

**LTC09D098**

**Title:** Draft Report to the Senate – External Examiners’ Reports: Undergraduate Provision (2005/06 – 2007-08); Postgraduate Taught Provision (2005 - 2008) and Postgraduate Research Provision (2008 – 2009)

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report from the learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) has been prepared following detailed and thorough consideration of external examiners’ report at School, Faculty and University level. The previous report to LTC was considered at its meeting in March, 2009.
- 1.2 The process for consideration of external examiner’s reports continues to be governed by the requirements of the University’s Code of Practice on Assuring and Enhancing Teaching Quality in relation to taught programmes and the Code of Practice on Research Degree Programmes. The Codes take into account the roles and responsibilities of Faculties (in particular that of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee) and the Quality Assurance Agency’s Code of Practice, with reference to the sections on External Examining and Assessment and on Postgraduate Research.
- 1.3 As in previous reports, student members of the LTC, including the Academic Officer of the UEA Union of Students, the President of the Graduate Students’ Association and the Student member nominated by the Students’ Council have participated in the consideration of this report. The report will be made publicly available via the internet. The LTC believes that this remains a positive step in demonstrating that the University is engaging with faculty, external examiners and students in maintaining the standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

**2. Awards Conferred**

Session	Higher Degrees	First Degrees	Certificates and Diplomas
2005-06	1138	2120	942
2006-07	1292	2263	825
2007-08	1434	2281	753

**Appendix A** attached sets out the number of first degrees awarded, including classifications.

### 3. The Role of the External Examiner

- 3.1 As indicated in Section 1.2 above, the role of the external examiner is governed by the appropriate University Codes of Practice informed by relevant external Codes.

**The purposes and functions of external examiners of taught awards are to ensure that:**

- the academic standards for each award are at the appropriate level and that student performance is judged against this;
- assessment processes measure student achievement against intended learning outcomes and are fair and fairly operated;
- standards at UEA are comparable with those of other higher education institutions.

**In order to achieve these purposes external examiners are expected:**

- to participate in assessment processes for University awards (taught programmes, including viva voce examinations where these are held);
- to arbitrate or adjudicate on problem cases;
- to contribute to the evaluation and consideration of the impact of extenuating circumstances upon students' performance;
- to evaluate assessment policies and procedures, including those with regard to professional practice, where relevant;
- to comment and give advice on the design of courses, on module content, balance and structure, on the appropriateness of learning outcomes, on standards of achievement and on professional practice placements, where relevant.

For postgraduate research degrees, the role of the external examiner is critical in the maintenance of standards and ensuring the comparability of awards. The UEA Code of Practice in this area continues to require that only persons of seniority, experience and expertise are appointed. The Code also requires the use of internal assessors where an academically qualified external examiner does not have recent experience of postgraduate examining in the UK.

- 3.2 The Senate is reminded that the institutional audit by the QAA in April, 2009, found that confidence 'could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future academic standards of the awards that it offers' and 'of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students'. The audit report confirmed that 'the University makes strong and scrupulous use of external examiners in summative assessment and that institutional procedures play an effective role in the management of academic standards'. Scrutiny of the reports of external examiners between 2005-06 to 2008-09 (undergraduate and postgraduate taught) and 2008-09 (postgraduate research) indicates that this confidence in the quality of the student learning experience and the standards of awards remains justified.

In terms of the procedure for scrutiny, external examiners were once again invited to complete a pro-forma report. In response to a number of views expressed about its presentation, a major overhaul has been undertaken leading to the introduction of a new pro-forma for use in respect of 2008-09. The new pro-forma (with appropriate adaptations for different types of provision, such as taught postgraduate, PGCE and Nursing and Midwifery) appear to have supported examiners in providing helpful and constructive narrative comments and to be easier to read.

Publication of summary reports by external examiners is no longer required although the QAA continues to monitor the accuracy of the information that universities publish about themselves via institutional audit. The QAA and is currently considering whether universities should be required to publish a standard data set across a range of indicators (e.g. staff:student ratios, class contact time) which might form the basis of a judgement, following audit rather than comment as at present.

