

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

2011/2

Like last year, all my communications with the administrators, in particular Ms. Tamara Hug and Mr. David Thompson, were conducted swiftly and efficiently. I received exhaustive information about the programmes and the regulations, and a good selection of the students' coursework, as well as a draft of the set essay questions. In response to a remark I made last year, this year I was also sent 'samples' (pieces of work which were average 2:1 and 2:2).

I found the standard of the students' work to be again extremely high, and thus appropriate for the examination and the qualification. Standards are equal to, and at the high end, often higher than, those of similar programmes in other UK institutions with which I am familiar. Again, I was very impressed by the quality of the teaching and by the obvious dedication and commitment shown by many of the supervisors.

Processes for assessment, and the determination of awards appeared to me to be sound and fairly conducted. The feedback given by markers was often very extensive and carefully phrased; it was always useful. This year, for the first time since I started as external examiner for this programme, in one case traditional means of assessment (dissertation) were supplemented by novel means of assessment (an appendix in the form of a documentary). It is my opinion that this is good practice, in line with the present and future directions of higher education, and intellectually sound.

The student cohort again appeared very strong: at the top end several students achieved very high marks, and was occasionally of almost publishable quality.