

Patent Examination Board

Foundation Certificate

External Examiner's Report

Name of External Examiner	Professor David Musker
External Examiner's institution	Queen Mary University of London
Programme(s) being examined	Foundation Certificate
Award meeting(s) attended	Awarding Meeting 10/02/2021

1. Programme Structure

Please comment upon:

- any particular strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Certificate programme;
- the balance and content of the programme(s) followed by candidates;
- the coherence of programmes, and the appropriateness of syllabus content in relation to the Foundation Certificate aims;
- the suitability of methods and the adequacy of training as reflected by the standards achieved by the candidates.

I note that the Certificate program has been accredited by IPReg, and assessed externally by the QAA in 2020. The examinations and syllabus are generally appropriate to the Certificate aims. As PEB is an examination-only body, training issues are not within the scope of this Report.

2. Standard of candidate performance

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

YES (If 'no', please state the reasons they fall short.)

2.2 Are there any other points on candidate performance that you wish to raise?

3. Assessment Process

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

YES (If 'no', please state the reasons they fall short.)

3.2 Please also comment for PEB on:

- strengths and weaknesses in the assessment process;
- the appropriateness of the assessment method (i.e. examinations) to the learning outcomes for the programme;
- the mark schemes;
- the quality and achievements of the candidates.

Written examinations are a tested and trusted form of assessment for the learning outcomes desired, and appropriate in this case.

Online assessment (as conducted this year) offer clear advantages of convenience both to PEB and to candidates. PEB are to be commended on the rollout of this process under difficult circumstances.

4. Other Quality Issues

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 question paper(s)?	Yes
4.2	Were your comments on the question paper(s) properly taken into account?	Yes
Marking and Standardisation		
4.3	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for your moderation of question papers?	No
4.4	Did you have sufficient information on the mark 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 with the arrangements for standardisation of examiner marking (where required)?	Yes
The Awarding Meeting		
4.8	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for, and conduct of, the Award meeting?	Yes
4.9	Were you satisfied with the decisions and recommendations of the Award meeting?	Yes
Assessment		
4.10	Was the standard of assessment consistent with that of UK higher education establishments where applicable, at QAA Level 6, so far as you could tell?	Yes
4.11	Did the assessment meet the requirements of the IPReg Accreditation Handbook?	Yes

Please detail any concerns regarding 4.1 – 4.11.

I was able to scrutinise the exam scripts fully, but it would be more convenient in future to be able to see them at an earlier stage.

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 7.)

As this is the first External Examiner Report I am not able to make a direct comparison. Both last year and this year were exceptional due to the effects of COVID, so a comparison would be of limited value, but in any event the analysis shared by PEB indicated that there was no statistically significant variation in outcomes from last year.

6. General Comments

6.1 In your view, are the standards set at unit level for the Foundation Certificate appropriate for qualifications at this level in this subject?

YES If 'no', please state the reasons they fall short.)

I have reviewed the individual 2020 papers, and I believe that they are at a reasonably consistent level, and one which is generally appropriate to the Foundation Certificate.

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

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.

PEB currently has a sound set of procedures and principles, and a robust process for review and standardisation of examination marks.

Signed: David Musker

Date: 17 March 2021