#### 4. **The Process of Consideration of Reports**

- 4.1 The process of consideration of reports by Schools and Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (LTQC) regarding taught provision continues to be that in operation last session. Briefly, Schools are required to draft a reply to each external and to present the report and draft response to their Faculty LTQC. Following scrutiny at Faculty level, the Faculties in their turn confirm to the Learning and Teaching Committee that the process has been properly undertaken, highlighting any University-wide issues and sharing examples of useful practice and enhancements.
- 4.2 In a continuation of the revised approach to consideration at University level in respect of **taught provision**, the Director of Taught Programmes has again selected one School from each Faculty and reviewed relevant external examiners' reports across a longer period from 2005-06 to 2007-08, inclusive. This approach has been adopted to track how Schools have responded to any issues or concerns and how provision has developed or been enhanced as a result. The exercise is also designed to discern features of good practice, to verify that standards remain appropriate and to determine whether the University's provision and/or the students' demonstration of the achievement of learning outcomes have changed/improved. A different set of Schools has been considered from the report to LTC last session so that in due course, all Schools will be reviewed in this rolling programme.

The Schools considered in this report are:

<b>Faculty of Arts and Humanities:</b>	History
<b>Faculty of Health:</b>	Nursing and Midwifery
<b>Faculty of Science:</b>	Biological Sciences
<b>Faculty of Social Sciences:</b>	Economics

**Appendix B** attached lists the Schools that have previously been audited in this way.

In addition, the review has also ascertained that the process of consideration by School and Faculties in respect of the 2007-2008 reports has been appropriately carried out in accordance with procedure, albeit the confirmation from the Faculty of Science was received later than the norm, arising from changes in Faculty Teaching Office support.

**Section 6 below** presents the outcomes of the review with **Section 7** considering the issues for the University raised by the reports.

- 4.3 Reports by internal and external examiners of **research degree programmes** have been considered by the Director of Research Degree Programmes. The outcome of this review was considered by the LTC at its meeting on 09 December, 2009 (**Appendix C attached**).
5. **Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Degree Programmes – action taken in response to issues arising from the report to Senate during 2008-09**
- 5.1 In the 2008-09 report to Senate, the following issues were featured, noting that external examiners laid different emphases on them:
- clarity/transparency regarding second marking
  - degree weightings

The University is aware from students' comments that they seek better feedback on their work, including on examinations.

5.2 The University, via the Learning and Teaching Committee, has responded to these concerns by:

- introducing and implementing a revised policy with regard to the internal verification of marking standards (double marking) approved in May, 2007;
- implementing a policy on course-work submission and “turn-around” times for marking of an feedback on summative coursework from 2008-09. It is planned that a review of the operation of this policy will begin towards the end of the 2009-10 session;
- continuing to limit the permitted range of degree weightings set out in the Common Course Structure (CCS) Degree Regulations and Instructions to Examiners. A major review of CCS is well under way, the LTC and Senate having recently approved some of the underlying principles of the new framework. It is envisaged that a first draft of new regulations will be considered by LTC towards the end of the session; the target date for implementation of the new framework being 2012-13;
- the commencement of a wider review of how feedback to students is managed via the Taught Programmes Policy Group. It is planned that the Learning and Teaching Committee will consider recommendations arising from this review at its meeting in June, 2010.

5.3 The report previously present (in December, 2009) in respect of postgraduate research candidates was generally very positive about candidates’ work and performance in vivas, noting that examiners’ reports were indicative of a clear position of confidence in the quality and standards of research degrees at this University. Some examiners commented that candidates compared favourably with candidates examined elsewhere and some that the work was amongst the best that they had seen at doctoral level.

There were however, some negative remarks about typographical, presentational and/or grammatical errors, on referencing styles, word-counts for the MPhil/PhD and use of previously-published illustrations. The Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group is considering, in conjunction with the Taught Programmes Policy Group, a new policy on use of proof-readers. It is also planning a review of the research degree regulatory frameworks is planned from 2010-11.

