

Name	Prof. Nicholas Paul Lockyer		
Home Institution	University of Manchester		
Email Address	Nick.Lockyer@manchester.ac.uk		
Name(s) of course(s) examined <i>e.g. Tripos Part/ MPhil/ MRes</i>	Natural Sciences Tripos Part 2 Chemistry; Part 3 Chemistry		
Academic year of examination	2024		
Level (<i>Delete as appropriate</i>)	Undergraduate		Postgraduate
Year of Appointment	3rd		

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Are the academic standards set for the award appropriate for the qualification, and comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions?	X		
2. Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (handbooks, regulations, marking and classing criteria) in a timely manner?	X		
3. Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that your comments and suggestions were taken into consideration?	X		
4. Are you satisfied that the assessment was pitched at the appropriate level?	X		
5. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	X		
6. Do the assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme?	X		
7. Are you satisfied that issues raised on your previous report form have been properly considered and, where applicable, acted upon?	X		
8. Did you receive a written response from the Department to your previous report form?		X	

If you replied No to any of the questions above, please expand here:

No written response to my previous reports were received. I understand EE reports were not forwarded from the centre to the Department?

Do you have any concerns about the course, including standards and quality?

No

Are you satisfied that the procedures associated with the assessment are efficient (e.g. timeframes, draft papers, questions, design and conduct of exam, meetings, vivas)?

Yes. Draft examination papers were prepared to an excellent standard and almost without exception were accompanied with complete model answers and cover sheets. Again this year one of the Senior Examiners was taken ill at a critical time in the process and a colleague Prof Sophie Jackson was enlisted

to compile a Part III examination report and brief us. With help from the Head of Department in pulling together data in the days immediately before the External's visit, I would like it placed on record that Prof Jackson performed an exceptional service to the Department under very difficult circumstances. Meetings and briefings went ahead as usual during our visit.

Do you have any comments on marking and classing (e.g. range of marks, action around borderline marks, penalties, moderation, double marking, reconciliation of marks)?

Marking and assessment policies and procedures are rigorous and robust. The Short Reports on Part III Questions document, produced by setters is a very useful qualitative and quantitative summary of the cohort performance. Justification of decisions regarding the scaling of marks on papers averaging outside expected boundaries were detail in the Briefing to External Examiners and we agreed with the actions taken. Borderline candidates were identified and looked at closely by Externals and appropriate action agreed with the Exam Board. We noted and welcomed changes to the policy on Part III project assessment in line with feedback we had provided last year, reducing the weighting of the supervisor mark to a very credit-heavy component of the course. The Department is well-aware of the gender attainment gap which continues to cause concern although there are signs of improvement this year.

Do you have any comments on the student experience of the course and/or their experience of the assessment process?

The External Examiners met with 8 Part II/III students immediately prior to the Examination Board. As was my previous experience, the overwhelming student feedback was very positive. A detailed summary of the student feedback were passed on to the Examination Board in person.

Do you have any comments on University policies (e.g. the role of the external examiner, policies around plagiarism, script annotation)?

No

Please describe here any recommendations for improvement.

The Externals commented last year on the risks of having a very small number of Senior Examiner staff carrying very significant responsibility, and required to deliver on short timescales once marks are received. With staff illness again threatening the smooth running of the process this year I would repeat my recommendation for further contingency planning e.g. appointment of deputies or an individual with sole focus on project moderation.

To help ease pressures on the Department, a slight relaxation of the timescale (within University constraints) might be considered e.g. pushing the EE visit and Exam Board back a day or two. The very tight marking deadline is exacerbated by delays in scripts being returned from special circumstances exam rooms (in colleges), noting that ~25% of Pt.III Chemistry candidates fell into that category this year.

Please highlight any good practice you encountered.

The External Examiner Briefing notes, pulled together a very short notice due to the staffing issues raised above were very comprehensive and helped focus our attention on the most pertinent issues regarding

borderline students and question paper averages. The dedication of the Senior Examiners was again noted.

The detailed annotation of marksheets related to project work was essential in assuring us that these marks were robust. In many cases project marks dictate which side of a borderline a candidate falls and in scrutinising these candidates, detailed marksheets are key.

Have you seen any evidence of grade inflation?

No.

If this is your final year as external examiner? If so, have you seen improvements over your tenure? Has the Department acted on your advice?

