

**Arab Open University**

**Summary of External Examiners Reports**

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| **Academic Year:**  | **2024-2025** |
| **Semester:**  | **Fall** |
| **Programme:** | 1. **MSc Computing (Cyber Security and Forensics)**
2. **BSc in Information Technology and Computing,**
3. **BSc Information Technology and Computing**
4. **BSc (Hons) Information Technology and Computing with pathway (BSc (Hons) Artificial Intelligence)**
 |
| **No of External Examiners**  | **7** |
| **No of Externally Examined Courses** | **40** |

1. **Chief External Examiners response and Comments:**

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| **Please confirm that the assessment and standards set for the programme are consistent and appropriate, and that the processes for assessment and determination of awards are fair, reliable across the provision.** |
| **I confirm** |

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| **Please confirm that sufficient information and evidence of professional work and students’ assessment were -received by the programmes’ external examiners to enable them to t fulfill their role.** |
| **I confirm** |

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| **Commendations:** |
| The institution’s assessment processes are of a high standard, with rigorous adherence to quality assurance procedures. The support provided to external examiners is commendable, despite tight moderation cycles. The administrative and academic teams demonstrate strong commitment and efficiency, facilitating a smooth assessment cycle. |

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| **Suggestions for Enhancement** |
| It is recommended that the institution consider establishing student societies or clubs, particularly in Computing, to enhance student engagement. Also, the issue of reassessment fees for students with mitigating circumstances should be reviewed to ensure fairness. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Dr. Diana Hintea**

 **Examined Modules: M251, T227, T316, TM298, TM356, M218, TM254**

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| The academic standards for the programme are appropriate for the award, aligning well with relevant subject benchmarks and the programme specification. The assessments are well-constructed, including clear marking schemes that support consistent grading. The standards set are rigorous yet attainable, ensuring that students demonstrate the requisite knowledge and skills expected at this level. |

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| 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| Generally, students’ work is of a good standard, comparable to their peers on similar programmes elsewhere. The distribution of marks across modules indicates a balanced level of achievement, with students showcasing strength particularly in technical topics. Feedback from student meetings suggests they perform well and appreciate the support provided by staff, aligning with performance levels seen in comparable institutions. |

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| 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
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| The quality of students’ work is satisfactory, with evidence of solid knowledge and technical skills. Their performance across assessments demonstrates achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Students seem to be strong in technical areas, and their work indicates they are gaining both subject-specific and general skills. The assessment strategy effectively measures these outcomes, although incorporating more critical analysis and soft skills development could further enhance their competencies. |

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| 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
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| Students exhibit strong technical knowledge and skills, particularly in core technical modules. They are motivated and responsive to practical activities, showing confidence in applied tasks. Weaknesses: Some modules may lack up-to-date content, and there is a desire among students for more extracurricular activities such as societies or clubs, especially in Computing. Additionally, a concern was raised regarding the process of reassessment fees in cases of mitigating circumstances, which requires further investigation. |

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| 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
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| Assessments are generally well-designed, with clear criteria and answer schemes. They are aligned with the programme’s learning outcomes. To align more closely with UK standards, assessments could incorporate more hands-on, critical analysis tasks and group projects to foster soft skills such as teamwork and problem-solving. |

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| 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
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| Marking is fair and consistent, as evidenced by the moderation of samples. The marking schemes are applied appropriately, with no discrepancies noted during moderation. However, the absence of physical scripts during the visit limited direct moderation, though the available samples indicated reliable marking practices. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Dr. Rakan Aldmour**

 **Examined Modules: T215A, T215B, T216A, T216B, TM255, TM358, TM366, T318**

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| The reviewed material, information, and samples were sufficient and were amended as requested. The evidence provided was comprehensive enough to support thorough moderation and evaluation, enabling the fulfilment of my external examiner responsibilities. The standards are appropriate and in place, aligning well with relevant subject benchmarks, the qualifications framework, and the programme specification. |