## 6. **Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Degree Programmes: academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities**

### 6.1 **Process**

The process of consideration at School and Faculty level in respect of reports for 2007-08 (or 2008 for postgraduate taught provision) has been undertaken in accordance with procedure and has been appropriately conducted. This has been verified by inspection of the report of external examiners and the accompanying tracking forms used by Faculty LTQCs.

We received a total of 119/124 reports from external examiners of undergraduate provision in respect of 2007-08 and 85/91 for postgraduate taught. All reports in respect of postgraduate research provision were received. There is a process in place for requesting outstanding reports (up to three “chaser” requests), the sanction being withholding of the fee.

### 6.2 **Standards and Quality**

Overall, the reports for 2007-08 confirm that academic standards and the quality of the provision remain acceptable and comparable with other UK Universities (and at times exceeds them). This is echoed by the 91% of 2008 UEA graduates (first degrees) who in

the National Student Survey expressed their satisfaction/high satisfaction with their experience (source: National Student Survey 2008). It is however acknowledged that some graduates remain concerned about feedback on their work. This aspect has been addressed in part by the implementation of a new policy on coursework “turn-around” times. The Director of Taught Programmes and the Taught Programmes Policy Group are now considering the most effective ways of providing feedback to students about their examination performance, with recommendations expected by June, 2010.

The University has also participated in a similar review of postgraduate taught provision (the ‘Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey – PTES) in 2009 with the 2010 survey now under way and taking part too in the second Postgraduate Research Experience Survey – PRES), both managed by the Higher Education Academy. The response rates from these surveys has been disappointingly low to date, and so ways of publicising the survey to encourage more students to respond are being pursued: the University is keen to hear from these students. PgR students’ perceptions and reception of the recently established Graduate Schools or Research Institutes in the four Faculties, to facilitate provision of skills training and to promote postgraduate research students’ sense of research environment and community, are awaited with interest.

Turning to the four Schools whose progress was tracked in terms of the views of external examiners over a three-year period, what follows are some illustrative comments about the nature of the provision.

**FACULTY: Science**  
**SCHOOL: Biological Sciences**  
**AWARDS: BSc and MSc**

The following issues and themes emerged during the three year period of the external examiners' reports between 2005-06 and 2007-08:

### **Undergraduate programmes**

#### ***Points of commendation:***

- the variety of learning opportunities made available to students (teaching, research training, practical work, independent study),
- The range of assessment methods employed (practicals, coursework and examinations),
- A wide choice of specialised modules available to students, informed by the research interests and activity of staff,
- Excellent teaching standards,
- Data handling teaching and assessment, embedded within modules and the course as a whole (responding to a criticism raised by externals prior to 2006),
- Research project in the Final year – the range and quality of student work as well as the learning opportunity it provides to students,
- Fair and transparent assessment processes (but noting that some external examiners praised the evidence of internal moderation, whilst others noted the absence of annotations)
- Evidence that the teaching and learning strategy resulted in students' enthusiasm for their subject and study

#### ***Issues which need further attention:***

- External examiners note that it is challenging to ensure consistency of marking across projects in the context of such different topics, different supervisors and different markers across a cohort. They also noted that expertise outside the School might be utilised where topics strayed across boundaries.
- Related to the above, there were some comments recommending that the School review assessment criteria with the aim of providing greater clarity to markers and examiners
- Information available to external examiners, specifically information on the option choices of students selected for viva and information on the distribution of module marks prior to the Board (this appears to have been addressed to some extent from the 2008 reports)
- The annotation of assessed work to reflect the views of (both) internal markers, linking the mark to comments and the assessment criteria
- The way in which the component assessment marks are combined to create an aggregate mark for the purposes of classification. Over all three years external examiners comment that the calculation method enshrined in CCS is inappropriate. Recommendations include the use of a profile of marks in each classification band.