This is my final year as external examiner. Although I have not received written feedback to formal reports, it is clear through discussions and actions that the Department has taken on board some suggestions e.g. in the weighting of supervisor marks in project assessments.

Do you have any other comments?

Thank you to the Head of Department, Senior Examiners and support staff for facilitating my role as External Examiner and being such generous hosts. I wish the Department and its students continued success.

Name	Alison Hulme		
Home Institution	The University of Edinburgh		
Email Address	Alison.Hulme@ed.ac.uk		
Name(s) of course(s) examined <i>e.g. Tripos Part/ MPhil/ MRes</i>	Tripos Part II and Part III		
Academic year of examination	2023-24		
Level (<i>Delete as appropriate</i>)	Undergraduate		Postgraduate
Year of Appointment	1 st	2 nd ✓	3 rd 4 th

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Are the academic standards set for the award appropriate for the qualification, and comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions?	✓		
2. Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (handbooks, regulations, marking and classing criteria) in a timely manner?	✓		
3. Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that your comments and suggestions were taken into consideration?	✓		

4. Are you satisfied that the assessment was pitched at the appropriate level?	✓		
5. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	✓		
6. Are you satisfied that issues raised on your previous report form have been properly considered and, where applicable, acted upon?		✓	
7. Did you receive a written response from the Department to your previous report form?		✓	

If you replied No to any of the questions above, please expand here:

6. & 7. I received an email last July from the VC External Examiners email address (vcexternalexaminers@admin.cam.ac.uk) acknowledging receipt of my report and stating that “this will now be passed to a relevant Officer for review. Following this, you will receive an email from the Officer to confirm that they have read your report and have sent it to the appropriate department or faculty for a response”. It would appear, that this email was not actioned by the administrative team, and as a result some of the outstanding actions from last year have been repeated in this year’s form.

Do you have any concerns about the course, including standards and quality?

The Part II and Part III courses cover a wide range of traditional and modern organic chemistry to a level that is equal to, or exceeds, that taught elsewhere. Exams remain the primary mode of assessment; the standard of questions in the exam papers for Part II and Part III is generally excellent (see later comments), and questions require students to demonstrate high-level problem-solving skills. My examination of scripts during the Exam Board meetings suggest that exam questions have generally been answered well.

An appropriate range of practical work is taught in the Part II course. However, the intense blocks in which labs are undertaken are very demanding on students; in June 2023 the “Synthetic” lab was universally described as “very stressful” by the students which we met, with little flexibility to accommodate illness, or inadvertent error. Whilst stretching very able students is clearly a desirable outcome, I am not convinced of the need to generate artificial barriers to student progression through the labs (e.g. preventing students from multi-tasking by running experiments in parallel). I was not able to determine what (if any) changes had been made to the practical blocks this year due to other restrictions on our time.

The Part III project allows students to conduct an in-depth piece of research. The opportunity to become embedded within research groups and see research as it really is, is a critical part of their scientific training at this level. The projects offered are varied and demanding, and take place within research groups across the Department. The selection of projects which I was able to view indicated a generally very high level of performance by the students and this is reflected in the marking.

Are you satisfied that the procedures associated with the assessment are efficient (e.g. timeframes, draft papers, questions, design and conduct of exam, meetings, vivas)?

Overall, the timelines for production of exam papers needs to be re-assessed to allow for more flexibility/contingency in paper preparation. Due to illness of one of the Senior Internal Examiners, there

was a considerable hold-up at one point this year. The potential for fairly serious consequences to the timetable for the whole exam preparation process if one member of staff is ill, was highlighted as a weakness in the process in my report last year.

There should be some response to the comments/corrections made by the External Examiners on the questions they have reviewed. This is tracked internally – but currently there is no feedback given to the externals. Notwithstanding, it was reassuring to see (at the time of the Exam Board meeting) that my comments/suggestions had been acted upon appropriately.

It was noted that the current system of returning papers sat remotely to the Department for marking (e.g. by students sitting examinations in Colleges), is very cumbersome and frequently results in delays in marking, generating added time pressure on SIE's for the compilation of these marks with others.

Preparation of the exam material for review by the External Examiners at the time of the Exam Board meetings was exemplary. We had agreed that we would not viva borderline students this year and this was clearly conveyed to the students in advance.

