

MSc in Mathematical Sciences (OMMS)

Examination Conventions Briefing

15th November 2021

How to Complete OMMS

- ▶ To complete OMMS you must complete at least 8 units; this must include a 2-unit dissertation.
- ▶ Each remaining unit corresponds to a 16 hour lecture course (the exception is the Theoretical Physics course which is 40 lectures and makes a double unit).
- ▶ The courses are assessed either by a written examination or a mini-project. [The lecture course determines the assessment method.]
- ▶ At the end of the course you will be classified on a distinction/merit/pass/fail scale.

How to Complete OMMS

You may choose a combination of lecture courses from mathematics, statistics and computer science with the restrictions that:

- ▶ at least three courses assessed by written examination will contribute towards your degree; and
- ▶ at most two courses from the Department of Computer Science will contribute towards your degree.

Assessment of Lecture Courses

- ▶ Most lecture courses are assessed by an invigilated written exam in the final term.
- ▶ Some (more practical) lecture courses are assessed by mini-project.
- ▶ In both cases the assessment (exam paper or mini-project) will usually be set by the course lecturer.
- ▶ Note that your submitted solutions to the problem sheets do NOT count towards your final grade for that course.

Written Examinations

- ▶ Exams last 1.75 hours and consist of three questions; your best two answers make up your raw mark for the paper (although you may attempt all three questions if you wish).
- ▶ You may take one double sided summary sheet of notes that you have prepared into the written examination — more details will follow later in the course.
- ▶ The range of material covered by the exam questions should be spread across the syllabus.
- ▶ Each question will be worth 25 marks and will be marked according to an approved marking scheme.
- ▶ A script checking process will then be used to ensure that all work has been marked and that the marks have been correctly totalled and recorded.

Written Examinations — Scaling

The Board of Examiners for Part C and OMMS will assign USMs (University Standardised Marks) for each paper, which may involve scaling the raw marks using a continuous piecewise linear map (spline). The examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:

- ▶ a paper was more difficult or easier than in previous years; and/or
- ▶ a paper was more or less difficult than other papers taken by students in a given year; and/or
- ▶ a paper has generated a spread of marks which is not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that all papers are fairly and equally rewarded.

Mini-Projects

- ▶ Mini-projects are usually set by the course lecturer and you will need to submit a written report online (in week 10 of MT or week 11 of HT).
- ▶ Once a mini-project has been submitted you cannot withdraw from that unit.
- ▶ Mini-projects are independently double-marked by two assessors, one of whom will usually be the course lecturer.
- ▶ The two marks are then reconciled to give the overall mark for the mini-project.
- ▶ An exception is made if a mini-project has a pre-agreed marking scheme. Such projects are marked by a single assessor and then a script checking process is used as for exams.

Dissertation

- ▶ Everyone needs to do a dissertation — this is worth two units.
- ▶ The word limit for dissertations is 7500 words. This is an upper bound and you may write significantly less.
- ▶ It is likely there will also be a (generous) page limit imposed. More details will follow.
- ▶ You will submit your dissertation online on Monday of week 1 of Trinity Term.
- ▶ The dissertations are double marked, usually by the dissertation supervisor and one other assessor.
- ▶ The two marks are then reconciled to give the overall mark for the dissertation.

Meaning of USMs

The correspondence between USM ranges and classes for individual units is

- ▶ 70–100: Distinction
- ▶ 65–69: Merit
- ▶ 50–64: Pass
- ▶ 0–49: Fail

Degree Classification

Let $AvUSM$ be the weighted average of the dissertation mark plus the other 6 best USMs achieved (symmetrically rounded), at least 3 of which will be written examination marks. The final course classification will be as follows:

- ▶ Distinction: $AvUSM \geq 70$
- ▶ Merit: $70 > AvUSM \geq 65$
- ▶ Pass: $65 > AvUSM \geq 50$
- ▶ Fail: $50 > AvUSM$

Students who fail one or more units contributing to $AvUSM$ will not be eligible for a distinction or a merit.

