



External Examiner’s Report Form

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|---|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Name of external examiner | | Dr MM Shaw | | | |
| External examiner for: programme/award(s)/module(s) | | MSc Digital Electronics & Communications MSc Programmable Digital Systems | | | |
| Appointed to Faculty (please select from drop-down list) | | Science and Engineering | | | |
| Appointed to School (please select from drop-down list) | | Environment and Technology | | | |
| Course delivered at Partner College (if applicable, please select from drop-down list. For consortium-based programmes, please select all that apply) | | | | | |
| Course delivered at University Centre Hastings (please check box) | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| Academic year: | 2009/10 | Year of tenure: | Final | Date of Exam Board | 18/10/2010 |
| Undergraduate: | <input type="checkbox"/> | Postgraduate: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Today’s Date: | 02/12/2010 |

External examiners for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses are required to submit an annual report to the University.

The report provides the opportunity for external examiners to comment on the academic standards of the provision and on the processes for assessment. Reports are used as part of the University’s quality assurance processes. The University values greatly the contribution of its external examiners and serious consideration is given to all issues raised.

External examiners should be aware that reports are made available to student representatives through Course Boards as part of the university’s annual academic health process and that individual students should not be mentioned by name or implication.

Completion and return of this report form

A copy of this report form is available online from <http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk> along with additional guidance on its completion (*External examiners’ annual report form – guidance notes*).

Please word-process your report expanding each section as appropriate. Your report should be submitted electronically to the University, within one month of the final examination board, to: externalexaminers@brighton.ac.uk

You may if required, submit a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor on any matter.

Please provide a detailed commentary to all sections, expanding the sections as required and make reference to specific modules where appropriate. You may find the QAA Academic Infrastructure (including the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, programme specifications and the Code of practice) and the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark, helpful as reference points when completing your report.

Academic standards and student performance

- 1** Please comment on the extent to which **the academic standards set by the University** are appropriate for the award/module(s) being studied.

The standards being set by the University are appropriate for these programmes. My experience of other Masters programmes at different institutions suggests that they are comparable.

- 2** Please comment on the **academic standards demonstrated by the students** and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses.

The standards achieved by students are appropriate and compare well across the sector.

- 3** Please comment on the **strengths and weaknesses** of the students as a cohort.

As the programme has been run out over the past couple of years, the cohort size has decreased markedly. In this, my final year as external examiner, the volume of student work has been correspondingly smaller, so observations in terms of a cohort, are difficult to make. However, my typical comments concern the students' general good ability to demonstrate practical skills in dissertation work. However, in some cases, they struggle to publish good written work and to construct effective discussions and conclusions.

- 4** Please comment on the **quality of knowledge and skills** (both general and subject specific, including professional practice where relevant) demonstrated by the student performance.

As previously mentioned, the limited cohort size during this last academic year, has made it difficult to make such judgements. In addition and as one might expect of a programme coming to the end of its natural life, there are a number of referral candidates seeking to make good module deficiencies. That being said, the quality of knowledge and skills demonstrated by the students has been satisfactory and appropriate to the programme.

- 5** Please comment on the **quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods** that may be indicated by student performance.

Student performance continues to demonstrate an appropriate teaching, learning and assessment regime.

The assessment process and methods

- 6** Please comment on the **design, structure and marking of the assessments**, including the appropriateness of assessment methods and the extent to which the assessment processes ensure equity of treatment for students.

The programmes have well designed and structured assessments. The marking is appropriate but as per a similar comment I made last year, moderation and second marking processes are not always that obvious. Prior to the June 2010 boards, student work from 2008 and 2009 was also mixed-up with the current year's assessments, causing some confusion.

- 7** Please comment on the continuing appropriateness of the **learning outcomes** for the module(s)/unit(s) examined and for the course (where appropriate), and the extent to which the assessment methods enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes continued to remain appropriate. Even though there were only small numbers of students progressing on the programmes in 2010, they were clearly able to demonstrate appropriate levels of achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Examination board operation

8 Please comment on the **conduct of and procedures adopted by the Examination Board(s)**, including as appropriate, requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

The assessment boards have always been effective and the decisions made are correct and fair. However, at the referral board held on 18 October, the way in which the students' assessment information was presented, made for an unnecessarily protracted discussion of the issues. Conducting a board pre-meeting would be an effective way of avoiding this situation in the future.

9 Please comment on the **appropriateness of the University's regulations**.

The University's assessment regulations remain effective and appropriate.

Role and responsibilities

10 Have **concerns made in your previous report** been considered and appropriately acted upon?

My only concern would be to ensure that appropriate second marking of an examiner's work has been carried out and is made obvious on the student assessments.

11 Were you given **sufficient access to, and power** to call upon, any material needed to make the required judgements?

Yes

Overview and recommendations

12 Please list any:

i. **good practice** that should be shared within the university.

Management, organisation and administration of the programme has always been effective.

ii. **recommendations for action** either in the school or the university.

None

13 The University would welcome your comments on **any other issues** not covered in the above sections e.g. comments on a Foundation degree in relation to the distinctive features of the qualification or issues relating to students on collaborative programmes.

Chief external examiners may wish to comment on the overall coherence of the awards and assessment processes and areas for further development.

No further comment other than to thank the staff involved with the delivery and administration of these programmes and for the professional way they have conducted their business during my five year term of office.

Electronic signature/ name of external examiner:

Dr Michael Shaw