### **Postgraduate Programmes:**

#### ***Points of commendation:***

- Range of assessments, including demonstration of employability skills
- Variety of teaching and learning methods
- Range and practical nature of modules, including field courses and use of external speakers to inform the programme
- Student satisfaction with the course
- Thorough and careful assessment boards
- Relationship with partners in the Norwich Research Park and access to modules in

other Science Schools

- Well deserved reputation of the courses nationally and internationally
- Very high standard of a significant proportion of students' assessed work

**Issues which need further consideration:**

- Relationship between markers' comments and marks awarded, and thus the way in which marking criteria are interpreted
- Support available to students during the data analysis stage of their research projects
- International students on one course felt that cultural rather than language differences had hindered their understanding of assessment methods and criteria.

**Commentary**

External examiners consistently confirm the academic standards of the programme and comment favourably on their comparability with other institutions (the Masters programmes in particular are regarded as of a very high standard).

The dominant theme throughout the reports across years and levels was the excellent course structures and specifically the range of topics available to students and the highly practical nature of the courses.

At the suggestion of the Taught Programme Policy Group, the Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee have been discussing the use of viva voce examinations to assist Boards of Examiners in their decisions on classification. A number of External Examiner's reports have commented on the use of vivas, which may help inform the debate.

As with external examiners' comments in other Schools and Faculties and across other years, there were some comments in respect of the use of the full range of marks. This was not, however, a major theme in the BIO undergraduate programme reports. There was also a theme at both undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels (echoing national concerns explored through the Burgess Review) around mechanisms for summarising student achievement (classification rules) and the precision of marking to 1%.

In general the quality of students' work is complemented, with some taught postgraduate students excelling, but a couple of reports noted that there was a weak tail (mainly undergraduate, but also taught postgraduate).

Both undergraduate and taught postgraduate external examiners raised concerns about the impact on the programmes of the loss of staff in the School. The School's response indicated that measures were in place. The external examiners urged continued vigilance in this area and appropriate succession / contingency planning. This concern appeared to have diminished by the 2008 reports.

There is evidence from the response of the School to the undergraduate external examiners' reports that the School responded appropriately to comments and suggestions from the examiners and in some instances clearly gave active consideration to suggestions from externals, such as marking criteria for undergraduate projects and a School meeting prior to the assessment period to discuss assessment related issues. School responses to taught postgraduate external examiners' reports were not available. The external examiners' reports themselves indicate that issues are appropriately addressed by the School.

**FACULTY:** Social Sciences  
**SCHOOL:** Economics  
**AWARDS:** BA/BSc and MA/MSc

The following issues and themes emerged during the three year period of the external examiners' reports between 2005-06 and 2007-08:

### **Undergraduate programmes**

#### ***Points of commendation:***

- The original approach adopted in a number of modules with some lecturers devising challenging and novel ways to encourage students to apply economic analysis to familiar situations
- Examples of innovation in first and second year modules
- Excellent degree of complementarity achieved in the modules
- Excellent teaching standards, demonstrated by students' production of good answers to challenging questions
- Favourable comparison of standards with those at other universities with which the external examiner was familiar

#### ***Issues which needed further attention:***

- The full range of marks, particularly at the upper end of the scale, was not used in all cases. It is noted that the School reviewed this issue at its annual review of teaching in July 2007 and agreed to review the structure of examination papers for some modules where the external examiner considered that it had been particularly difficult to obtain high marks. A similar remark was made again in 2008, with the outcome that the School's Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality was to review marking descriptors and the Chair of the Board of examiners was to ensure that appropriate guidance was given during the examination period
- The external examiner noted what he considered to be a slightly anomalous feature of the degree structure arising from the course's general social science past, viz the very few students who took final year economics modules. In its response, the School commented that of 89 finalists, 7 were enrolled on the Economics and Politics degree and 6 on the Philosophy, Politics and Economics course. The proportion of ECO modules were significantly lower in these courses. On the other hand, students enrolled on the Economics, Economics and Accountancy and Business Economics degrees had 88%, 76% and 74% of their year 3 enrolments in ECO.

