



Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages  
Preliminary Examination for  
Modern Languages and Associated Joint Schools 2021

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS

TRINITY TERM 2021

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## MODERN LANGUAGES PRELIMS STATISTICS

***N.B. To note for Beginners' Languages, Russian and German sit a separate FPE, but all other Beginners' Languages sit the same FPE as post-A-level entrants.***

### 1. LANGUAGE COMBINATIONS

#### Combinations offered in the Main School

Prelim Language	2020/21		2019/20		2018/19		2017/18		2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..	Main Sc..	Joint Sc..
Czech (with Slovak)		2				1								
French	20	45	25	45	26	47	27	34	31	31	25	35	24	24
German	17	20	12	11	17	12	17	18	11	16	13	16	15	17
Italian		3		5		5		1 4		3 4		5		1
Modern Greek						1				1		1		1
Portuguese		1		1		1					1			1
Russian	6	3	3	5	2	3	3	4		4		3	1	5
Spanish	6	16	5	12	8	15	4	16	4	13	5	11	4	12
French and German	13		22		16		11		31		21		21	
French and German ab initio	11		3		5		4		7		2			
French and Greek			1											1
French and Italian	5		2		2		4		8		25		21	
French and Italian ab initio	14		13		11		11		8				1	
French and Lings	13		14		11		10		11		10		8	
French and Portuguese					1				1		5		2	
French and Portuguese ab initio	4		3		3		4		5					
French and Russian	2		3		4		3		1		4		3	
French and Russian ab initio	4		5		8		11		3		10		9	
French and Spanish	29		21		24		23		23		22		34	
French w/ Polish	1													
German and Celtic Languages											1			
German and Czech w/ Slovak	1										1		1	
German and Czech w/ Slovak ab ini..			1		1		1							
German and Greek							1				1			
German and Italian					1		3				5		5	
German and Italian ab initio	8		3		4		7		5					
German and Lings	5		6		5		2		6		2		7	
German and Portuguese	1		1				1						3	
German and Russian	1		4		3		1						4	
German and Russian ab initio	3		6		4		2		6		3		2	
German and Spanish	1		2		1		3		1		4		1	
Greek and Lings	1		2						1					
Italian ab initio and Lings	1		2		5		2							

## 2. MODERN LANGUAGES PRELIMS STATISTICS

### PRELIMS OUTCOMES

Year	Language	Total Cands	Main School					Joint Schools				
			Distinctions	% Dist.	Fails	% Fail	Candidates	Distinctions	% Dist.	Fails	% Fail	Candidates
2020/21	Czech	5	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2
	French	161	33	28.4%	0	0.0%	116	18	40.0%	0	0.0%	45
	German	82	15	24.2%	0	0.0%	62	6	30.0%	0	0.0%	20
	Italian	38	12	34.3%	0	0.0%	35	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3
	Latin and Ancient Greek	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	Linguistics	29	5	17.2%	0	0.0%	29					
	Modern Greek	2	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2					
	Portuguese	16	5	33.3%	0	0.0%	15	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Russian	26	9	39.1%	0	0.0%	23	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	3
	Spanish	82	12	18.2%	0	0.0%	66	1	6.3%	0	0.0%	16
	<b>Total</b>			93		0	*	28		0		*
2019/20	Czech	2	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2					
	French	157	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	112	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	45
	German	72	0	0.0%	1	1.6%	61	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11
	Italian	37	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5
	Latin and Ancient Greek	3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3					
	Linguistics	32	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	32					
	Modern Greek	4	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	Portuguese	15	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Russian	29	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	24	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5
	Spanish	66	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	54	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12
	<b>Total</b>			0		1	*	0		0		*
2018/19	Czech	5	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1
	French	157	29	26.4%	1	0.9%	110	11	23.4%	0	0.0%	47
	German	70	13	22.4%	1	1.7%	58	4	33.3%	0	0.0%	12
	Italian	38	6	18.2%	0	0.0%	33	2	40.0%	0	0.0%	5
	Latin and Ancient Greek	4	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	Linguistics	28	8	28.6%	0	0.0%	28					
	Modern Greek	1						0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Portuguese	12	5	45.5%	0	0.0%	11	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Russian	29	5	19.2%	1	3.8%	26	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	3
	Spanish	71	12	21.4%	0	0.0%	56	1	6.7%	0	0.0%	15
	<b>Total</b>			79		2	*	21		0		*
2017/18	Czech	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	French	142	26	24.1%	0	0.0%	108	9	26.5%	0	0.0%	34
	German	74	19	33.9%	0	0.0%	56	5	27.8%	0	0.0%	18
	Italian	42	10	26.3%	0	0.0%	38	3	75.0%	0	0.0%	4
	Latin and Ancient Greek	7	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7					
	Linguistics	31	11	35.5%	1	3.2%	31					
	Modern Greek	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1					
	Portuguese	12	4	33.3%	0	0.0%	12					
	Russian	28	8	33.3%	0	0.0%	24	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4
	Spanish	69	11	20.8%	1	1.9%	53	2	12.5%	0	0.0%	16
	<b>Total</b>			91		1	*	19		0		*
2016/17	Czech	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	French	160	27	20.9%	0	0.0%	129	6	19.4%	0	0.0%	31
	German	83	17	25.4%	0	0.0%	67	6	37.5%	0	0.0%	16
	Italian	33	5	17.2%	0	0.0%	29	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4
	Latin and Ancient Greek	5	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5					
	Linguistics	35	13	37.1%	0	0.0%	35					
	Modern Greek	2	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Portuguese	16	4	25.0%	0	0.0%	16					
	Russian	22	5	27.8%	0	0.0%	18	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4
	Spanish	66	6	11.3%	0	0.0%	53	4	30.8%	0	0.0%	13
	<b>Total</b>			78		0	*	18		0		*

