

External Examiner's Report – Part III/MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science,
Department of History and Philosophy of Science

2010/11

This was my first year as External Examiner for the Part III and MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science, offered by the Department of History and Philosophy of Science. All my communications with the administrators, in particular Ms. Tamara Hug, were conducted swiftly and efficiently. I received good information about the programmes and the regulations, and an adequate selection of the students' coursework, as well as a draft of the set essay questions. I had sufficient access to material; it may be useful for the department to send me sample coursework in the future, along with borderline cases, disputed cases, highest and lowest marks.

I found the standard of the students' work to be extremely high, and thus appropriate for the examination and the qualification. Standards are equal to, and sometimes higher than, those of similar programmes in other UK institutions with which I am familiar. No doubt this is a reflection of the high selectivity of the programme, the excellent infrastructures offered by the department and university, and the high quality of the teaching and supervision provided by the department.

Processes for assessment, and the determination of awards appeared to me to be sound and fairly conducted. The current procedure of assigning two markers who are not involved in a piece of work's supervision, is good practice; the feedback given by markers was often very extensive and carefully phrased.

The student cohort appeared very strong: some obviously more than others, but at the top end several students achieved very high marks, and their coursework was a pleasure to read, and occasionally of almost publishable quality.