### **Postgraduate Programmes:**

#### ***Points of commendation:***

- The learning outcomes and learning and teaching methods were considered totally appropriate
- The assessment process was considered to be fair and entirely appropriate
- The School was considered to excel in experimental economics
- The teaching was identified as of the highest standard, as indicated by the high quality of some of the examinations scripts and dissertations, and comparable to those of the very best research-led universities
- Particular praise was given to some of the assessments (eg computer tests) which the external examiner considered clearly demonstrated that students were taught how to put into practice what they had learnt
- Emphasis put on the development of analytical skills was also highlighted as impressive
- The quality of the work of the top candidates was considered 'truly outstanding'
- Excellent feedback was provided to students.



**Issues which needed further consideration:**

- More use of the top end of the marks' range was recommended
- It was suggested that a merit classification be introduced
- Although not singled out as a concern, it appeared that the examiner had not received some information relating to module outlines and marking criteria and an explanatory note regarding the modules and scripts to be moderated.

**Commentary**

External examiners consistently confirm the academic standards of the programmes and comment favourably on their comparability with other institutions (the Masters programmes in particular were singled out for very high praise). No concerns were expressed about the quality of the students' learning opportunities and the standard of work.

As with external examiners' comments in other Schools and Faculties and across other years, there were some comments in respect of the use of the full range of marks. This needs continued vigilance and action on the part of the School and Faculty to ensure that markers utilise marking criteria and the full marking range.

Although this was not specifically raised as a concern, the provision of information to external examiners needs careful monitoring to ensure that it continues to be timely and appropriate.

There is evidence from the responses of the School that the School carefully considered and replied appropriately to comments and suggestions from the examiners. With regard to the proposal to introduce a merit classification at Master's level, the School rightly responded that this was a matter for the University's Learning and Teaching Committee. As the Common Masters Framework (CMF) has recently undergone update and the Common Course Structure (first) Degree Regulations are currently undergoing major review, this issue will be brought forward during the next update of the CMF.

A particular feature of good practice is the Faculty's use of a 'traffic light' system to classify perceived risk.

**FACULTY: Faculty of Health**  
**SCHOOL: School of Nursing and Midwifery**  
**AWARDS: Dip HE, BSc, pre-registration programmes**

The following issues and themes emerged during the three year period of the external examiners' reports between 2005-06 and 2007-08:

**Undergraduate programmes**

**Points of commendation:**

- External examiners specifically mentioned the outstanding and well organised induction process which the School offers to them and welcomed the open dialogue between the School and the external examiners throughout the year;
- Programmes were well structured and give students the experience to be assessed on the full range of issues of the particular programme;
- Good links between theory and practice within the curriculum; modules have been designed to ensure that practice skills are underpinned by the relevant theory;
- The quality of teaching is very high which can be seen at the significant output of first class marks and degree awards, the curriculum is seen as dynamic and continuous efforts have been made to improve standards;

- External examiners commended the School for providing students with meaningful feedback and noticed that this was particularly the case for weaker students; (“The lecturers are expending enormous amounts of energy in enabling candidates to learn about concepts of mental health nursing and the application of these concepts in clinical practice. This is clearly demonstrated by the high quality of some of the scripts examined and suggestions made in the feedback provided to candidates of failed scripts to seek academic support before re-submission.” Sandy, 2006-07.)
- Excellent support to students through adviser system and link lecturer system while on placement; (“The students receive the best example of student support that I have witnessed at any University; both academic staff and service providers are to be commended.” Russell-Roberts, 2006-07).
- Good relationship between placement provider and School;
- Smooth administration of the assessment process, the organisation and administration of the meetings of the Board of Examiners are outstanding;
- The School is very responsive to comments made by external examiners and acts on these by often involving external examiners in the review of certain issues;