2015/16	Celtic	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1							
	Czech	3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3							
	French	158	22	17.9%	0	0.0%	123	9	25.7%	0	0.0%	35		
	German	68	16	30.8%	0	0.0%	52	4	25.0%	0	0.0%	16		
	Italian	44	4	10.3%	0	0.0%	39	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	5		
	Latin and Ancient Greek	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4							
	Linguistics	27	7	25.9%	0	0.0%	27							
	Modern Greek	2	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1		
	Portuguese	20	8	42.1%	0	0.0%	19	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1		
	Russian	31	11	39.3%	0	0.0%	28	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	3		
	Spanish	68	4	7.0%	0	0.0%	57	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11		
Total		74		0		*	16		1		*			
2014/15	Celtic	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1							
	Czech	3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3							
	French	148	23	18.5%	0	0.0%	124	2	8.3%	0	0.0%	24		
	German	76	14	23.7%	0	0.0%	59	6	35.3%	0	0.0%	17		
	Italian	34	3	9.1%	0	0.0%	33	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1		
	Latin and Ancient Greek	5	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	5							
	Linguistics	29	10	34.5%	0	0.0%	29							
	Modern Greek	3	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1		
	Portuguese	17	6	37.5%	0	0.0%	16	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1		
	Russian	31	7	26.9%	0	0.0%	26	3	60.0%	0	0.0%	5		
	Spanish	75	9	14.3%	0	0.0%	63	2	16.7%	0	0.0%	12		
	Total		75		0		*	15		0		*		

### 3. DISTINCTION statistics for the joint schools candidates

Prelim Title	Language <sup>2</sup>	2020/21		2019/20		2018/19		2017/18		2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
		Distinction	Total Can..	Total Can..	Distinction	Total Can..	Distinction	Total Can..	Distinction	Total Can..	Distinction	Total Can..	Distinction	Total Can..	
Preliminary Examination in English and Modern Languages	French	9	23	13	1	14	3	12	2	11	2	12	1	5	
	German	1	3	4	2	6	2	3	1	2	1	2	5	7	
	Italian			4	2	3	1	1			1	4			
	Modern Greek											1	1	1	
	Portuguese					1							1	1	
	Russian			1				1		1		1		1	
	Spanish	1	3	2	1	8		2	1	1		3		3	
	Total	11	29	24	6	32	6	19	4	15	4	23	8	18	
Preliminary Examination in European and Middle Eastern Languages	Arabic	8	13	14	5	12	4	12	7	11	4	10	2	3	
	French	3	6	10	3	9		3		5	1	5		1	
	German		4	1		1		1	2	3	1	5			
	Persian										1	1			
	Portuguese										1	1			
	Russian		1	3		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Spanish		3	2		2	1	8	1	3		3		1	
	Turkish			1					1	1	1	1			
Total	9	14	16	5	13	4	13	9	12	6	15	2	3		
Preliminary Examination in History and Modern Languages	Czech		2		1	1									
	French	5	9	12	3	12	3	11	2	10	2	9	1	10	
	German	4	7	1	2	4	2	8	2	8	1	5	1	7	
	Italian					1	2	2		1		1			
	Russian	1	1	1				1				1	2	3	
	Spanish		6	4		2		4	2	5		2	1	5	
Total	10	25	18	6	20	7	26	6	24	3	18	5	25		
Preliminary Examination in Philosophy and Modern Languages	French	1	7	10	4	12	3	8	2	5	4	9		8	
	German	1	6	5		1	1	6	1	3	1	4		3	
	Italian		3	1		1		1	1	3				1	
	Modern Greek					1				1					
	Russian	1	1		2	2		1		2					
	Spanish		4	4		3	1	2		4		3	1	3	
Total	3	21	20	6	20	5	18	4	18	5	16	1	15		

## 4. CANDIDATES BY GENDER

Year	Language	Main School		Distinction			Total Distinctions	Total Candidates
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Total Distinctions		
2020/21	Czech							5
	French	22	7	29	8	10	18	161
	German	10	3	13	4	2	6	82
	Italian	6	6	12				38
	Latin and Ancient Greek	1		1				4
	Linguistics	3	2	5				29
	Modern Greek		1	1				2
	Portuguese	4	1	5				15
	Russian	3	5	8	1	1	2	26
	Spanish	9	2	11	1		1	82
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>290</b>
2019/20	Czech							2
	French							157
	German							72
	Italian							37
	Latin and Ancient Greek							3
	Linguistics							32
	Modern Greek							4
	Portuguese							14
	Russian							29
	Spanish							66
<b>Total</b>								<b>270</b>
2018/19	Czech		1	1		1	1	5
	French	19	7	26	4	7	11	157
	German	8	5	13	4		4	70
	Italian	3	3	6	2		2	38
	Latin and Ancient Greek							4
	Linguistics	5	3	8				28
	Modern Greek							1
	Portuguese	2	3	5				12
	Russian	2	3	5	1	1	2	29
	Spanish	10	2	12	1		1	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>274</b>	
2017/18	Czech		1	1				4
	French	14	10	24	6	3	9	142
	German	9	6	15	4	1	5	74
	Italian	7	3	10	3		3	42
	Latin and Ancient Greek							7
	Linguistics	8	3	11				31
	Modern Greek		1	1				1
	Portuguese	3	1	4				12
	Russian	4	4	8				28
	Spanish	6	5	11	2		2	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>263</b>	
2016/17	Czech	1		1				4
	French	16	10	26	2	4	6	160
	German	15	2	17	3	3	6	83
	Italian	3	2	5	1		1	33
	Latin and Ancient Greek							5
	Linguistics	9	4	13				35
	Modern Greek							2
	Portuguese	3	1	4				16
	Russian	2	3	5		1	1	22
	Spanish	3	3	6	2	2	4	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>267</b>	
2015/16	Celtic							1
	Czech							3
	French	13	8	21	5	4	9	158
	German	7	5	12	1	3	4	68
	Italian	1	3	4	1		1	44
	Latin and Ancient Greek		1	1				4
	Linguistics	5	2	7				27
	Modern Greek	1		1				2
	Portuguese	2	6	8		1	1	20
	Russian	5	6	11		1	1	31
Spanish	2	2	4				68	
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>266</b>	

