

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

2012/3

Like in previous years, 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.

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. Students are encouraged to take on ambitious and original projects, and it is evident that the members of staff take good academic and pastoral care of them. They know all the students as individuals.

Processes for assessment, and the determination of awards appeared to me to be, as always, sound and fairly conducted. The feedback given by markers was often very extensive and carefully phrased; it was always useful. Compared to previous years, all examiners are making very good use of the distinction between confidential and non-confidential remarks, and are expressing comments about publishable quality in the confidential section. Moreover, in the course of my three years as external examiner, I have observed an increasing confidence on the part of the examiners in using marks from the 40s to the 80s. I commend the fact that examiners are now comfortable with the full range of marks.

The student cohort again appeared again very strong: at the top end several students achieved very high marks, and was sometimes of publishable quality. I would recommend that every effort is made to recruit for post-graduate study those students who have expressed aspirations in that direction. It would be a pity if Cambridge lost to other universities the academic talents I have seen developing on this history and philosophy of science programme.



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