

FINAL HONOUR SCHOOL OF ANCIENT AND MODERN HISTORY EXAMINERS' REPORT 2019

Part I

A. Statistics

All candidates

Class	No						%					
	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
I	11	13	8	5	7	7	52.4	68.4	42.1	35.7	46.7	50
II.1	10	6	10	9	7	7	47.6	31.6	52.6	64.3	46.7	50
II.2	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	5.3	-	6.7	-
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

All candidates, divided by male and female

Class	Number										Percentage (%) of gender									
	2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I	8	3	6	7	7	1	3	2	7	0	61.5	37.5	66.7	70	50	20	43	28.6	54	0
II.1	5	5	3	3	7	3	4	5	6	1	38.5	62.5	33.3	30	50	60	57	71.4	46	50
II.2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	50
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

NEW EXAMINING METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- B. Candidates receive a circular from the History Faculty in April detailing examination procedures (this goes to all History and History joint schools candidates); additionally, supplementary notes for AMH FHS candidates are sent out by the Chair of AMH through the History Faculty at the beginning of Trinity Term. Step-marking was discontinued this year. The ancient history sub-faculty decided not to follow the History Faculty's lead in having the thesis supervisor as a marker, and all AMH theses were marked in the traditional way.

Part II

A. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE EXAMINATION

21 candidates (13 M, 8 F) took the examination. There were eleven firsts (8 M, 3 F) and ten upper seconds (5M, 5F).

The proportion of Firsts (52.4%) was slightly lower than last year's exceptional number, and was in line with the figure for the History school as a whole. The size

of the cohort for this FHS, however, makes it hard to attach statistical significance to the exact proportions.

The Chair would like to express his sincere thanks to Andrea Hopkins, Isabelle Moriceau, Andrew Dixon, Erica Clarke, and the other staff in History and Classics who helped everything run so smoothly, despite a number of difficulties created when ancient historians returned their scripts, comment-sheets and marks to the Classics office rather than to History.

The chair would also like to thank all his fellow examiners for their help, co-operation and advice, especially Bryan Ward-Perkins and Perry Gauci for wise counsel at the examiners' meeting; Polly Low, in her third year as external for this degree, was especially generous with constructive comment, and Carl Watkins offered valuable suggestions about the medical cases.

Mark Profiles. Mark profiles presented no cause for concern on the basis of (statistically insignificant) AMH data or fuller data from the main Schools.

Administration. The arrangements introduced last year relating to the timetable, external examiner, and administration of setting and marking for AMH again worked well this year. A double error in the Cicero gobbets paper, where the paper as printed did not include the details of text and date, and then the errata sheet prepared to remedy this did not reach candidates sitting the paper in the computer room in examination schools, was resolved during the marking process: markers were instructed to ensure that candidates who did not receive the errata were not punished for any consequences of working with the uncorrected questions. The scripts were scrutinized, and the outcome deemed equitable.

There was also an error in the rubric to the Hellenistic World paper (where the standard instruction that AMH candidates attempt three, not four questions was not included); there is no indication that this created difficulties, except for one candidate who sat the examination in college (see under FAPs, below).

Medical Certificates and Factors Affecting Performance. The Board considered ten cases; in all of these, performance in the most relevant papers was carefully re-examined, with scripts being re-read. In one case, involving sudden illness during a single paper, the mark for the paper was cancelled, and the classification of the degree therefore changed. Two of the applications concerned the Cicero gobbets paper, discussed above; another was from the candidate who had to wait for clarification for the rubric of the Hellenistic World paper, who received their highest mark for this paper.

The Board was attentive throughout its deliberations to the need to ensure equity of treatment for all candidates. Concern was expressed at the difficulty of making decisions on the basis of the evidence made available through the current procedure (one otherwise powerful statement was unaccompanied by any evidence, and the Board therefore felt unable to act upon it; no conceivable adjustment would have altered the classification), and also at the increase in the number of such applications (up from four last year): although none was frivolous, the majority dealt with the sort of routine difficulty that would probably not have been passed on to the board by colleges or GPs under the traditional procedure.

B. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES AND BREAKDOWN OF THE RESULTS BY GENDER

It was very disappointing to discover that last year's reversal of the traditional gender gap was not maintained, although the numbers and proportions of women achieving first-class marks remained greater than in the three previous years. The forthcoming publication of recommendations from the Classics faculty for remedies to this long-standing difficulty is eagerly awaited.

C. DETAILED NUMBERS ON CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE IN EACH PART OF THE EXAMINATION

D. COMMENTS ON PAPERS AND INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Comments on papers from modern history are to be found in the report for the main school.

Comments on ancient papers (including comments on Lit. Hum. and CAAH):

Greek History 2 (Essays)

Distribution of marks: Lit.Hum.: 10 Firsts, 18 2.1s, 2 2.2s; CAAH and AMH: 1 First, 3 2.1s, 1 2.2.

As with GH1, the new format allowed space for excellent answers, and the standard this year was extremely high. Several did the optional gobbet question, with outstanding answers on the Neapolis decree and Euripides, Suppl.