2014/15	Celtic		1	1			1
	Czech						3
	French	14	8	22	2	2	148
	German	7	6	13	2	4	76
	Italian	3		3			34
	Latin and Ancient Greek	1		1			5
	Linguistics	5	5	10			29
	Modern Greek		1	1	1	1	3
	Portuguese	2	4	6	1	1	17
	Russian	3	4	7	2	1	31
	Spanish	4	5	9	1	1	75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>259</b>

## CHAIR'S REPORT AND STATISTICS

This was an extraordinary year in the long life of Prelims. Cancelled in 2020 in the wake of Covid-19, the examinations were reinstated this year in the context of enormous change and uncertainty, with no part of the process left unaffected. The range and scale of these changes have had significant implications for students, tutors, examiners, and administrators, and my thanks go to everyone involved in making the exams happen, in spite of the many challenges we have faced in teaching, learning, and assessment this year.

There was particular pressure on the exams office this year, not only because more or less everything was new – with implications for every aspect of the process from communications to marksheets to handling scripts – but because there was a constant flow of information and updates from the central university (especially with regard to Inspira) that had to be absorbed, incorporated, and relayed to examiners and students throughout the year. My particular thanks go to Catherine Pilonel for all her work and patience, as well as to Sandra Beaumont in the UG office; to Geraldine Hazbun as DUS for her incredible efforts in adapting all the relevant policies and paperwork and ensuring students were kept up to date; to Almut Suerbaum as FB Chair, who has not only been very supportive but also actively involved in decision-making throughout; and to Jane Hiddleston as Vice-Chair for her clarity during the trickier moments in particular.

The report below highlights the key innovations of this examining cycle, with specific recommendations in bold.

- **Certification.** Some ML papers were certified this year, which meant that only the following were examined: Paper I in all languages, plus either Paper III or Paper IV. Beginners in Russian and German took BI only, and sole students took only one of their three further topics papers, with all the rest certified. The process was outlined by USC at its October 2020 meeting, with further detail communicated to tutors by the Chair of the exam board during the Easter vacation. The aim was to make this as easy as possible, and most submissions came in on time and without too much difficulty.

To achieve certification, students had to complete at least four pieces of written work per paper to a pass standard, with one piece submitted to the examiners for moderation. College tutors were responsible for submitting their own students' work. In sole papers (further topics), students had to complete at least one piece of written work to a pass standard, as well as offering a seminar presentation or equivalent. In this case, the course convenor was responsible for submission.

Examiners were invited to moderate at least 20% of the cohort in each language, though in practice most examiners moderated a much higher proportion of the submissions. There was one fail (in Spanish IV), with the candidate in question allowed to re-submit in September.

It was noted that certification had worked well and was still able to flush out candidates not working to an appropriate standard. On the downside, it does not prepare candidates for the full run of papers at FHS, and college tutors should bear in mind with this particular cohort that they have neither taken A-levels nor sat a full run of papers at Prelims.

There was some discussion at the final exam board about the process, in particular the degree of consistency and comparability moderators might reasonably expect among submissions. On the one hand, there was a view that some degree of standardisation would be fairer to candidates and make the moderation process more meaningful; on the other, a view that too much standardisation turns it into an examination by proxy rather than a form of continuous assessment (as it was conceived this year). My own view, as Chair, is that if it remains a pass/fail assessment the process should remain light-touch; the only exception to this might



be Paper I, which could be certified in future given the difficulties posed by the open-book format. The various possibilities for this paper, assuming there is not a return to conventional exams, are discussed in more detail below.

- **Inspira.** All examined papers were taken remotely on the new Inspira platform. One of the key decisions of the year involved the mode of submission, with a choice between 'typed' (using the text boxes), 'mixed' (a combination of typed and handwritten), and 'handwritten.' This nomenclature was unhelpful, given that none of these categories accurately described the 'type and upload' function that became necessary once it became clear that the text boxes could not reliably accommodate all characters in all languages (including IPA symbols in Linguistics). This led to some confusion among students and required very careful (and repeated) communication. In the event most candidates followed the instructions they had been given, though some wrote in the text boxes nonetheless.

**Uploading of scripts:** Quite a large number of candidates had technical issues uploading, not only causing them considerable anxiety but also leading to a run of MCEs. However the vast majority of scripts were uploaded successfully.

**Names on scripts:** A very high number of candidates typed their names on scripts, in spite of reminders only to identify themselves by their candidate number. In the absence of any checking by exam schools, the responsibility for identifying these scripts, removing the names, and ensuring they were re-uploaded to the system fell to the faculty exams administrator, becoming the most time-consuming and burdensome task of the examining period. **It is therefore strongly recommended** that additional administrative support is put in place by exam schools **before** scripts are released, to ensure this does not happen in future.

There was one case of metadata (candidate name) appearing in the filename, which was reported to the proctors. In any case where a name was visible, the script was 'cleaned' and an alternative assessor found in order to preserve the candidate's anonymity. However, it is very problematic that even after the script is reuploaded as an attachment, the original, compromised version of the script remains in the system: not only can this lead to further breaches of anonymity, but it means that examiners are prevented from downloading and printing runs of scripts in order to avoid accessing compromised or incorrect versions.

**Marking** on Inspira went smoothly, with most assessors agreeing that marking typed scripts is infinitely preferable to marking handwritten ones.

