

Patent Examination Board

Final Diploma

External Examiner's Report

Name of External Examiner	Dr Fernando Barrio
External Examiner's institution	Queen Mary University of London
Programme(s) being examined	Final Diploma
Award meeting(s) attended	Awarding Meeting 9 March 2023

1. Programme Structure

Please comment upon:

- any particular strengths and weaknesses of the Final Diploma 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 Final Diploma aims;
- the suitability of methods and the adequacy of training as reflected by the standards achieved by the candidates.

The programme is well structured and some of the potential issues are being currently addressed by the review of the different papers.

The content followed by candidates is balanced, although there is a need for updating of the international topics present in some of the papers. This is in progress.

Excepting in one case, the pass rates are consistent with previous years, which coupled with the balance of the programme explained before, would imply that methods and the adequacy of training have been conducive to the standard achieved by the candidates.

2. Standard of candidate performance

- 2.1 Is the standard of candidate achievement at Pass level and above comparable with that of equivalent Level 7 programmes and/or qualifications in similar subject areas in UK higher education institutions with which you are familiar?

YES

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

In one of the papers (FD3) the pass rate was substantially lower than the previous year, although it can be argued that the anomaly could be attributed to that year and in this one the situation has become within the usual pattern.

3. Assessment Process

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

YES

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.

The process is robust and appropriate, which does not mean that it can not be improved. There is an argument that some of the papers can be assessed through a practical exercise at home, where the application is done in a more realistic scenario than the one present during a timed exam.

3.3 Was the Final Diploma Minimum Pass Descriptor applied when marginal scripts were considered at Awarding?

YES

3.4 Was the standard of assessment for the Final Diploma consistent with that of UK higher education establishments, where applicable, at QAA Level 7?

YES

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?	N/A
Marking and Standardisation		
4.3	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for your moderation of question papers?	Yes
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
4.10	Was assessment consistent with the requirements of the IPReg Accreditation Handbook, so far as you could tell?	Yes
Please detail any concerns regarding 4.1 – 4.10.		

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.)

N/A

6. General Comments

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

YES

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.

Being a qualification for a regulated profession, there seems to not be much room for departing from a examination-based assessment, although different options can be (are currently being) considered.

Although usually within the realm of IP academic studies, there are experiences where the assessment takes place using real cases and through the application of the content of the curriculum to achieving a working solution. Understanding the potential need for regulatory adaptation, such good practice could be adapted to assessment methods where the candidates carry out some of the activities proper of a patent attorney, at home, and then is evaluated in the result.

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.

N/A

Signed: Fernando Barrio

Date: April 2024