

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S ANNUAL REPORT
ON POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY
2020-21**

Name of external examiner	Natasha de Vere
Institution	University of Copenhagen
Programme(s) being examined (e.g. MA Drama)	MSc: AER, EEB, FAME, PLANT, EEG
Examination board(s) attended (e.g. PG Drama SEB, 19/10/21)	Summer Exam Board: 22/6/21 Autumn Exam Board: 6/10/21

Your completed report should be submitted by e-mail to Alice de Havillan, Academic Quality and Standards Officer, at a.l.dehavillan@qmul.ac.uk within 30 days of the main examination board meeting.

If you prefer, you may post your report in hard copy. If completing this by hand, you may need to enlarge the text boxes before printing. Please send any hard copy reports to:

Academic Secretariat (External Examiners)
ARCS, Queens E10
Queen Mary University of London
Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS

Your report is intended for internal use only and will contribute towards aspects of Queen Mary's annual reporting procedures. Your report will be read widely, and will be made available to students; **please do not include personal information (such as your home address) or identify individual students.**

If you would like to raise any issues of a sensitive nature directly with the Principal, please feel free to do so. The address is Principal, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS. Please do NOT use this form for this purpose.

This template is updated annually; the most recent version is available at:
<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality-assurance/external-examiners/external-examiners-resources/>

1. Programme structure

Please comment upon:

- any particular strengths and weaknesses of the programme;
- the balance and content of the degree programme(s) followed by students;
- the coherence of programmes, and the appropriateness of the core/compulsory modules in relation to the aims and intended learning outcomes;
- the suitability of methods and the adequacy of teaching as reflected by the standards achieved by the candidates.

Programmes: AER, EEB, EEG, FAME

The structure of the programmes for AER, EEB, EEG & FAME provide a good balance of modules in relation to the aims and learning outcomes. Students are presented with a good range of theory and practice and the order of the modules is coherent and progressive. A weakness of the programmes is that there are a large number of MSc programmes with overlapping content, meaning that student numbers on some courses are low. I understand that this has now been changed to provide a unified MSc programme in these areas. I think this is a good plan. The methods used and teaching provided, reflected by the standards achieved by the candidates, is excellent. The modules are well organised with clear and relevant learning objectives. The teaching methods and approach is varied and engaging.

Programme: PLANT

I have covered this programme separately as it involves teaching at both QMUL and also at Kew. The structure of this MSc is excellent, equipping the students with all of the skills needed to work within this diverse sector. The modules are varied and well-balanced, providing an appropriate level of challenge for the students. The teaching methods and approach are excellent. This is an outstanding MSc within this subject area.

All programmes

This year I attended all of the student talks for all of the programmes, and I was impressed with the range of topics available for the students to choose from. There is an excellent range of supervisors available for the students, allowing them to work with top-level researchers in the areas they are interested in.

2. Standard of student performance

- 2.1 *In your view, are the standards of student performance comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK higher education institutions with which you are familiar?*

YES / NO (if 'no', please state the reasons they fall short)

The standards of student performance are higher than those I am familiar with in other UK higher education institutions.

- 2.2 *Are there any other points on student performance that you wish to raise?*

I am impressed with the performance of the students on all of the schemes. Particularly encouraging is the steady increase in skills and competences seen as the students' progress through the programmes.

This is especially evidenced in the student projects, observing the students talks compared to the completed research projects.

3. Assessment Process

3.1 *In your view, are the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted?*

YES / NO (if 'no', please state the reasons they fall short)

Yes, the processes for assessment, examination and determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted. Excellent adaptations were made to allow for COVID-19 restrictions.

3.2 *Please also comment for Queen Mary on:*

- *strengths and weaknesses in the assessment process;*
- *the appropriateness of the assessment methods (i.e. examinations, essays, dissertations etc.) to the learning outcomes for the programme, and the balance between them;*
- *the marking scheme, and the scheme for the award of honours (including weighting in final assessment between years of the programme and in relation to the number of modules completed);*
- *the quality and achievements of the candidates.*

For all of the programmes I examined the assessment methods and marking schemes are appropriate and well-implemented. A particular strength is the quality of the written feedback provided to students in all their assessments. Students typically receive detailed, constructive comments, that enable them to improve throughout the course. The quality and achievements of the candidates is excellent.

A weakness, which I have commented on previously, is the poor response rate for student feedback on the modules. Typically, only a very small percentage of students complete the module feedback forms and this makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from the results. I did however also speak with the students after the research talks, to gain informal feedback from them on their views. I know that this is difficult to achieve, but I would really like to see student feedback percentages increased.

4. Other Issues of Quality

If the answer is 'no' for any of the following questions, please give details in the comment box at the end of this section.

Examination papers		Delete as applicable
4.1	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for consulting you on the structure and content of the examination paper(s)?	NA
4.2	Were your comments on the examination paper(s) properly taken into account?	NA
Marking and Moderation		Delete as applicable
4.3	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for your moderation of assignments?	Yes
4.4	Did you have sufficient information on the marking scheme(s)?	Yes
4.5	Did you feel that you could fairly assess the quality and consistency of the marking?	Yes

4.6	Was the quality of the marking satisfactory?	Yes
4.7	Were you satisfied that all scripts were double-marked internally (where required)?	Yes
4.8	Were you satisfied with the arrangements to review any practical work?	Yes
4.9	Were you happy with the arrangements for conducting oral examinations/ presentations (where used as part of the assessment for a module)?	Yes
The Examination Board(s)		Delete as applicable
4.10	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for, and conduct of, the examination board meeting?	Yes
4.11	Were you satisfied with the decisions and recommendations of the examination board meeting?	Yes
Assessment		Delete as applicable
4.12	Was the standard of assessment consistent with that of the national university system, so far as you could tell?	Yes
4.13	Were you satisfied with the assessment arrangements for associate students (if applicable)?	NA
<i>Please detail any concerns regarding 4.1 – 4.13.</i>		

5. Issues of Procedure

If applicable, how did procedures/arrangements compare this year with previous years? Were suggestions that you made last year acted upon? (if not applicable, please go to question 6).

The arrangements and procedures have been consistently excellent during the years I have been examining.
The only suggestion that has been difficult to implement is improving student feedback percentages on modules.

6. General Comments

6.1 *In your view, are the standards set for the awards appropriate for qualifications at this level in this subject?*

YES / NO *(if 'no', please state the reasons they fall short)*

YES

6.2 *Are there any other points that you wish to raise? In particular, Queen Mary would welcome your comments on any aspects of exemplary practice in the subject area for which you act as external examiner.*

All of the courses that I have examined are excellent. Of particular note is the PLANT MSc which I consider to be the gold standard for MSc programmes covering these subject areas. The combination of teaching, research expertise and facilities provided by QMUL and Kew make this a truly outstanding MSc.

I would also like to comment on the standard of student feedback provided, for all of the programmes, especially for written work. This is consistently excellent.

6.3 *If appropriate, please provide a short statement or bullet points of any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes.*

I particularly like the timing for the research talks, where the students get to present their work once their projects are underway, but not yet completed. This provides a really good check point where the students get to see their work in the whole and also to get valuable insights from seeing the work of their peers.

Signed: Natasha de Vere

Date: 2-11-21

Thank you for completing this report and for your contribution to assuring standards and quality at Queen Mary University of London. Please return your report to the address/e-mail address given on the front page of this pro-forma. You will receive acknowledgement of the receipt of your report from the Academic Secretariat.