**Reviewing of scripts:** After the publication of results, it became clear that it had been possible this year for candidates to save copies of their scripts and so revisit them in light of their marks. The FHS Chair had already made clear to college tutors that they were not in any circumstances to review scripts with their students, as this would undermine the integrity of the exams process, and it was generally understood that this also applied to Prelims. Nonetheless, the senior tutor of one college asked for a candidate's script to be reviewed in spite of the tutor's reluctance to do so, and the Chair had to intervene. It is hoped that by moving to 'typed mode' next year – ie using the text boxes rather than uploading pdf documents – candidates will not automatically save a copy of their own work, though Linguistics papers are likely to maintain a handwritten element produced outside the text boxes. **It is recommended therefore that candidates are given explicit instructions to destroy or delete any such material once it has been uploaded to Inspira, and that tutors are instructed not to access or comment on scripts at the request of either students or senior tutors.**

- **Open-book examination.** Broadly speaking the open-book format worked well this year. The reports from Turnitin were clean – except where it had interpreted a re-uploaded paper as a plagiarised one – so there was no evidence of widespread plagiarism. It did seem likely, however, that candidates were copying and pasting their own notes into their scripts, and there was certainly some over-use of lecture notes in literature papers. Many candidates used quoted material sensibly and judiciously, but some used quotes from both primary and secondary texts as fillers, or in ways that did not support their argument. Assuming we continue in the same way next year (and perhaps beyond), some further training of candidates in the open-book format would be a good idea. The advisory upper word limit of 1500 words for essays was too high, with most candidates writing considerably less than this, and **it is recommended that the word limit is either abandoned or revised down next year.**

**Cut and paste:** There was some discussion of this at both the pre-final and final board meetings. In certain beginners' languages there was a view that the cutting and pasting of quotes was acceptable, but **the recommendation is that candidates should not be allowed to cut and paste text**, quoted or otherwise, into their scripts, and it is hoped the text boxes will prevent this from happening next year.

**Paper I:** The only paper to have been examined rather than certified in all languages, this is the one that needs most consideration in the open-book context. While it had been anticipated that certain types of exercise would not work with open books, and some papers had already been adapted in consequence, in the event examiners found that even sentences for translation were difficult to mark in this format, producing unusually high marks in some languages (see below under Covid-19 mitigations for a report on scaling). French reported that the summary exercise had worked well and produced a very normal run of marks. In Spanish the prose passage had been selected to test ingenuity and range (e.g. with register, dialogue, and culturally specific elements) rather than just vocabulary and grammar, though this didn't wholly remove anxieties around the possible misuse of online resources.

Assuming there is no return to conventional exams next year, **the board recommends that the assessment of Paper I is considered very carefully.** There are three possible routes to take (as discussed at the final meeting):

- 1) **The paper itself can be altered**, or further altered, to exclude exercises that rely on a mechanical application of grammar knowledge (e.g. gap-fill exercises), or which can be entered wholesale into online databases or translation software (e.g. sentences for translation), or which are primarily designed to test vocabulary (e.g. simple reading comprehensions). This would involve a major overhaul of many papers, however, and may leave examiners feeling that they are not able to test precisely the skills and areas of knowledge they wish to test.
- 2) **Candidates can be invigilated** to ensure they do not access online resources during the exam. If the aim is to do this remotely there will need to be some early assurance from the Inpera team that the limiting and policing of access is possible; if it is, this would be the closest virtual alternative to a 'normal' exam. However, it would not necessarily facilitate the re-introduction of aural/oral elements into the paper, and some languages (specifically Portuguese, Russian and Italian) may prefer a mode of assessment that allows them to test these skills as they have in the past.
- 3) **The paper can be certified.** Paper I may lend itself to a different form of certification to other papers because it tests a very specific range of knowledge

and skills, and may be considered a particularly important threshold to FHS. For this reason USC may wish to consider some standardising of the assessment process, e.g. certifying it by means of college collections rather than on the basis of classwork. In this case, setting the same paper across the whole cohort at the same point in the year – ideally in Trinity term – would ensure that no student was disadvantaged, and would allow for greater comparability in the process of moderation. It would also make it easier for centrally-taught languages to manage the process, and for college tutors to assess their own students' progress.

**Descriptors for Paper I:** Depending on how Paper I is assessed next year, the descriptors will need careful checking to ensure they reflect any changes to papers or to the assessment process itself. Things to consider include:

- If the paper is to be certified, will it be pass/ fail only? (e.g. in the case that Paper I is certified by college collections)
- If it is open book, are the descriptors appropriate and sufficiently rigorous at the top end? (e.g. with respect to knowledge of vocabulary)
- If exercises are changed or new types of exercise introduced, do the descriptors allow for that? (e.g. this year the listening comprehension descriptors were adapted for reading comprehension, but these should ideally be worded more specifically if that exercise is to remain on some papers)
- Are all numerically-marked exercises across all languages given a mark out of 100 and then scaled to 85 (the maximum mark in language papers)? Previously the descriptors recorded this process only in the context of the listening comprehension, and this year they were adapted to say that 'normally' scaling would be applied to all exercises marked numerically, but in the event all exercises marked in this way were scaled. This qualifier could therefore be removed in future (though see below on marking practices).

**Paper I marking practices:** One thing that became evident in the process of revising the descriptors for this paper this year was that marking practices are not always clearly stated in the conventions, making it difficult for students and markers not already familiar with the paper to understand how marks are allocated. For the sake of both fairness and consistency, **it is recommended that sub-faculty conventions properly record marking practices for Paper I in each language**, including a) how different sections of the paper are weighted; b) which sections of the paper are marked numerically and how marks are allocated in those sections; c) which sections are marked according to the bandings in the descriptors; and d) whether scaling is applied to the paper as a whole or to individual sections.

More broadly, USC may wish to review the capping of marks at 85 for language papers, as well as explicitly encouraging examiners to use the upper range of marks in both language and literature papers. However for as long as the marks safeguard is in place (see below under Covid-19 mitigations) it would not be sensible to innovate with marking practices.