***Issues which need further attention:***

- External examiners detected some grade inflation as marks obtained during practice and placements are much higher than marks obtained for academic work;
- Weaker students would benefit from being specifically taught on how to improve their literature search skills;
- Consideration of extenuating circumstances during the meeting of the final examination board rather lengthy, requests made by external examiners if this could be shifted to a pre-meeting of the Board of Examiners;
- Streamlining examination boards by eliminating the amount of paperwork produced and using an electronic medium to display to the Board of Examiners;
- Some external examiners would like to have the opportunity to visit students while they are on placement as this had not always been possible;

**Commentary**

The responses from the School indicate that the School is open minded and receptive to comments and issues identified by external examiners. Generally, the School has taken action to remedy these issues and has often actively involved the external examiner in the review of certain issues. For example, if an external examiner wished to visit a student while on placement, the School generally makes an effort to organise such a visit in a future year. Similarly, the School has taken the comment regarding the grade inflation of marks obtained for practice placements in comparison with marks achieved for academic work very seriously and has reviewed this issue via a number of strategies. In subsequent years, external examiners have commented that the considerable development to redress the issue of grade inflation had borne fruit.

**FACULTY:** HUM  
**SCHOOL:** History  
**AWARDS:** BA History, MA History

The following issues and themes emerged during the 2007-08 period of the external examiners' reports:

## ***Undergraduate programmes***

### ***Points of commendation:***

'The School excels in the extent and quality of its written feedback'. '[The School] has done an excellent job of educating candidates to think critically and write clearly'

### ***Issues which need further attention:***

One of the external examiners noted that the marking scheme says students must write without grammatical/spelling errors to obtain a 70 or better and noted that students recommended to get a first did write with such errors. He thought the scheme should either be enforced or modified

### **Postgraduate Programmes:**

#### ***Points of commendation:***

'The range and variety of methods to engage with the past, the link between these methods and flexible assessment procedures, and the superb level of feedback on student work'

Issues which need further consideration: None

### **Commentary**

Running through all the reports was a very positive view of the School, the quality of its students, the commitment of its staff to provide high-quality feedback, and impressive course design. A good example is this from an external in his final year who provided an additional overall report as well as the pro-forma report:

'It seems to me that you can be very pleased with the History course at UEA, which manages to be both demanding and humane. The standard is very high, with the best comparing well with the top end here at Cambridge, and a relatively small 'tail'. It was also gratifying to be generally on the same wavelength as the internal examiners on matters of argument and style. Your undergraduates are still being taught how to write, and to think. The examination scripts and coursework showed very clear progression with regard to skill of argument and the development of critical understanding. It was good too to see among even the middling candidates, a sophistication in the handling of historiography. There were refreshingly few answers which simply summarised the secondary literature, while sitting on the fence. Candidates were inclined to strike out on their own and to wager a view.

## **7. Issues for the University arising from external examiners' reports on taught provision**

7.1 The reports continue to comment on certain themes which have previously been raised by other external examiners, viz, use of the full range of marks and consistency of mark with marking criteria. There were also comments about provision of information to externals (largely a matter of good housekeeping) and a specific comment about calculation of the aggregate mark which informs under UEA CCS regulations, degree classification.

7.2 As far as the last comment is concerned, the University's Learning and Teaching Committee has embarked on a review of the current Common Course Structure Degree Regulations, which is on-going. It is planned that the new regulations will take effect from 2012-13. No decision has yet been taken with regard to how degree classification will be calculated but it is anticipated that a number of options will be considered.

Guidance has recently been published for use by Schools/Faculties regarding the number and selection of scripts and other information to be made available to external examiners.

Although this is not a major issue raised by all examiners across the full range of provision, Schools/Faculty Teaching Offices are urged to be vigilant and to ensure that externals have access to the information they require.

It is acknowledged that use of the full range of marks and the relationship between marks and assessment criteria are recurrent themes. The Learning and Teaching Committee has repeatedly urged Faculties and Schools to encourage markers to use the full range (and they in their turn have done likewise). It is recognised that in some areas (but by no means all), this may require cultural shift from deeply in-grained practice. There are a range of approaches that can help raise awareness:

- management information on degree/progression outcomes, including subject comparisons across the sector;
- continued pressure from external examiners;
- better use of assessment criteria and consistency between marks and criteria;
- sharing of outcomes of academic appeals;
- opportunities to share practice;
- improved feedback to students about their performance.