Whilst the Head of Department was able to ask another member of the department to take over as Senior Internal Examiner for Part III mid-process, there were several knock-on effects. Not least, a reduction in time for the External Examiners to look at examination scripts and project reports whilst in Cambridge as the newly-appointed SIE learnt in “real time” what was needed for presentation to us, as externals, while we were present. However, reports from both Part II and Part III Senior Internal Examiners indicating changes that had been made in response to the External Examiner reports (e.g. changes to Part III project marking), at the time of the Exam Board meetings were helpful, particularly in light of the lack of a formal report earlier in 2023-24.

Do you have any comments on marking and classing (e.g. range of marks, action around borderline marks, penalties, moderation, double marking, reconciliation of marks)?

Part II and Part III examination scripts are not double marked, but there are several markers contributing to student assessment on each paper which ensures a very fair process. For the most part, the link between the suggested mark schemes (which were made available to external examiners prior to the exams) and the marking itself was clear. A few minor errors were found on the papers either immediately prior to the exam itself, in the examination hall, or in one instance in the marking process; these were dealt with promptly at the time and, where appropriate, adjustments to the marking scheme were made and identified to the External Examiners.

Where mark averages for individual questions were not in line with the desired ranges, these were examined on a case-by-case basis and determined either to be fully justified, or to be stochastic due to the small number of students sitting that question. It was determined that no borderline students had been negatively affected by lower mark averages; thus no scaling of question marks was conducted. The mean marks for all papers were determined to be close to the target and none were adjusted.

Changes have been made to the assessment of student performance in Part III projects this year, including reducing the percentage of marks awarded by the project supervisor and enhancing the independent assessment of the project through a presentation/oral exam process. Overall, this has increased the robustness of marking this important piece of work and whilst a few more tweaks may be

introduced in 2024-25, a solid platform has now been developed. Project marks were scaled to a common mark average across the sections, as some were particularly high. The overall mark distribution for projects matches previous years.

The range of overall marks at both Part II and Part III is broad, ranging from the high 80's to a few fails, suggesting a very discriminating process. The degree classifications appeared fair, and the performance of students at the grade boundaries met with expectations. After consideration, the External Examiners agreed with the recommendations of the Internal Examiners for all borderline cases. As expected, there is a high correlation between the performance of students in Part III and their performance in Part II the year before.

There was a significant difference in the performance of male and female candidates at Part III. Thus, whilst the overall percentage of "good degrees" is broadly similar, a considerably higher percentage of male candidates have been awarded a first class degree than their female counterparts [Class I (f -29% relative to m), Class II, division 1 (f +30% relative to m)]. Whilst there were comparatively few female candidates (22) in the Part III class this year, it is notable that the gender differences in percentage of students obtaining Class I vs Class II Div 1 was much smaller ($\pm <10\%$) in the project component of the Part III course, which constitutes 35% of the mark. This suggests that perhaps female candidate performance is not being fairly reflected in the examinations process, as the remaining 65% of the final mark is leading to a $\pm \sim 30\%$ difference in overall Class I vs Class II Div 1 distribution. It is possible that this is a cohort effect; the difference in distribution of the cohort (2023-24) that has just taken Part II is much less pronounced [Part II: Class I (f -12% relative to m), Class II, division 1 (f +10% relative to m)] than shown in the data for the current final year cohort last year (Part II results in 2022-23). But if this is a trend, it should be examined closely by the Department with a view to reducing it.

Do you have any comments on the student experience of the course and/or their experience of the assessment process?

As in our meeting in June 2023, the students again praised the friendly and inclusive nature of the Department and were very articulate in expressing their appreciation of the course content overall, particularly for Part II courses which were consistently described as being very good with excellent engagement by the lecturing staff.

Prior knowledge: Students expressed concern about the prerequisites for some courses not matching what was actually required. At Part II level, some questions in the A6 course were inappropriate, they assumed prior knowledge in physical/theoretical chemistry that would only have been obtained through the Paper 2A route. Similarly at Part III level, L4 and L6 specifically state that they have no organic pre-requisites, but rely on knowledge from organic courses that the students may not have attended.

Tutorial supervision: Part II students complained about the quality of supervision received, particularly when tutorials were organised through the lecturer rather than the College, or postgraduate level supervisors came from outside the Oxbridge system. The problem was perceived to be worst in Physical and Theoretical courses where there were fewer academic members of staff; unsurprisingly the take-up of exam questions is lower in these subject areas.