- **Covid-19 mitigations:** In line with university guidance, this year a marks safeguard was applied to all cohorts of 30 or more to ensure that the median for each paper was in line with the median for the years 2017-19, to prevent either grade inflation or deflation (bearing in mind that Prelims were cancelled in 2020, and that it was an anomalous year at FHS). The marks safeguard was applied to the following Prelim papers this year (with the number of marks deducted in brackets): French I (-2), Italian I (-6), Linguistics IX (-3). Some scaling was also applied to cohorts of fewer

than 30 as follows: Russian I and BI (-5) under the normal provisions set out in the conventions (i.e. to prevent an anomalous run of marks); and Portuguese I (section A) according to the descriptors (i.e. marked initially out of 100 but capped at 85). The fact that, with the exception of Linguistics IX, scaling only had to be applied to Paper I in any language throws some light on the difficulties with this paper in open-book format, as highlighted above.

With respect to marking, no other cohort-wide mitigations were necessary. An issue was raised by a candidate in relation to Russian I section B question 5, where two lists of prepositions had been supplied in place of one. The examiners took careful stock of the impact this might have had on candidates' choices, and concluded that it was possible to answer all questions correctly using either of the two lists, or a combination of both. As a result, no further action was taken and the results in this paper were in general very strong.

**Mitigating Circumstances Notices to Examiners:** The board received these from 66 candidates, each of whom submitted between one and four MCEs. Many of these were technical, usually indicating difficulties with uploading scripts, and in consequence all penalties for late submission were waived.

All notices were given very careful consideration by a panel comprised by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Exams Administrator, and by a representative of the joint school where applicable. The panel noted that the system for considering and assigning grades to these applications has become unmanageable, partly because they are so numerous, but also partly – and more significantly – because the range of circumstances covered is so great and the impact on individual performance so difficult to assess. It was also noted that candidates who submitted MCEs often went on to perform very well, even in the papers they claimed to be most affected, and that in general anomalies were rare among these candidates. One candidate's mark was raised from 39 to 40 in Spanish I in light of the circumstances outlined in the MCE, just pushing them over the pass boundary, but in other cases it was not clear how the often very harrowing and difficult circumstances identified in the applications could translate into an adjustment of marks. It was also extremely unhelpful that MCEs continued to be processed by the Proctors' office and passed on to exam boards until the day before the final meeting, by which time marks had been checked, scaled (in some cases), and entered into draft classifications.

For all these reasons **the board recommends a) that there is a clear cut-off point for receipt of MCEs, expect in exceptional circumstances; (b) that there is a separation between immediate and material impact on particular exams and more long-term issues relating, for example, to (mental) health; and (c) that colleges, the Proctors and UAS resume their role in sifting these**, with specific recommendations to boards in the case of complex, long-term issues that extend well beyond the immediate examining period.

- **Absence from exams:** Several candidates (7) were absent from papers with permission from the proctors; in all cases **the board's recommendation was that they should take the missing papers as at a first sitting in September**, with marks reported as incomplete in the interim and the opportunity to re-sit if necessary. One candidate failed to submit a paper, without proctors' permission, subsequently submitting an MCE: according to university rules this candidate will take the paper as a re-sit in September. One candidate was given dispensation from further topics in French after the college failed to ensure they received the necessary teaching.
- **In-house marking programme/ classification system:** The board expressed its very sincere thanks to David Allen for his fantastic work on this at fairly short notice, not to mention his patience and flexibility in dealing with a complex set of requests. It was the first time the programme had been used for Prelims, and in its next run we

hope to be able to use the marksheets built into the programme and generate classifications automatically, so that marks do not have to be manually transferred from WebLearn or classifications generated individually for each candidate..

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## **JOINT SCHOOLS**

The exams in all Joint Schools ran smoothly, thanks again to the efficient communication and collaboration of the academic and administrative staff. CML and MLL candidates were considered in the main schools meetings, the other Joint Schools in separate final meetings chaired either by the Chair or the Vice-Chair in Modern Languages. The results were confirmed and the members of all the boards expressed their satisfaction that the Exams took place in the Examination schools and passed without any incidents or problems. The Gibbs prizes for Joint schools were finalised.

In **EML** there were 33 candidates, and 7 overall distinctions were awarded.

In **EMEL** there were 15 candidates, and 2 overall distinctions were awarded.

In **HML** there were 26 candidates, and 5 overall distinctions were awarded.

In **PML** there were 22 candidates, and 2 overall distinctions were awarded.

## **RE-SITS / LONG VACATION**

Resits were timetabled for the first week in September, the Final meetings being held on Tuesday 7 September. There were 7 candidates in Modern Languages, 3 candidates in English & Modern Languages, and 1 candidate in History and Modern Languages. The meetings were attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Senior Examiner or nominated Examiner in the languages where there were re-sits.

All candidates' performances were duly reviewed, and one MCE was received.

At the Final meeting of the board the members expressed their gratitude to Examination Schools for meeting their request for arranging the resits during the first two weeks of September. [To note, one CELA candidate's submission paper in English was not examined until late September, after the final exam board had met and had to be re-classified separately; it is hoped in future that all resits can be timetabled in good time]

Professor Laura Lonsdale

Chair of Prelims 2021

## PRELIMS PRIZES 2021

Prizes were awarded to the following candidates:

PRIZE	NAME
<b>ANDREW COLIN PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Russian</i>	<b>SHARED</b> <u>Post A'Level:</u> Anya DAVIES (New) / French & Russian AND Jacob JONES (CHCH / Russian & Philosophy)  <b>SHARED</b> <u>Russian <i>ab initio</i>:</u> James MACROBERTS (University) / French & Russian B AND Lauren PREECE (LMH) / Spanish & Russian B
<b>CLAUDE MASSART PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in French literature</i>	Ella HOLLIDAY (The Queen's College) French & Spanish
<b>CYRIL JONES MEMORIAL PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Spanish</i>	Etta SELIM (The Queen's College) English & Spanish
<b>DAVID CRAM PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Prelims Linguistics by a ML student</i>	Nikita JAIN (Oriel) French & Linguistics
<b>DAVID GIBBS PRIZES</b> <i>Best performance in Modern Languages</i>	Faun WILLIAMS (St Catherine's) Modern Greek & Linguistics  Ella Holliday (The Queen's College) French & Spanish
<b>DAVID GIBBS PRIZES</b> <i>Best performance in Joint Schools with Modern Languages</i>	<b>SHARED</b> Joshua KIRKHOPE-ARKLEY (Pembroke)

