

Name and Title: Dr Emma Tobin
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Home institution: University College London
Award or subject area examined: MPhil and Part III
Associated University of Cambridge Faculty/Department: History and Philosophy of Science

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

TICK HERE

<p>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.</p> <p>Any recommendations made are for the purposes of enhancement to the course and its assessment.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>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.</p> <p>HOWEVER, there are some risks to the future assurance of the course and its assessment, as outlined in my recommendations.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>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.</p> <p>These require immediate action on behalf of the University to prevent reoccurrence in the next set of examinations.</p>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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.

Science and Technology Studies
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz
Vice Chancellor
University of Cambridge
The Old Schools, Cambridge, CB2 1TN

04/07/15

RE: External Examiner's Report for Department of History and Philosophy MPhil & Part III Programmes

Dear Professor Borysiewicz,

I am writing as the external examiner for the MPhil and Part III Programmes in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. As in previous years, the department is to be congratulated on the pedagogical strength of its programmes. The programmes are intellectually challenging and highly distinctive in terms of both content and the breadth of assessment methods. They show some really outstanding work across all areas of the department. There is some genuinely original research and some of it outstanding and publishable. All of the teaching staff in the department are highly motivated in their teaching activities and show a genuine duty of care to their students. The Department of History and Philosophy of Science Cambridge sets a very high standard and certainly sets an inspiring example to the rest of the field. It's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to see the outstanding work that is produced by the students at HPS Cambridge. Since, it is my last year as external examiner, I would like to say that it has been a privilege to work with the department for the past 3 years. I strongly commend the wonderful work done with students and can only ask that the department continues the work that it is doing.

Dissertations in general are of a very high calibre and are a great credit to this department and its teaching staff. They show some really outstanding work across all areas of the department. The topics are novel and stimulating and show excellent standards of supervision and mentoring for the most part. The quality of student dissertations was as usual very high indeed and feedback is exemplary. Examiners make a good effort to be constructive and show not only where the student made mistakes but also how they might have done things differently. It is also very clear in the transition from essays to the dissertation that students are on a serious learning curve, greatly facilitated by the excellent feedback provided throughout, and this puts them in a position to produce truly remarkable work in their dissertations. Standards are certainly appropriate for the examination and the qualification. Feedback on student work was consistently of a very high standard and was very comprehensive going above and beyond the level of feedback I have seen at other U.K. institutions. Marking and second marking was clearly executed and where internal disagreement was significant the department even appointed a third internal marker in some cases. This worked very well indeed and I thought that student work was taken very seriously and given due consideration. Any disagreements between markers were well explained in the confidential comments and justification for the proposed mark was provided. This made moderation very easy for me as external examiner.

Over the 3 years, I have seen constant improvement on both programmes. In particular, I think student work reflects a more general spread across different areas of the programme; so encouraging students to diversify has worked very well. I was also pleased to see the continued use of anonymous marking. The criteria for assessment are now much clearer particularly in the first class range and there is evidence of these being used in deciding marks in the first class range. There were also some high first class marks, which I was pleased to see. It remains to congratulate Dr Marta Halina and Tamara Hug on the smoothly run examination process. The processes for assessment, and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted.

Recommendations:

(1) Review of Plagiarism checks for student work.

This has been raised by candidate 309's work. In my opinion, it would be worth the department considering using a plagiarism filter (e.g. turnitin) as a systematic check for poor referencing and plagiarism.

(2) Review of Word length policy implementation:

The department should look at reviewing the word length policy and how this is communicated to students, this would release some of the administrative burden of the implementation.

(3) Review of late penalties policy:

I think the department can consider making the penalties more punitive. It certainly is elsewhere and would get rid of the potential for students to game the system by taking extra time to complete work.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Emma Tobin

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Tobin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.