Maths/Coding in Labs: Students expressed concern that if they had insufficient background knowledge in either Maths, or coding, some of the Part II labs were difficult to complete. The demonstrating ratio in

the theoretical lab is simply not high enough to deal with all of the coding questions which students have.

Part III projects: Students expressed concern about a lack of transparency about how Part III projects were assigned. Some students complained about how many hours they had to work in the lab, but on the whole they were very appreciative of the opportunity and felt that they gained a really good insight into working in a research group. Laboratory supervision was variable. Feedback from the project supervisor was highlighted as an issue; whilst a report is supposed to be completed at the end of the Michaelmas term by the day-to-day laboratory supervisor, this wasn't always circulated to the project student. There was strong support for the new style presentation and viva at the end of the project.

Exam study: Students commented on the disparity between individual supervisors in the provision of mark schemes for past exams. Mark schemes are released to all students for exams pre-2019, but only some supervisors release mark schemes for more recent papers closer to the exams. This means that for some students for some newer courses there are no indicative mark schemes available for independent exam study.

Academic support: As last year, there were concerns raised by the students about the links between College and the Department for academic support. There was praise for the mechanisms for gaining extra time and sitting exams within College, but concern that this wasn't reflected in the tutorial and learning support provided by the Department throughout the year (e.g. extra time in tutorials, recording of all lectures etc. – some courses were even highlighted as specifically not providing notes and not allowing recording). There was also considerable disgruntlement about the (lack of) mitigations granted by EMAC, when students had documented illness during specific exams.

Time pressure in exams: Students commented on the time pressure, particularly in Part II exams. Questions which are set as short answer (5-minute answers) take much longer in reality, with the result being that there isn't enough time for longer answer questions to be completed fully. They also commented on the lack of differentiation between 30-minute questions and 45-minute questions and a lack of "thinking time". (Part III longer questions were considered to have enough time.)

Percentage of good degrees: It was interesting to note that students had acquired recent data (not available on Moodle which stops at 2019) to compare the percentage of "good degrees" in Chemistry with other departments in the Physical Sciences in Cambridge. There was anxiety that a lower percentage of good degrees in Chemistry would adversely affect their long-term career prospects. They had also acquired recent External Examiners reports through freedom of information requests and were interested to know how many of our recommendations had been acted upon!

Do you have any comments on University policies (e.g. the role of the external examiner, policies around plagiarism, script annotation)?

The exam script books which I reviewed were, for the most part, annotated clearly and appropriately.

There were no instances of plagiarism highlighted this year. Actions last year (2022-23) indicate that there is a robust process for dealing with such cases externally to the Department when needed.

I still find it slightly unusual that the Exam Board are not alerted to any special circumstances, particularly where these might take a student's marks into the grade boundaries requiring consideration by the Exam Board. At other institutions where I have acted as External Examiner (as well as my own), the outcome of special circumstance appeals (e.g. no further action, adjustment of practical marks due to illness, etc.) that are determined by a centralised process are made known prior to the Exam Board meeting so that the student's final marks can be considered appropriately.

Please describe here any recommendations for improvement.

Course content and teaching:

- A check on course content (at Part II and Part III level) needs to be conducted to ensure that students aren't being asked to do things that they haven't actually been taught.
- Postgraduate supervisors new to the Oxbridge style of tutorials need specific training and direction in how to conduct Cambridge supervisions.

Maths and Coding Support:

- Students praised the approach in the new Quantitative Environmental Sciences (QES) course where the coding sessions were said to be much better organised (longer and with more demonstrators on hand to help); this would provide a better model for coding-intensive labs.
- Students praised the 2nd year catch-up Maths courses in Physics which students can attend if needed; it was suggested that Chemistry should copy the Physics Department.

Part II laboratories:

- As recommended last year, Part II labs should define the minimum learning outcomes required for each lab to allow more flexibility in the adjustments for students with long-term disabilities; and should explore options for multi-tasking (which is an essential scientific skill), rather than specifically prohibiting students from running experiments in parallel.