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| 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| Generally, students’ work was of good standard, but the assessment also allowed, in the majority of modules, for a good distribution of marks. |

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| 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
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| After reviewing student work and engaging with students, I observed that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills for the course. However, additional technical skills are needed to better support them in their final year projects, particularly in programming. |

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| 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
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| * Students actively seek help, support, and feedback.
* They demonstrate engagement and motivation in their learning.
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| 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
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| The curriculum meets the required standards, with the added advantage of online resources enhancing the learning experience. However, there are challenges in accessing soft copies of some books, which could be addressed to improve resource accessibility. Assessments are well-designed, with clear criteria and structure. |

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| 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
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| Marking has been consistent, and double marking is considered to ensure fairness. Additional comments on the detailed application of marking schemes would provide further assurance. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Prof. Matt Jones**

 **Examined Modules: TM253, TM240, TM324, TM352, TM354 TM355, TM471**

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| * 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| The standards are appropriate and in alignment with relevant benchmarks and the programme specifications. |

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| * 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| A need to further develop students’ qualitative and narrative skills. The Faculty is actively working to embed such “softer” skills within modules and provide relevant resources. |

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| * 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
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| During a visit to Bahrain, I interacted with students and assessed their work. The quality of discussions and student knowledge indicated that graduates are well-prepared for careers in IT. The samples of student work demonstrated a range of abilities comparable to similar programmes in the UK and internationally. |

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| * 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
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| * Strong technical and programming skills.
* Ability to analyse and argue for or against different system design choices.
* Capacity to undertake extended, complex projects, exemplified by the capstone individual project.
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| * 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
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| Overall, the curriculum is well-designed, with innovative approaches such as providing rich practice questions to enhance learning. There is room to further develop industry-relevant skills, such as Python, based on student feedback. Some modules use multiple-choice questions, which may benefit from review to ensure they assess understanding rather than rote guessing. Additionally, increasing variety and innovation in final exam questions would strengthen assessment robustness. |

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| * 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
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| While there is evidence of strong processes around double marking, cross-branch marking, and data analysis, some inconsistency in how marks are indicated on scripts was observed. Continued emphasis on consistent application of marking schemes is recommended. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Dr. Markus Wolf**

 **Examined Modules: TM270 , TM271 , TM275 ,TM276 ,TM340 ,TM341**

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| The standards set are appropriate and align with the validated programme of study. the assessment strategy follows the faculty template, and I have reviewed and approved all assessments prior to their release. Changes to TMAs, including the integration of Coursera assessments, were also approved. |

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| 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| The high average grades, especially in courses with online Coursera assessments allowing unlimited resubmissions, suggest excellent performance but require careful monitoring. |

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| 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
 |
| Students demonstrate outstanding academic performance and skills comparable to those in similar programmes at other institutions. Their work reflects a strong grasp of subject matter and an innovative approach to application. The high average grades, especially in courses with online Coursera assessments allowing unlimited resubmissions, suggest excellent performance but require careful monitoring. |

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| 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
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| Most students exhibited deep understanding of technical subjects and communicated ideas effectively in English. No major weaknesses were observed in the sample reviewed. |

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| 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
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| Assessments follow the faculty template, comprising practical TMAs, mid-term, and final exams, with clear marking criteria. The use of question banks and the inclusion of links to Google Colab notebooks for verification are commendable. The pilot of Coursera-based assessments is promising but encountered issues such as grade differentiation and access, which are being addressed. |

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| 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
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| Marking has been generally fair and consistent, with evidence of second marking and moderation. Minor inconsistencies in marking practices were noted, which should be monitored. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Dr. Antony Brown**

 **Examined Modules: TM256, M348, TM311, TM359, TM238, MST224**

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| * 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| The standards are appropriate and aligned with the relevant benchmarks and programme specifications. |