Q.19 (Was Spartan policy strictly reactive during this period?) was most popular, the best answers considering carefully the various constraints and ambitions in the Peloponnese as well as outside. Q. 6 (To what extent can the history of Greek city-states in this period be written without Persia?) produced many thoughtful and some excellent responses, the best also aware of what we might not (or not yet) know about Greek-Persian relations in Asia Minor. Q.13 (Should our concept of Greek citizenship include women?) attracted many candidates, and again, the strongest analysed what 'Greek citizenship' was generally taken to mean, rather than tackling female roles and adducing a weak form of 'belonging' from that. Q.14 invited discussion a famous quotation from Finley ('Considerations of status and civic ideology, rather than laws of supply and demand, governed economic decision-making'): answers tended to be significantly unfamiliar with the Finley view, but also not comfortable discussing the basics of supply and demand, or connecting with theories of the Mediterranean economy familiar for the archaic period and in Purcell/Hordern, Corrupting Sea; few thought of the crucial need for metals or grain, Athenian or otherwise.

Roman History 6 (Essays)

There were 55 candidates (including Lit Hum, COS, CE and AMH): 17 firsts; 34 2:1s; 4 2:2s.

All questions were attempted, except for 17a (*Laudatio Turiae*), indicating a pleasing breadth of engagement across the period. By some distance the most commonly answered questions were on Caesar, Claudius (Section A) and Religion (Section B). There was only a slight preference for Section A questions, marking a welcome change from a tendency in the past to avoid the Section-B style topics which required a broader reach and more thinking on the feet. Generally, this was a strong cohort, which exhibited an impressive breadth of material discussed, as well as a very good depth of analysis across the board.

Those candidates who attempted less popular questions on topics such as historiography (on Tacitus and Suetonius) and discussions of material evidence (coinage and epigraphy) did well through a willingness to engage with different material and think critically about what that can tell us about the early Principate. In the more commonly-chosen questions, there was a tendency at points to produce answers that gave a good summary of the evidence and of the general topic, but fell down on analytical precision. For instance, the 'religion' question showed a wide range of attempts, with weaker candidates lacking a sufficient breadth of material and analysis. That said, stronger candidates were able to excel on all types of questions, showing a willingness to think critically and originally. The very best answers and scripts were characterized by an impressive capacity to think across a wide range of evidence and ideas, drawing it together to construct relevant and interesting responses. Candidates should be reminded that whilst providing context and parallels from outside the period is helpful and often illuminating, the concentration of the treatment should be on the period in question.

Athenian Democracy

Distribution of marks: 3 Firsts, 15 2.1s; no 2.2s

Candidates who tackled the gobbets did best when they analysed the content of the passage in detail as well as the overall context. This was particularly clear for the De Neaira passage ([Dem.] 59.121-2).

There were some excellent answers to q.7 (Why did Athenians publish so many decrees and accounts on stone?), and q.9 (Was rhetoric the bane of the Athenian democratic system, or the glue that kept it together?). In this latter, weaker scripts talked generally of structures and political processes, the stronger ones then went on to use specific instances to back up and take the argument further. In general, scripts were very pleasingly able to talk about the fourth century as well as the fifth, and were clearly thinking about democratic theory together with social reality.

Alexander the Great and his Early Successors

There were 45 takers this year (10 AMH, 1 COS, 12 CAAH, 22 LitHum). The overall standard was broadly in line with recent years, with ten candidates receiving firsts, twenty-seven receiving 2:1s, and eight receiving 2:2s. At the top end the quality of scripts was outstanding, although very few candidates produced consistently outstanding work across all three essays. The most popular questions were q.3 (the Common Peace), q.9 (Macedonian royal women), q.10 (Ptolemy) and q.11 (legitimacy of successors). The question on Ptolemy elicited particularly good essays, showing real intellectual curiosity and creative use of a wide range of sources. The question on Macedonian royal women was generally well done; weaker

candidates tended to provide a bare narrative of events in which royal women featured, while the best answers delved seriously into the literary representation and misrepresentation of women's roles in Diodorus and elsewhere. The question that attracted the largest number of poor answers was q.2, on 'Roman colouring' in our extant Alexander-histories, which attracted several generic 'sources for Alexander' essays; few candidates knew enough about the Roman context to tackle the question successfully.

It was pleasing to see some high-level and sophisticated engagement with the material evidence, primarily (but not only) from CAAH candidates: several candidates wrote very good essays on ancient viewers of Macedonian royal coinage, and a difficult question on the significance of hunting in Macedonian court life elicited some outstanding answers, many of which made full use of the frieze on Tomb II at Vergina and the Alexander sarcophagus (the best answers also bringing in relevant literary sources). The handful of candidates who wrote on Cassander did so very well indeed. A particularly pleasing feature of this year's run was the large number of candidates who clearly had a really good grasp of the narrative history of the early Successor period (often somewhat hazy in recent years), although the years after 316 BC seem to remain something of a blur to most candidates, with only the Salamis campaign of 306 and its aftermath standing out from the fog.

