

External Examiner's Report on HPS Part II

Rachel Cooper, 15 July 2019

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.

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.

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

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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. Where there were disagreements between markers these were resolved through discussion.

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) Examiners' notes showed a clear rationale for the marks given for exams.