Part III project:

- Project assignment is a thorny issue and at our meeting with students the External Examiners robustly defended the current process, knowing just how hard it is to match projects and supervisors! Maybe provide a little bit more transparency if possible?
- As recommended last year, there should be a formal explanation of the role of the Part III laboratory/day-to-day supervisor (e.g. direction to appropriate induction or training processes, normal frequency of planning meetings, "daily" assistance provided in person/by email, help with finding relevant literature etc.). Writing it down will help to define what the minimum expectations are, and publication will clarify for project students the support they can expect to receive. This material could be provided either online, or in person to lab/day-to-day supervisors who need to sign up to these expectations.
- As recommended last year, to assist students with planning for the project report and to mitigate where projects do not progress as expected, a formal mid-project review with a self-assessment provided by the student and commented on by the supervisor (PI) can provide a very helpful formative assessment process and ensures that the student engages with the project supervisor in a constructive way. It can also be a useful mechanism for identifying any additional training that the student might need in order to successfully complete the assigned project.

Exam study:

- Restrict the embargo on mark schemes for past questions to the last 3 years (so that there is still “unseen” material for tutorials) and provide (at least) one mark scheme for newer courses to give a level platform to all students.

Academic support:

- Lecturers and tutorial supervisors should be reminded of the “additional” support mechanisms to which some students are legally entitled. Processes for appropriately feeding this information through to these teaching staff should be reviewed.
- There is disparity between the academic and student perception of mitigations provided by the Examinations Access and Mitigations Committee (EAMC). The opportunities/processes for appeal could be highlighted more clearly in the student course handbook.

Exam preparation:

- The “5-minute” question style should be reviewed, students are often required to put down too much information in such a short space of time.
- There are some areas which are not tested as rigorously, and with as great a problem-solving approach as others, whilst other questions appear fiendishly difficult. There needs to be an intermediate step in the exam preparation process which requires staff teaching content in a particular discipline to come together and harmonise the question levels. This should not be the role of the SIE or External Examiner.
- There needs to be greater engagement across all staff in the examinations process. Perhaps not surprisingly, most errors which appeared in the final papers were for questions for which incomplete/no answers were provided. These questions simply could not be checked, due to a lack of information provided.
- It would be normal for there to be some feedback to External Examiners during the exam preparation process to indicate which of their suggestions have been acted upon.

Exam administration:

- My recommendation in 2023 was that there should be more of a safety net, with either teaching office, or academic staff backup for those coordinating exam preparation, allowing someone to step in and take over if circumstances require without the need to spend a considerable amount of time getting up to speed – essentially a deputy for each of the processes.
- Move the exam board meeting by 1-2 days relative to the exam timetable to allow office staff time to process papers/input data within office hours.

Freedom of Information:

- Update Moodle to provide Exam Reports and External Examiners Reports from 2019 onwards.

Gender biases:

- Part III results this year highlighted a much bigger gender gap (at the Class I level) in performance of female students in the exam components of the course than in the project; this warrants examination.

Please highlight any good practice you encountered.

The students we met praised the welcoming and inclusive environment found in the Department.

Changes made to the assessment of student performance in Part III projects this year, including reducing the percentage of marks awarded by the project supervisor and enhancing the independent assessment of the project through a presentation/oral exam process were universally well-received by students. Overall, this has increased the robustness of marking this important piece of work and whilst a few more tweaks may be introduced in 2024-25, a solid platform for project marking has now been developed.

Preparation of the exam material for review by the External Examiners at the time of the Exam Board meetings was exemplary.

Have you seen any evidence of grade inflation?

The data compiled does not suggest that there has been any significant grade inflation.

If this is your final year as external examiner? If so, have you seen improvements over your tenure? Has the Department acted on your advice?

N/A.

Do you have any other comments?

As noted last year, there is not always an obvious connection between the material covered in Part II and Part III. It might be time for a course review, to consider what all students must cover as “core” Chemistry (and how this is built on from year to year of the course) and what it would be desirable for students to know as specialists in sub-disciplines.

