



Name and Title: Dr Rachel Cooper
Email: r.v.cooper@lancaster.ac.uk
Home institution: Lancaster University
Award or subject area examined: Part II HPS
Associated University of Cambridge Faculty/Department: HPS

Please tick the statement which most closely reflects your views of the examinations.

TICK HERE

The standards set for the award(s) or subject area(s) above were appropriate. The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted. Any recommendations made are for the purposes of enhancement to the course and its assessment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The standards set for the award(s) or subject area(s) above were appropriate. The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted. HOWEVER, there are some risks to the future assurance of the course and its assessment, as outlined in my recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
There are immediate concerns or risks relating to the standards set for the awards or subject areas above and/or the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards. These require immediate action on behalf of the University to prevent reoccurrence in the next set of examinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick as appropriate:	Yes	No	N/A
Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (programme handbooks, regulations, and marking criteria)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that the level of questions was appropriate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were you given sufficient opportunity to scrutinise the general standard and consistency of marking of examination scripts and coursework?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have issues raised in previous report(s) been addressed to your satisfaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Please return this form, with your full report, to: vcexternalexaminers@admin.cam.ac.uk by July 31st for undergraduate examinations, 1st October for Masters Degrees, and 12th October for resits.

Or: The Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge, The Old Schools, Cambridge, CB2 1TN.

Please also forward copies to your Chair of Examiners.

External Examiner's Report on HPS Part II

Rachel Cooper, 28 June 2017

I have been asked to comment on the following:

The extent to which standards are appropriate for the examination and the qualification

Standards are appropriate for the examination and qualification. Students were assessed on the basis of exams, primary source essays, and, in some cases, dissertations.

The exam questions were generally well chosen and probing. Students had clearly been well-taught and the quality of work was generally excellent.

I was especially impressed by the Primary Source Essays. Students were asked to closely engage with one of a range of set primary sources and wrote 3000 word essays. This work was supported by seminar series on the set texts. The essays written by students were generally of an excellent standard. This type of assessment worked very well and prompted students to think critically and deeply about the set texts.

Excellent work was also produced in the dissertations.

In general, students showed a sophisticated understanding of a range of topics in the history and philosophy of science. They were able to write well and clearly. Students could engage closely with difficult texts, critically assess the arguments of other scholars, and were able to develop their own original lines of argument.

The extent to which standards are comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions with which you are familiar

Standards are comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions with which I am familiar.

The standards expected for work to receive marks of a particular class were comparable to those of other institutions with which I am familiar in the UK. A higher proportion of students achieved first class degrees than at other institutions, but this was fully justifiable in view of the excellence of the work produced by candidates.

A much higher proportion of work achieved very high marks (in the 80s) than in other UK institutions with which I am familiar (where such marks are virtually unheard of). I am fully satisfied that these high marks were fully justified; I saw quite a few examples of student work that, with some revision, would be of publishable standard.

The extent to which processes for assessment, and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted;

Processes for assessment, and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted.

All essays, dissertations and exam scripts were double-blind marked. Examiners maintained notes on the rationale for awarding marks. These notes could be reviewed in cases where examiners disagreed and were also made available to me (as external examiner) on request.

Where there were disagreements between markers these were resolved through discussion and in all cases examiners were able to agree a mark.

As external examiner, I reviewed a sample of exam scripts for each paper, and also read a sample of dissertations and essays. I am fully satisfied that the marks awarded were fair.

As external examiner, I also carefully reviewed work by candidates who were at a borderline between degree classes. I am satisfied that the work of borderline candidates was thoroughly considered.

Any good practice which you feel could be usefully identified for further dissemination.

Examples of good practice that can be identified for further dissemination are:

- (1) All student work was double-blind marked
- (2) Markers used the full range of marks, with awarded marks ranging from the 40s to the mid-80s.

Additional comments

1. Feedback to students

At present students do not receive any comments on their dissertations, essays, or exams. In other UK institutions with which I am familiar it is now the norm for students to receive feedback on at least essays and dissertations. There may be very good reasons why feedback is not given to students in Part II of HPS at Cambridge, but I would suggest that it should be considered whether feedback should be provided.

2. Statistical analyses to ensure consistency of marks

I suggest that it would be worthwhile to conduct a statistical analysis of student marks to check that the marks awarded for work in the history of science and in the philosophy of science are comparable (additionally, it might also be worth checking for consistency between individual papers). The numbers of students writing philosophy dissertations and essays was too small for this to be worthwhile in this cohort, but it would be worth reviewing marks over some longer period in order to check that comparable marks are given for philosophy and history coursework, and for philosophy and history exams.