Units over the Required 8

- ▶ While you must complete 8 units to complete the OMMS course, you can complete an extra one or two courses if you wish.
- ▶ You may wish to complete these for credit — by sitting the exam or writing the mini-project. If you do this they will appear on your transcript.
- ▶ Any units not contributing to your final mark (i.e. not included in *AvUSM*) cannot have a detrimental effect on your classification.
- ▶ This means, for example, if you would achieve a merit if you had completed 8 units, but you completed and failed a 9th unit, you will still achieve a merit.

Resits

A student who fails the MSc in Mathematical Sciences may resit on at most one subsequent occasion. This resit attempt shall normally be taken at the next opportunity, but may be deferred once, i.e. it must be taken at one of the next two opportunities.

In all such cases the Examiners will specify at the time of failure which components may or must be redone. Usually, candidates will be permitted to resit any component for which they received a 'failing' USM (i.e. 49 or below) but they will not be permitted to resit any component they have already passed (i.e. achieved a USM of at least 50). Candidates who have initially failed any element of assessment will not normally be eligible for the award of distinction or merit.

Non-Attendance at Written Examinations

Rules governing non-attendance at examinations and any consequent penalties are set out in full in the Examination Regulations (Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 14).

In cases where the Proctors do not believe there are satisfactory reasons for non-attendance or an application to the Proctors has not been submitted, a mark of zero will be awarded for the unit. In this case, the mark for any resit of the exam (only allowed if you fail the M.Sc. overall) will be capped at 50.

If you will be prevented by illness or other urgent cause from attending one of your examinations you should contact your college office or college advisor as soon as possible.

Late Submission of Coursework

If you will be prevented by illness or other urgent cause from submitting your coursework on time you should contact your college office or college advisor as soon as possible. Your college is able to submit an application for an extension of time to the Proctors on your behalf.

Where permission to submit late has not been granted by the Proctors there will be both academic penalties and financial penalties. In this case, you must inform your college of any mitigating circumstances as soon as possible, so that the college can make an application to the Proctors if appropriate.

Failure to submit a required element of assessment, without an accepted reason, will result in the failure of that assessment and a mark of zero. In this case, the mark for any resit of the assessment (only allowed if you fail the M.Sc. overall) will be capped at 50.

Alternative Examination Arrangements and Mitigating Circumstances Notices to Examiners

A candidate in any University Examination with specific learning difficulties or disability/illness may apply through the Senior Tutor of their college for alternative examination arrangements relating to their condition.

Candidates who would like the examiners to be aware of any factors that may have affected their performance before or during an examination are advised to discuss their circumstances with their college and consult the Examination Regulations (Part 13). Candidates should complete the form entitled “Mitigating Circumstances Notices to Examiners” and send this to their college with appropriate supporting material. The candidate’s college will submit the application for forwarding to the Chair of Examiners.

Examiners

The examination board for 2021–22 is made up of seven internal examiners from the Mathematical Institute and the Department of Statistics, along with three external examiners.

It must be stressed that to preserve the independence of the examiners, you should not make contact directly with them about matters relating to the content or marking of papers. Any communication must be via the Senior Tutor of your college, who will, if they deem the matter of importance, contact the Proctors. The Proctors in turn communicate with the Chair of Examiners.

Extra Information — Past Papers

- ▶ Past maths exam papers can be found at <https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/undergraduate-courses/examinations-assessments/past-papers> (click on “past paper archive” link).
- ▶ Alternatively you can find past papers at OXAM — see <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/:oxam> (contains papers from both the Mathematical Institute and the Department of Statistics).
- ▶ Solutions to the 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020 maths papers and specimen solutions from other years are available at <https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/undergraduate-courses/examinations-assessments/part-c-specimen-solutions>.
- ▶ Solutions from the Department of Statistics are available on Canvas at https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/67002/pages/part-c-statistics-specimen-exam-papers-and-solutions?module_item_id=1089948.

Extra Information — Examiners' Reports

- ▶ Part C Examiners' Reports can be found by following the links at <https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/undergraduate-courses/examinations-assessments/examiners-reports>.
- ▶ Previous OMMS Examiners' Reports are available from <https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/undergraduate-courses/teaching-and-learning/part-c-students/examinations-and-assessments/part-c-and-omms>.