools of thought. In my own institution and in most of those other institutions where I have been an external examiner, students were surprisingly reticent when it came to assessing and criticising the work of established historians. No such timidity was exhibited by the students on this course, who showed a commendable willingness to evaluate cases and make reasoned judgements. Another strength that struck me strongly was the consistent good use of primary sources that was on display in the dissertations that I read. Students naturally took advantage of any printed primary materials that were readily available to them, along with sources that could be viewed on the internet, but they also showed considerable initiative in doing genuine archive work. It would be all too easy to say that this is easy for students living in London – and it is certainly true that such students can and should get to the National Archives or the British Library – however, as many of the archives visited were outside of London (and, indeed, outside the UK) this impressive level of archival research cannot be put down simply to location. It shows a level of dedication on the part of the students (doubtless encouraged by excellent supervision) that ranks among the best examples of best practise.

The standard of student performance at all levels, across every module and in all forms of assessment was extremely high. The majority of the work I saw was of a fully deserved upper second or first class standard. This was in spite of (or perhaps because of) some extremely challenging questions. The students appeared to have no difficulty rising to this challenge.