	<p><b>Arabic &amp; French</b></p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>Leo TIDMARSH (St Hugh's)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; Arabic</b></p>
<p><b>DAVID GIBBS PRIZES (New for 2021)</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in a Beginners' Language (available to candidates in Beginners' Czech, Italian, Modern Greek, Portuguese, OR Russian)</i></p>	<p><b>Caolan MCCAFFERTY (Keble)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; Italian</b></p>
<p><b>MARJORIE COUNTESS OF WARWICK PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in French by a female candidate</i></p>	<p><b>SHARED</b></p> <p><b>Jennifer EVANS (St Hilda's)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; Linguistics</b></p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>Scarlett COLQUITT (LMH)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; Spanish</b></p>
<p><b>MRS CLAUDE BEDDINGTON MODERN LANGUAGES PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in German</i></p>	<p><b>Rachel ZERDIN (Brasenose)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; German</b></p>
<p><b>T.F. EARLE PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in Portuguese Prelims content papers</i></p>	<p><b>Daniel FREMANTLE (Trinity)</b></p> <p><b>Spanish &amp; Portuguese B</b></p>
<p><b>STEPHEN PARKINSON PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in Portuguese Prelims language papers</i></p>	<p><b>Daniel FREMANTLE (Trinity)</b></p> <p><b>Spanish &amp; Portuguese B</b></p>
<p><b>LIDL PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in German papers on the post-A-level course (any combination except sole)</i></p>	<p><b>Rachel ZERDIN (Brasenose)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; German</b></p>

<p><b>LIDL PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance in German sole</i></p>	<p><b>SHARED</b></p> <p><b>Anna COOPER (Jesus)</b></p> <p><b>German sole</b></p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>Lara BULLOCH (Wadham)</b></p> <p><b>German sole</b></p>
<p><b>LIDL PRIZE</b></p> <p><i>Best performance on the German beginners' course</i></p>	<p><b>Thisuri DON (St Anne's)</b></p> <p><b>French &amp; German B</b></p>

**Note:** [Note: A Gibbs Prize is NOT available in the language in which the Beddington Prize is being offered. In 2020-21, the Mrs Claude Beddington Prize will be offered in German as *this was not offered in German in 2020 due to the Prelims Examinations being cancelled*]



## CZECH (WITH SLOVAK)

In 2020-21, Papers II (Translation from Czech) and III (Poetry and Drama) were certificated based on work completed during the year. Given the open-book format and different examining environment, there was no significant difference from other years in how students performed in Papers I and IV, with some excellent and some poorer performances, especially in the language paper. The papers therefore performed their crucial function of revealing to students their individual strengths and weaknesses.

### Czech I: Prose Composition and Grammar Sentences

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
1 20%	4 80%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
73 – 69	65 – 65	51 – 51	45 - 45

### Czech IIA & IIB: Unseen Translation from Czech / Examined by Certification

### Czech III: Prescribed Texts I / Examined by Certification

### Czech IV: Prescribed Texts II

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
2 40%	3 (60%)	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
72 – 71	64 – 64	61 – 61	58 - 58

## FRENCH

### French I: Grammar Translation into French, and Summary

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
46 28.75%	114 71.25%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
82 – 71	71 – 66	66 – 60	60 - 42

As in 2019 — the last time Prelims were sat — there were two exercises for this paper: 20 sentences for translation into French, and a summary in French of a passage of French. This turned out to be an unusually high-scoring paper, with some exceptional performances and many very, very good ones. The examiners noted a clear difference in responses to Q1 (the sentences), where online resources are more obviously useful, and Q2 (the summary), which required a more personal and creative approach. With the ever-increasing accuracy of online machine translation, some thought should be given to this exercise if exams remain online and open book in the future: while its usefulness while teaching language is not in doubt, its role in assessment should be. As a result of the high marks overall (inflated by very high marks for Q1), the median was above the 3-year average. The examiners scaled the results by taking 2 points off of each exam mark, and that produced the median of 66.

Candidates found the summary exercise more challenging than the translation exercise. The reading passage was a reflection on why authors write: the questions they pursue, and the answers critics and readers seek in their work. One of the most common shortcomings was a lack of flow or thread through the summary. Many scripts presented disjointed sentences without developing ideas or connecting each new idea to the previous one. This is partly the art of summary, of course, though also partly a question of rhetoric; candidates should brush up on conjunctions and linking phrases that show how one sentence picks up on, extends, or contrasts with the one before. While some summaries were truly excellent in all respects, a good handful were written in elegant prose but did not pay sufficient attention to instructions, in which candidates were told to 'Adopt the voice of the writer of the passage'. As always, the importance of following instructions cannot be overstated. A number of candidates summarized the passage in general terms but missed the nuance of the author's argument. At the lower end of responses were scripts that combined a lack of understanding of the core argument with an inability to write well in French. As has been the case with this exercise in the past, candidates invite trouble when they try to write sentences more complex than what they can truly handle: as syntax falls apart, it pulls everything else down with it.

A number of specific grammar points produced recurrent errors:

Word order after *dont* (Q1.7). Clauses introduced by *dont* follow the normal order of subject-verb-object. The item immediately following *dont* is thus the subject of the clause. It may be helpful in this respect to imagine *dont* as meaning 'of which / of whom' rather than 'whose'.

Passives. In both Q1 and Q2, many candidates struggled with translating English passives that cannot be rendered with the passive voice in French because the relevant verb takes an indirect object (*permettre* in Q1.1, *demander* in sentence Q1.7 and also very frequently in Q2). (Note that in English, the indirect object of a verb *can* become the subject of a passive, as in 'I was given the book'). This is a separate consideration from the stylistic question of whether to retain or transpose the passive in translating from English to French.