Name	Professor Nicholas J Long			
Home Institution	Imperial College London			
Email Address	n.long@imperial.ac.uk			
Name(s) of course(s) examined <i>e.g. Tripos Part/ MPhil/ MRes</i>	Natural Sciences Tripos, Chemistry Parts II and II			
Academic year of examination	2023/2024			
Level (<i>Delete as appropriate</i>)	Undergraduate		Postgraduate	
Year of Appointment	1 st	X	2 nd	3 rd 4 th

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Are the academic standards set for the award appropriate for the qualification, and comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions?	X		

2. Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (handbooks, regulations, marking and classing criteria) in a timely manner?		X	
3. Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that your comments and suggestions were taken into consideration?		X	
4. Are you satisfied that the assessment was pitched at the appropriate level?	X		
5. Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	X		
6. Do the assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme?	X		
7. Are you satisfied that issues raised on your previous report form have been properly considered and, where applicable, acted upon?			X
8. Did you receive a written response from the Department to your previous report form?			X
If you replied No to any of the questions above, please expand here: In general, the process was very smooth and I greatly appreciated the information and support from the Part II and Part III examiners. My main issue is the incomplete set of model answers. Some colleagues completed and supplied very accurate and helpful model answers, other colleagues provided nothing, or only perfunctory hand-written notes. Model answers are vital in helping the External Examiners to do their job, assess difficulty of exam questions and learn how the marks will be allocated. It is also a chance to assess any potential errors in the questions (of which there were a number found during the exams, though these were managed well and corrected promptly, without disadvantaging the students it seems). The Department should make the supply of exam question model answers compulsory, without exception. It is also good practice for the External Examiners to receive a short report or reply following their comments on exam questions. After supplying my comments, I did not receive any feedback as to whether the comments or suggestions had been applied or agreed with, and a short reply back from the question setter/internal examiner would be very helpful.			
Do you have any concerns about the course, including standards and quality? No, this is a high quality, challenging course – on a par with other internationally leading Departments of Chemistry.			
Are you satisfied that the procedures associated with the assessment are efficient (e.g. timeframes, draft papers, questions, design and conduct of exam, meetings, vivas)? Yes, all was fine for this external examiner. However, the internal vetting process seems very tight on timing within June, and the Department may wish to realign the dates and deadlines slightly to help themselves.			

Do you have any comments on marking and classing (e.g. range of marks, action around borderline marks, penalties, moderation, double marking, reconciliation of marks)?

The scripts and project reports that I examined were accurately and thoroughly marked. I scrutinised the project marking in detail and was very happy with the process and balance of supervisor mark, with independent markers comments and % contribution, as well as the weighting of the oral and presentation marks. There seems to be a good balance overall within the project marking and the balance between exam and project-based assessment in the Part III stage of the course.

Do you have any comments on the student experience of the course and/or their experience of the assessment process?

The external examiners had an enjoyable and valuable meeting (of around 90 mins) with a group of around 10 Part II and Part III students, who were honest and open in their feelings about the course. They were largely positive about the degree experience in Chemistry, though had some points of concern and ideas for improvement. Some specific points have been relayed to the Department, but there was a general feeling of some disconnect with the Colleges and Department in terms of consistency of supervision teaching and assistance in welfare cases with respective Directors of Studies. I have made a suggestion that the Department may wish to put in place some student welfare provision *within* the Department, as a first day-to-day point of call for distressed or worried students. This person/office could offer immediate student support as well as being a potential bridge of information between the Department and Colleges.

In terms of consistency of teaching in supervisions and laboratory courses, the Department should consider further training of new supervisors or demonstrators – both on-line and in person, which would be extremely helpful, especially for researchers and teachers who are new to the Cambridge system.

Do you have any comments on University policies (e.g. the role of the external examiner, policies around plagiarism, script annotation)?

No, all seems appropriate and in order.

Please describe here any recommendations for improvement.

In my first year as external examiner I still getting used to the Cambridge course and I will have more comments next year, but I have raised one item in particular with the Department – final year project allocation. The whole process seems rather opaque (and the students also thought this) and my suggestion is that it should be more formalised, there should be a more even project allocation across the supervisors (some PIs had no project students, others has around 5 or 6) and I would strongly suggest that there is no input from the potential supervisors as to which student they would like to supervise. This supervisor ‘choice’ opens up (perhaps unfairly) accusations about bias and prejudice from aggrieved students, and I don’t believe is helpful or indeed correct.

Please highlight any good practice you encountered.

As stated above, the rigour and balance of the Part III project report marking, and the guidelines for the report, with a limit of 5000 words.

Have you seen any evidence of grade inflation?

No

If this is your final year as external examiner? If so, have you seen improvements over your tenure? Has the Department acted on your advice?

N/A

Do you have any other comments?

No