In this regard, the Committee will be aware:

- of the current review of Common Course Structure Degree Regulations;
- of the review of assessment which is yielding useful information/data about assessment;
- of opportunities to share practice via the annual Learning and Teaching Day and a range of academic practice events (including on academic appeals and complaints);
- that recommendations about feedback to students are expected to be laid before the Committee later this session.

It is also strongly recommended that Schools via School Directors and/or Teaching Committees where appropriate, continue to keep under review assessment criteria. Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees should pay particular attention to this aspect during their consideration of external examiners' reports and via course approval, update and review.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Taking all the above in account, the Learning and Teaching Committee is pleased to confirm to the Senate that:

- academic standards and the quality of provision as commented upon by external examiners in respect of taught provision at undergraduate, integrated master's and master's level remain acceptable and comparable with, and in some cases exceed, those of other UK Universities;
- academic standards and the quality of provision as commented upon by external examiners in respect of research degree programmes remain acceptable and comparable with, and in some cases exceed, those of other UK Universities;
- there is evidence of generally sound and some outstanding practice in relation to the conduct and management of teaching, learning and assessment, to course content and, in several instances, to the feedback given to students;
- Schools and Faculties continue to consider and respond to the issues raised by external examiners;
- Schools and Faculty LTQCs should continue to utilise a range of approaches to encourage markers to use the full range of the marking scale;

- Schools and Faculty LTQCs should pay particular attention to and keep under review, assessment criteria and ensure a consistent relationship between marks and the relevant criteria;
- there are further developments that are being championed by the Learning and Teaching Committee (as set out in Section 5 above);
- the process of consideration has been appropriately carried out in accordance with University procedures.

8.2 The Learning and Teaching Committee therefore recommends to the Senate, that this report be accepted. It will then be placed on the LTQ website.

## APPENDIX A

Of the first degrees awarded, these were classified as follows:

Class	SESSION		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
<b>First</b>	225 (11)*	228 (10)	286 (12)
<b>Upper Second</b>	1224 (57)	1231 (54)	1285 (56)
<b>Lower Second</b>	566 (27)	602 (27)	536 (23)
<b>Third</b>	92 (4)	98 (4)	76 (3)
<b>Ordinary Pass</b>	13 (1)	9 (1)	3 (1)
<b>MBBS **</b>	0 (0)	95 (4)	95 (4)
<b>Other Unclassified Honours</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	2120 (100)	2263 (100)	2281 (100)

\* (Figures in brackets are percentages)

\*\* (A degree that is awarded on a pass/fail basis)

**APPENDIX B**

	<b>FACULTY</b>			
<b>Report to LTC/Senate In Session</b>	<b>Arts and Humanities</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Sciences</b>
	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Schools</b>
<b>2007-08</b>	World Art Studies and Museology	Medicine, Health Policy and Practice	Mathematics	Development Studies
<b>2008-09</b>	Literature and Creative Writing	Allied Health Professions	Chemical Sciences and Pharmacy	Norwich Business School



LTC09D059

**Title: PG Research Programmes Policy Group – External Examiners’ reports  
for Postgraduate Research Degrees 2008-09**

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### **Background**

In accordance with the Code of Practice on Research Degrees section 11 iii, the examiners’ reports for research degrees have been reviewed by the Director of Research Degree Programmes. This is a summary report of the findings of the reports of external examiners reporting during the session 2008-9. The examiners’ reports concern themselves almost entirely with feedback on the individual thesis, but periodically issues are raised regarding University policies in general. Review of the external examiners’ reports also allows the identification of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment which can be disseminated throughout the University.