Cicero: Politics and Thought

This year's candidates produced a strong run of scripts, which offered very many thought-provoking and spirited essays and commentaries. There were very few weak scripts, and all candidates produced at least some good quality material. The best performing cohort this year was AMH, closely followed by CAAH. Lit Hum did not lag too far behind this, but was generally characterized by the middling 2.i script. One wonders whether the relaxation of the "Only One Cicero Option" rule at Greats will reverse this trend.

The majority of candidates sitting the combined essay and commentary paper attempted the gobbet question. The quality of gobbet answers was generally high, although rarely exceptional: although there was plenty of evidence of diligent preparation (even relatively obscure details were commonly elucidated), it was comparatively rare to find candidates who were prepared to venture particularly novel or striking interpretations of what the significance of the passages might be. The AMH gobbet paper was generally well done and in many cases showed a seriously impressive knowledge of the texts.

All essay questions were attempted by a plurality of candidates, although very few were answered by a sufficient number to invite close comment. The most popular choices were questions 11 (on Cicero's religious life) - well done but with surprisingly little citation of Cotta's position in the *de natura deorum*; 8 (on foreign policy); 13 (on Cicero's independence) - which produced some wonderfully 'meta' answers; and 2 (on Cicero's equestrian background). Some candidates were able to demonstrate a firm grasp of the details of ethics and Hellenistic philosophy, and in general the amount of detail that candidates knew, and their acquaintance in some cases with recent scholarship was highly encouraging. Other than ignorance of the adjective equestrian,

and the almost Caligulan belief that being born an 'equus' did not rule one out of the running for the Consulship, there were few sources of irritation.

In the setting of the gobbets from the Cicero *Letters* the customary inclusion of full information on addressee, date etc, as well as the Shackleton-Bailey citation for the passage, was accidentally omitted. This omission was picked up before the examination, and an addendum sheet was prepared by the setter for distribution with the question paper. This worked in all cases except one, where two candidates sitting a version of the paper in the WP suite in Schools did not receive the addendum, despite repeated assurance by Schools invigilators that all candidates, wherever they were sitting the examination, had been supplied with it. In marking the paper, care was taken to ensure that those candidates were not penalised for any statement which could have been avoided had that specific information been available to them.

Politics, Society and Culture from Nero to Hadrian

30 candidates including Lit Hum, CML and AMH: 11 firsts; 19 2:1s.

The greater time-pressure of the 4-essay format (for Lit Hum and CML candidates taking topic papers) sat in stark contrast with the more leisurely format now afforded the period papers, but candidates nevertheless worked hard to maintain a high standard throughout this long paper, with pleasing results. Every question on the paper attracted answers, suggesting a broad and varied approach to the period and associated themes, but by far the most popular questions were predictably 1 (on Nero's responsibility for his own downfall) and 5 (on the conservative or innovative nature of the Flavian dynasty). The strongest scripts were characterized by both an impressive grip on the ancient evidence and a capacity to apply thoughtful (and often unusual, even original) interrogative frameworks to topics which may or may not have been familiar from tutorial work and lectures. Weaker scripts tended to amass material rather randomly and without a clear argumentative structure or obvious relevance to the question.

Religions

A total of 21 candidates took the paper, 15 from Lit. Hum, one COS, four CAAH and one AMH. . Seven candidates (five from Lit Hum, one COS and one from CAAH) received marks of 70 or above, and one (from LitHum) below 60. The overall standard was high, and the best answers were characterized by very good knowledge of the prescribed texts, and a lively and intelligent application of a wide range of materials to the answers. It was good to see that all questions were attempted by at least one candidate, with markedly less bunching than last year.

The most popular single answer, with 12 takers, was question nine, 'In what sense were Roman emperors divine?': although handled competently, this failed to yield many first-class answers, with too many candidates providing generalized comments on tropes of modesty (or monomania), and rehashing Claudius' pumpkinification or Vespasian's deathbed quip, and too few adducing more relevant evidence (particularly the epigraphic material that documents sacrificial practice) and assessing this. The next most popular, question 8 on the significance to religious function of structural design and decoration, yielded the highest overall average marks, perhaps because candidates were required to deal with concrete instances. Some excellent knowledge was on display here, extending considerable beyond the prescribed materials. The next most popular choices were questions five, on the career of Peregrinus or Apuleius' Lucius, and seven on Tertullian's claim about the martyrs seeding the church. The former

produced the lowest average of marks of any question, largely because many candidates failed to answer the question (on what these cases ‘teach us about the religious world of the second century’); the latter had a number of extremely good, incisive answers but also several less successful ones, which again were compromised by a failure to answer the question, about the evidence.

**E. COMMENTS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTIFIABLE INDIVIDUALS
AND OTHER MATERIAL WHICH WOULD USUALLY BE TREATED AS
RESERVED BUSINESS**

F. Members of the Board of Examiners

Dr Neil McLynn (Chair)

Dr Charles Crowther

Dr Aneurin Ellis-Evans

Dr Perry Gauci

Dr Helen Gittos

Dr Bryan Ward-Perkins

Dr Carl Watkins (External Examiner in History)

Dr Polly Low (External Examiner in Ancient History)