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| * 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| Student performance was acceptable, with a suitable distribution of outcomes. Ongoing monitoring of overall pass rates and grade distributions is recommended as cohort sizes increase. |

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| * 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
 |
| The assessments demonstrated a good range of grades, indicating that students possess skills and knowledge consistent with comparable programmes elsewhere. |

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| * 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
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| Students generally showed good subject knowledge. There has been an effort to incorporate practical work into assessments, and where this was done, students demonstrated suitable technical skills. Further encouragement of practical assessments would benefit more students. |

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| * 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
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| Assessments were well-designed, clear, and fair, with transparent marking criteria and a variety of question types. |

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| * 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
 |
| Marking was consistent and included detailed comments. The cross-branch marking process was well-documented, with effective collaboration among marking teams. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Dr. Ana Vukovic**

**Examined Modules: Algorithms. Data Structure and Computability (M269), Web technologies (TT284), Data Management and Analysis (TM351),**

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| standards were appropriate and in line with relevant benchmarks and programme specifications. |

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| 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| Regarding student assessments, I received sufficient evidence including students’ papers, marksheets, statistical analysis, exam papers with solutions, the programme regulations, university regulations, and minutes of meetings.GCC reports for modules M269, TM351, TT284, M252, T321, and MT248 were satisfactory. I am pleased to note that module convenors have reflected on my previous comments and recorded actions clearly, demonstrating good traceability. |

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| 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
 |
| The quality of students’ work was comparable to students elsewhere. Selected students from the Bahrain branch were interviewed, and their feedback was generally positive. They appreciated the course and support but raised concerns that some modules contain outdated material, such as learning about 1G and 2G mobile phones when current standards are 5G. This feedback should be considered in course reviews. |

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| 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
 |
| Students demonstrated good subject knowledge generally. The cohort performed well across modules, with many achieving satisfactory results. The main weakness noted was the reliance on outdated material in some modules, which could impact their readiness for current industry practices. |

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| 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
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| Assessments this semester were well-structured and appropriate. |

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| 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
 |
| Marking was clear and consistent in most cases. The use of the cross-branch CBM activity before marking is good practice, promoting uniformity across locations. The exam key on the drive is very helpful for comparing scripts and reflecting on grading standards. |

1. **Extracts from External Examiners report form**

**External Examiner Name: Dr. Abdulghani A. Ahmed Alyamani**

 **Examined Modules:**

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|  **Information Security M811B****Digital Forensics M812A****Network Security T828A****Research Project T802** **Data Management Project M15** **Machine Learning in Cyber Security M818**  |

Please comment as appropriate on the following:

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| 1. The academic standards for the programme/module.
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| Upon careful review, I can confirm the presence of appropriate and well-established standards aligned with the intended learning outcomes and relevant benchmarks.  |

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| 1. Performance of students in comparison to similar programmes
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| Answer scripts and MSc dissertations demonstrate a good level of quality, reflecting students’ strong knowledge base and research skills. The high marks and attempts at publication further attest to the students’ capabilities and the quality of their work. Student performance indicates a high quality of teaching and supervision, with results showing medium to high achievement levels, which reflect effective instructional practices. |

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| 1. The quality of students’ work, their knowledge and skills and achievement of learning outcomes
 |
| Student performance indicates a high quality of teaching and supervision, with results showing medium to high achievement levels, which reflect effective instructional practices. |

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| 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the students
 |
| Students demonstrated good subject knowledge generally. The cohort performed well across modules, with many achieving satisfactory results. |

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| 1. The Quality of Assessments (design, methods and making schemes)
 |
| Assessments are well-structured. Increasing the level of assessment questions and introducing a formal marking rubric for thesis evaluations would be beneficial |

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| 1. Standards of Marking and grading students’ assessments
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| Assessment marking and grading criteria adhere to institutional policies. Internal marking and moderation processes are generally consistent and fair. The moderation process, including the use of the assessment key and external moderation, supports fairness and transparency. |