The outcomes of this review will be considered by the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group at its next meeting on 6 November 2009 and by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

### **Process**

Each Examiner submits a separate written report and recommendation to the Board of the School concerned which is forwarded to the Head of School for approval and signature. Where there is agreement on the recommendation the Head of School then forwards the recommendation to the Registry for approval by the University. All examiners’ reports are reviewed on receipt by the Graduate Office by the Assistant Registrar for generic or School-specific issues and any such issues are brought to the attention of the School and/or Director of Research Degree Programmes for discussion and action, where appropriate.

### **General Issues**

The examiners’ reports continue to be very positive about candidates’ work and performance in the viva and are indicative of a clear position of confidence amongst a range of UK and international examiners in the quality and standards of research degrees at this University. Examiners commented that the candidates they examined compared favourably with candidates examined at other universities and some that the work was among the best that they had seen at doctoral level. The reports contain minimal references to issues outside of the assessment of candidates.

### **Specific Issues**

An issue raised last year was that some candidates’ work contained a large number of typographical, presentational and/or grammatical errors. This issue was raised again in a sizable minority of examiners’ reports this year. The Policy Group had discussed how this issue might be addressed but it is clear that there are still training needs here and further discussions required about proof reading.



A number of examiners also commented on problems with the bibliography and in particular with referencing styles. One examiner, who requested referencing guidelines for the MSc by Research, commented that greater clarity was required in the guidelines particularly regarding the referencing of multiple authored works. Another commented that more guidance on this issue was required before thesis submission with an emphasis on acceptable norms at a departmental or institutional level.

Two external examiners commented on the word count for the MPhil and PhD, one felt that the word limit for the MPhil should be reduced from 80,000 to 65,000 words, the other that the PhD should be reduced from 100,000 words to 80,000.

The issue of copyright was raised in several reports. One external examiner wished to draw to the University's attention the issue of the unacceptable use of illustrations based on published figures used without the approval of the copyright owner. S/he felt that this issue should be emphasised in the University's instructions to students preparing theses for submission.

### **Statistics**

In 2008-9 the University issued Pass Lists for a total of 249 Research Degrees overall (see attached table). This represents a 10.7% increase on the number for 2007-8.

### **Research Degree Passes 2008-9**

School	PhD	PhD by publication	Professional doctorates	MPhil	MEd	MA / MSc/ LLM by Research	Total
AHP	1 (0)	0 (1)		1 (1)			2 (2)
AMS	0 (0)						0 (0)
BIO	48 (52)			1 (0)		2 (2)	51 (54)
CAP	14 (13)					6 (1)	20 (14)
CHE	1 (-)						1 (0)
CMP	13 (10)			0 (0)		3 (1)	16 (11)
DEV	13 (9)					2 (0)	15 (9)
ECO	2 (2)					1 (0)	3 (2)
EDU	11 (11)	1 (0)	3 EdD (5)		1 (1)	0 (0)	16 (17)
ENV	28 (37)					4 (0)	32 (37)
FTV	10 (5)					1 (0)	11 (5)
HIS	10 (3)			1 (0)			11 (3)
LCS	1 (0)						1 (0)
LLT	0 (0)					0 (1)	0 (1)
LAW	2 (2)					0 (1)	2 (3)
LIT	7 (10)	0 (2)				0 (1)	7 (13)
MTH	2 (4)	1 (0)					3 (4)
MED	6 (4)	0 (0)	20 ClinPsyD (19) 5 MD (3)				31 (26)
MUS	4 (1)	0 (1)				2 (1)	6 (3)
NBS	4 (2)						4 (2)
NAM	1 (0)					3 (4)	4 (4)
PHI	0 (1)			0 (0)			0 (1)
PSI	4 (4)						4 (4)
SWP	2 (4)	0 (0)		0 (1)			2 (5)
WAM	6 (5)					1 (0)	7 (5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>190 (179)</b>	<b>2 (4)</b>	<b>28 (27)</b>	<b>3 (2)</b>	<b>1 (1)</b>	<b>25 (12)</b>	<b>249 (225)</b>

Figures for 2007-8 in brackets.