Past historic / imperfect subjunctive. A number of candidates chose to use these tenses / moods in Q1. The examiners would not dream of discouraging this, though the tone and content of some of the sentences can make them rather odd choices. In any case, it is important that candidates understand that the choice of tense in one clause commits them to certain other tenses in the rest of the sentence; one cannot, for instance, begin Q1.10 with 'Bien que j'eusse' and later say 'elle m'a forcé'; or in Q1.14, the past historic in the second half of the sentence would tend to require the past anterior ('Après que nous eûmes cueilli') in the opening clause. Put differently, the past historic is a lifestyle, not just a ruse to avoid having to agree past participles.

'Ils / leurs.' In Q2, there was a notable increase in pronoun confusion in sentences / clauses with an indefinite subject this year. That many undergraduates have decisively adopted singular 'they' as their go-to indefinite pronoun is all to the good, but they should be aware that calquing this usage into French will produce nonsense, often while failing to avoid gendering the subject (e.g. \*'le lecteur y trouve qqch qui répond à leurs besoins'\*). French has its own ways of avoiding gendered language and is developing new ones, and students will certainly want to learn about these.

And last but not least: *poser une question*—not *demander!*

## **French II: IIA: Unseen Translation into English, and IIB: Translation from Prescribed Texts / Examined by Certification**

## **French III: Short Texts / Examined by Certification**

## French IV: French Narrative Fiction

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
28 17.95%	128 82.05%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
79 – 68	68 – 66	66 – 62	62 - 43

This paper was done very well this year, with no fails, and only one mark below 50 (due to the candidate completing only two essays). Candidates were able to focus their answer appropriately on the questions and demonstrated good knowledge of the texts. The best answers showed intellectual ambition by arguing with sophistication and nuance. All four texts were covered well. On the *Chastelaine*, some of the answers to the question on gender relationships risked ranking degrees of 'interest' in slightly simplistic ways, whilst some of the analyses of speech and orality demonstrated better attentiveness to the text's complexity. With Laclos, some candidates didn't know how to deal with questions of ideology and politics and came up with unconvincing arguments, whilst some of those who answered on writing and reading found it difficult to say anything nuanced about the latter. Essays on Sand were generally good, though some of the answers to the question about colonialism and feminism were slightly reductive in their dismissal of Sand's reflections on colonial race relations. Candidates tended to favour the Proust question about remembering and forgetting over the one on narrative structure, but some of those who did write about structure were able to produce subtle and thoughtful analyses. Overall, however, candidates managed the exercise very well, producing three intelligent and convincing answers.

## French XI: Introduction to French Film Studies / Examined by Certification

## French XII: Introduction to French Literary Theory / Examined by Certification

## French XIII: Key Texts in French Thought

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
8 44.4%	10 55.6%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
80 – 71	71 – 69	67 – 65	65 - 57

With the exception of a couple of scripts at the lower end, which showed less secure knowledge of the texts and/or shaky engagement with the questions set, candidates performed very well indeed. The highest marks went to those who engaged closely with the question and showed excellent textual knowledge to support their answers. Occasionally candidates deployed knowledge that was less immediately relevant to answering the question. This was the last outing for Bergson, who had fewer takers than the other writers, but who yielded some excellent answers. The best commentaries showed precisely how the passage fitted into the argumentational context within the text as whole whilst also teasing out the writer's rhetorical strategies. Of the 18 candidates, 14 answered on Descartes, 14 on Rousseau, 9 on Bergson, and 17 on Beauvoir. There were 5 commentaries on Descartes, 4 on Rousseau, 3 on Bergson, and 6 on Beauvoir.

## GERMAN

### COURSE A (Post A'Level)

#### German I: Deutsche Gesellschaft und Kultur Seit 1890

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
15 21.74%	52 75.36%	2 2.90%

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
81 – 69	69 – 64	63 – 57	57 - 35

#### Reading Comprehension

Summary: The Reading Comprehension consisted of an article on the role of children at demonstrations in general, and in anti-Corona demonstrations in particular. The summary exercise showed that most candidates had understood the relevant points of the article. The best summaries grasped the main idea of the text, showed a good level of abstraction and rendered a concise account of the central argument. The average scripts still grasped the main points but strung together individual points made in the text. Most summaries were well written, with linguistic ability and the ability to write a good summary seeming to generally go hand in hand. At the lower end, summaries were not quite clear, focused on side arguments and contained frequent basic mistakes.

Questions on the text: Candidates seemed well prepared for the new format and the questions were generally handled well. Frequently, not all marks for each question could be awarded due to the lack of detail, but the majority of candidates provided answers to all five questions. Some students, probably to avoid copying too much from the text, tried to give an overly abstract answer. Surprisingly, a small number of students seemed to be unsure about the meaning of the word 'Verfasser' in the question *Wie äußert sich der Verfasser zu der Rolle von Kindern bei Demonstrationen im Allgemeinen?*, and rather than giving the account of the author of the article, they gave their own opinion. Some candidates had to be marked down for poor language and frequent basic mistakes.

#### Essay

All essay topics were attempted, with *Wie stark haben sich Familienstrukturen in den letzten hundert Jahren verändert?* and *Arbeit gibt dem Leben seinen Sinn* being the most frequent. Many essays were well structured with an informed argument. Many essays clearly drew on content from the DGuK courses and lectures and made connections with the set texts. Due to the open book format, some lines of argument became very familiar after reading a number of scripts. In general, the essay showed a higher linguistic standard than the text comprehension part, with students displaying clearly more familiarity with vocabulary and phrases pertaining to the DGuK topics. The language ranged from near-native-speaker level to scripts that contained many frequent mistakes that, at the very low end, led to a breakdown in communication. Most of the mistakes were case mistakes, plural and adjectival endings, and frequent English phrasing. The following points detail some of the language issues in the overall paper.

- the colloquial 'Leute' used very frequently in scripts of different linguistic abilities, with students not aware that the register was not appropriate. Other register problems included expressions like 'total' and 'Demos'.
- a number of candidates had problems with the use of the neutral pronoun 'man'. In some occasions 'er' was used instead. In other instances, 'man' was used correctly in the nominative, but not in other cases.

