

EXAMINATION CONVENTIONS: MSC IN APPLIED STATISTICS

For MSc candidates the overall assessment is based on:

1. Paper (i) Principles of Statistical Analysis
2. Paper (ii) Further Statistical Methodology
3. Assessed Practical Work
4. Dissertation.

Each of (1)–(4) has equal weight, i.e. each contributes 25% to the overall MSc assessment.

The guidelines are 75 hours of lectures or equivalent work for each of (1) and (2), with 1 question per 8–10 hours work.

The assessed practical work (3) will be made up of two practical assignments in Michaelmas Term, two practical assignments in Hilary Term, and a week-long Practical Assessment in Trinity Term. Each of the Michaelmas and Hilary Term assignments contributes 12.5% to the overall assessed practical mark and the week-long Trinity Term practical 50%. You will be told if there are any changes to these guidelines. Interim marks given for the practical assignments in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms are provisional and may be subject to further moderation.

Candidates can pass, pass with distinction or fail. In order to pass, a candidate must achieve an average of at least 40% on (1) and (2), a mark of at least 40% on (4), and an overall average of at least 50% on (1)–(4). An overall average of at least 70% is required for a distinction.

Distinction candidates will show excellence over a wide range of topics. Passing candidates will at least show good or very good work over a reasonable range of topics. These descriptions are of overall performance: weaker performance in part of the overall assessment can be compensated for, if the overall performance merits it. Candidates who just fail the MSc can be allocated a pass on the Diploma if they show, in the view of the examiners, understanding and competence equivalent to passing the Diploma.

The examination rubric on Paper (i) will state that 'All questions should be attempted.' The examination rubric on Paper (ii) will state that 'Credit will be given for answers to a maximum of 5 questions, at least 2 of which must be on the core topics.'

MSc/Diploma in Applied Statistics qualitative descriptors

- Distinction** The candidate shows excellent skills in modelling, reasoning and problem-solving. He/she demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the material, and is able to use it innovatively in unfamiliar contexts.
- Pass** The candidate shows good or very good skills in modelling, reasoning and problem-solving. He/she demonstrates a good or very good knowledge of much of the material.
- Fail** The examiners consider that the candidate is not worthy of an MSc/Diploma. There is little evidence of competence in the topics examined; the work is likely to show major misunderstanding and confusion, coupled with inaccurate calculations. The candidate either leaves without a degree or may retake the examination the following year.

(If a candidate fails the MSc but nevertheless shows sufficient merit to pass the Diploma, the candidate has the option of retaking the examination the following year or of being issued with a diploma.)

Double marking

For the examination papers, there is a precise model solution and marking scheme approved by the examiners for every question. Answers will be double-blind marked by the examiners or assessors. Each dissertation will also be marked independently by two examiners or assessors (neither of who will be the dissertation supervisor).

Reconciliation procedures

When the two marks for a dissertation show minor discrepancies, the two marks will be averaged. In the other cases, there will be a discussion between the two examiners or assessors concerned, after which it will normally be possible for a mark to be agreed. In any exceptional cases a third examiner or assessor will normally read the dissertation before the Examiners agree a mark. The same procedure applies to the marking of examination questions.

Scaling

If the marks on part of the assessment appear not to be in line with the qualitative descriptions of a distinction and a pass, then this will be taken into account and candidates' marks may be moderated accordingly.

Late or non-submission of coursework

Under the provisions permitted by the Examination Regulations, late submission of coursework (i.e. practical reports and dissertations) will normally result in the following penalties.

Where permission for late submission has been granted by the Proctors, no penalty will be imposed.

Where permission for late submission has not been granted by the Proctors, but the Proctors have given leave for the candidate to remain in the examination, the Examiners may impose a penalty not exceeding the credit available for that piece of work. The Examiners should take into account such factors as:

1. the evidence forwarded to them by the Proctors and (insofar as the following matters are not dealt with by such evidence)
2. the degree of advantage gained by the extra time made available to the candidate relative to the time that was available to complete coursework by the original deadline
3. the weight to be attached to the reason given, if any, for late submission.

Where the candidate is not permitted by the Proctors to remain in the examination he or she will be deemed to have failed the examination as a whole.

Dissertation

In marking dissertations, the following criteria and weightings will be used:

Criterion	Weighting
STRUCTURE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of aims• Quality of general approach	10%
LITERATURE AND THEORY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of scrutiny of literature• Understanding of relevant theory	10%
EXPOSITION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of exposition of source materials• Quality of elaborations of source materials• Quality of mathematical argument	20%
METHODOLOGY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriateness of choice of techniques• Quality of data-collection and/or handling• Quality of computer work• Accuracy	30%
CONCLUSIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriateness of conclusions drawn• Understanding of implications and limitations	20%
PRESENTATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarity of style• Quality of diagrams and tables• Proper referencing to the literature	10%

The length of the dissertation should be no more than is required to present the project in a satisfactory manner and in any case **no more than 12,000 words**. Inordinately lengthy dissertations may lose marks.

Two copies of the dissertation are to be submitted to the Examination Schools, High Street, by noon on a date to be announced by Examinations Schools, no later than 15 September 2009. Details of submitting work to the Examination Schools can be found at

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/schools/oxonly/submissions/index.shtml>

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