

MSc in CRIMINOLOGY and CRIMINAL JUSTICE (RESEARCH METHODS)

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS 2008

General Remarks

The Chair of Examiners would like to thank all of those involved in the examination process for the MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods); those who served on the Board of Examiners, those who acted as Assessors, and, in particular, the Director of Examinations (Ann Kennedy) and the Examinations Officer (Julie Bass) who were available throughout the year for support and advice.

Dedicated administrative support was received from the Criminology Graduate Studies Administrator, Mrs Cathy Byford, without whom the examinations process would not have run as well as it did. The Board of Examiners would like to record its appreciation for Mrs Byford's efficiency and professionalism throughout the year.

The Board of Examiners was supported by Professor Dick Hobbs from the London School of Economics who was enormously helpful in reading and commenting on essays, dissertations, and examination scripts and we are pleased that he is available to continue for his final year as External Examiner during 2008-09.

Structure of the Examination

The elements of the examination were as follows:

- a 3-hour unseen written examination jointly based on the 'Explanation and Understanding in Criminology' and 'Understanding Criminal Justice' courses. Students were required to answer three questions under strict examination conditions;
- two written assignments for the Criminology Research Methods courses (one each for 'Research design and data analysis' and 'Social explanation and data analysis');
- a closed-book class test and take-home data analysis test for 'Statistical methods in the social sciences'; and a two part practical exercise for 'Qualitative research methods';
- two option essays (one for each substantive option) written unsupervised and unaided during the last three weeks of Trinity term;
- a dissertation.

Examination. Students were required to take two Core Courses; ‘Explanation and Understanding in Criminology’ in Michaelmas term, and ‘Understanding Criminal Justice’ in Hilary term. These two courses were examined by one unseen three-hour written paper on the Thursday of week 0 of Trinity Term (19 April 2007). Students were required to answer three questions from a choice of twelve

Criminology Research Methods courses: Research Design and Data Collection was examined in Michaelmas Term, and Social Explanation and Data Analysis and Qualitative Methods in Hilary Term, by essays. The choice of essay titles was posted on Friday of 6th week, and the essays submitted by noon on Friday of 9th week. Each essay was to be no less than 2,500 words and no more than 3,000 words. In addition, candidates had to complete weekly assignments for each of these courses, marked on a pass/fail basis, to the satisfaction of the course tutor.

‘**Statistical methods in the social sciences**’ was taught and assessed within the Sociology department by a 2-hour closed book in-class test and a take-home data analysis test.

Option Essays. In Trinity Term, students were required to take *two* optional seminar courses, examined by essays, the titles of which were posted on Friday of 6th week, and the essays submitted by noon on Friday of 9th week. Each essay was to be no less than 3,500 and no more than 5,000 words. Candidates chose one essay title from a choice of three.

Dissertation. The students were required to submit a Dissertation of no less than 13,000 and no longer than 15,000 words by noon on Friday, 12th September.

To pass the Examination.

The degree of MSc is awarded to any candidate who achieves a mark of at least 50 per cent for each of its four components: (1) the unseen exam, (2) the written assignments, data analysis test and practical exercise for the methods courses, (3) the option essays and (4) the dissertation. For this purpose, the individual marks of the methods assignments and the options essays are aggregated and two average marks awarded for components 2 and 3 of the degree. The examiners award a distinction to any candidate who achieves marks of at least 70 per cent on the dissertation, and at least two out of the other three components of the degree.

Information given to candidates

The Edict and supplementary edicts (attached as Appendix 1) were sent out to candidates in Michaelmas term 2007 in hard and electronic copy. The Edicts were also put on the MSc Criminology intranet pages. Much of this information had already been available to candidates in the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice handbook, and the programme specifications (all students receive a hard copy of these documents and they are also available on the intranet).

Marking

The two option essays, two criminology research methods courses, dissertation and core course examination paper were double blind marked by two Examiners, or an Examiner and an Assessor, who then met to agree a mark (see Appendix C for the marking scheme, on page 19). In nearly all cases there was no substantial difference between the initial grades and so agreement was easily reached. The statistical methods course and the qualitative methods course were both assessed by the tutor in Sociology, who provided both raw and aggregated grades, and the marks were then approved by the Criminology Board of Examiners.

All papers where a mark of 49% or below had been given were sent to the External Examiner, as were borderline papers (where a mark of 69% had been awarded) and a range of other essays and scripts. The External Examiner read 8 essays, 3 Dissertations, two Core Course examination scripts.

Procedures and Problems

There were no problems reported to the Board of Examiners.

Plagiarism checks

There were no cases of plagiarism reported for this degree.

Medical certificates and other information about factors affecting performance

No medical certificates were presented for the candidates on this degree.

Overall Results of the Examination

There were seven candidates for the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods) - see display copy of the pass list at Appendix 3. Six candidates passed the degree, with one gaining a distinction. This candidate was awarded the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods) 2008 Examination Prize, designed to recognize the best performance on the MSc at Distinction level. Attached at Appendix 2 is the numbers of entrants, passes, distinctions and fails, broken down by gender, as well as the range of marks for each component of the course.

Core course examination

The examination for the core course was taken by 7 students. The quality of the answers to this year's core course was high. The breakdown of responses to specific questions across the entire MSc cohort was: 1 (20%); 2 (15%); 3 (35%); 4 (15%); 5 (25%); 6 (5%); 7 (60%); 8 (30%); 9 (20%); 10 (25%); 11 (10%); 12 (40%). All grades were resolved between the two examiners. Within the MSc (Research Methods) cohort, the overall average was 64%, and three candidates were awarded a distinction. One candidate failed the core course exam.

Optional Courses

The seven Research Methods candidates were taught and examined for their Trinity Term options along with the candidates for the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice. Therefore, see Examiners Report for the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice 2008 for further information on student performance in the Trinity Term options (Sociology of Punishment; Risk, Security and Criminal Justice; Restorative Justice; Race and Gender; and Sentencing) see Examiners Report for the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Dissertations

One candidate failed the dissertation. Six candidates passed and presented well-researched and well-written essays. Two obtained a distinction.

M. Bosworth
D. Hobbs (External)
C. Hoyle (Chair)
F. Varese
October 2008

Appendix 2

MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods)

Table 1. Degree Results by Gender. 2007-2008 Academic Year

		Gender		Total
		FEMALE	MALE	
<i>Grade</i>	Pass	3	2	5
	Distinction	1	0	1
	Fail	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>		4	3	7

Table 2. Degree Results by Gender - MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods)
2006-2007 Academic Year

	FEMALE	MALE
<i>2006-2007 Academic Year</i>		
Distinction	0	1
Pass	2	0
Fail	0	0

Table 3. Option results, showing the range of marks and averages

Option	Number of candidates	Lowest mark	Highest mark	Average mark
Race and Gender	4	61	71	67
Restorative Justice	1	66	66	66
Risk, Security and Criminal Justice	1	54	54	54
Sentencing	4	68	73	69
Sociology of Punishment	4	54	70	64

Table 4. Compulsory Research Methods results, showing the range of marks and averages

Research Methods Course	Number of candidates	Lowest mark	Highest mark	Average mark
Methods 1: Research Design and Data Collection	7	63	72	68
Methods II: Social Explanation and Data Analysis	7	46	70	60
Statistical Methods in the Social Sciences	7	69	84	76
Qualitative Methods	7	44	72	64

Table 5. Core Course Exam results, showing the range of marks and average

Lowest mark	Highest mark	Average
44	74	64

Table 6. Dissertation results, showing the range of marks and average

Lowest mark	Highest mark	Average
48	70	61