- very frequently students used 'viel' instead of 'sehr' (Die Familie hat sich viel verändert.)
- vocabulary was mixed up, for example: 'schwül' for 'schwul', 'etwas' for 'etwa', 'Staat' for 'Stadt'.

**German II: IIA: Translation into German, and IIB: Translation from German / Examined by Certification**

**German III: Literature I: Commentary / Examined by Certification**

**German IV: Literature II: Prescribed Texts**

Class profile

Quartiles

Distinction	Pass	Fail	1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
15 21.74%	54 78.26%	0	85 – 68	68 – 64	64 – 61	61 - 49

The paper produced many good answers, most candidates achieving a High Pass or Distinction, with some truly outstanding scripts towards the top end. All questions were attempted. The most popular questions were those on gender (42) and narrative perspective (38). Not far behind were those on ideas and images of youth and innocence (35), desire (31) and critical realism (31). Just 3 candidates chose to answer the question on betrayal, and takers were also in the single figures for the questions about the unsaid aspects of the prose texts, how viewer response is guided, and whether fiction should offer solutions.

The open-book format this year seemed to have a largely positive effect on the quality of the essays, making on the whole for a more mature version of the usual paper. No longer dependent on what they could remember and able to quote texts accurately and at greater length, candidates could concentrate on the argument, and engage in closer analysis than is usually seen, much of it excellent. It was pleasing to see that concerns about the possible negative effects of open-book appeared in general not to be borne out. Almost all answers were clearly written in direct response to the questions on the paper, the argument developed continuously. There was remarkably little evidence of patchwork (very occasional leaps of argument, pronouns featuring before names were introduced). Candidates deserve credit for avoiding the obvious pitfalls of this year's format and approaching the paper in a spirit that combined the best of the traditional short, focused response with the opportunities afforded by access to the primary material.

The benefits of this may have played a part in one striking feature of the paper this year: the low number of answers on *M*. Although students engage with the film enthusiastically when studying it, this did not translate itself into discussion in the paper. Where it did, answers were of a piece with the quality of the rest of the script. It might be worth reflecting on possible reasons for the avoidance of *M*. Did the fact that it was presumably easier this year to browse and quote from the texts have an impact? How is the film taught in colleges, and what is the relationship between teaching and the paper?

It was good to see a number of cross-genre answers. Almost no answers attempted to deal with more than two works, and a good number looked at one. Six of the nine questions on the paper permitted answers on 'one or more', including two of the three in the required Section A, meaning that candidates could offer exclusively single-text answers. If it seems desirable that candidates show at least somewhere in the paper evidence of ability to engage in substantial comparison of two or more works, the questions set should make this unavoidable. Alternatively, the requirement could be made clear in a revised rubric.

The same scenes, details, and quotations featured in many essays. The opening scene of *Frühlings Erwachen* was discussed serially. Apart from Hänschen Rilow's toilet

monologue, there was little on other important scenes. Effi's reflection on Instetten's use of the ghost as an 'Angstapparat' served repeatedly to show free indirect discourse, with an almost identical reading in each case. In a related way, minor characters were rarely mentioned, even in *Effi Briest* (only 4 candidates brought Gieshübler in to the discussion of masculinity in the novel) and in *Nach Mitternachts*. Ilse hardly featured at all in the many answers on *Frühlings Erwachen*, and Frau Gabor, slightly more visible, was often treated simplistically. To some extent this was elicited by the questions, and it is good that candidates are clearly absorbing material from the lectures and recommended reading, but they might also be encouraged to develop more of their own sense of interesting moments and figures in the texts.

### German XI: Introduction to German Film Studies / Examined by Certification

### German XII: Introduction to German Medieval Studies

Class profile

Quartiles

Distinction	Pass	Fail	1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
5 31.25%	11 68.75%	0	76 – 74	70 – 65	65 – 63	63 - 58

All candidates knew the text well and had clearly benefitted from seminars and suggested further reading. Most candidates could identify significant themes in the commentary, though some missed the nuances of the exchange with the host, misattributing *vrum* to Gregorius, or overlooked the narrator's reference to Gergorius as *der ellende* in the final line. In the guided commentary, the best answers picked up on the asymmetrical modes of address and the difference between scholarly learning and knightly practice. Weaker answers tended to insert quotations rather than interpreting the relevant lines. All essay questions were attempted and elicited engaged answers.

### German XIII: Key Texts in German Thought / Examined by Certification

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## GERMAN COURSE B (Ab Initio)

### German B I: Reading Comprehension, Essay and Grammar

Class profile

Quartiles

Distinction	Pass	Fail	1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
2 18.18%	9 81.82%	0	71 – 68	68 – 66	66 – 63	63 - 60

#### Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension passage talked about the situation of female immigrant workers in the social care sector in Austria. All candidates showed good or adequate overall understanding of the text and the majority answered all questions satisfactorily. At the lower end the answers were very short with few details and less effort to answer the questions in the candidates' own words. Some candidates who clearly understood the text were marked down for language.

#### Essay

Only two essay topics out of five were attempted: *Wie gut bereitet die Schule auf das Studium vor?* and *Wie hat sich die Struktur der Familie in den letzten hundert Jahren*

*verändert?* with the majority of students writing on family structures. These texts were well structured in general and had an informed argument. The best essays showed a variety of sentence structures, with few word order mistakes and also good vocabulary; but as expected there were some mistakes, especially in more ambitious structures. The weaker scripts contained basic mistakes such as cases, verb agreement and verb position. Frequently, sentence structures in these scripts were shorter and more basic. There were no scripts where understanding was hampered severely by language mistakes and all candidates had something to contribute to their chosen topic.

### Grammar

Candidates excelled in the grammar part, something not entirely unexpected in an open book exam, but it also showed that students were well prepared.

### **German B II (IIA: Translation into German and IIB: Translation from German) / Examined by Certification**

### **German B III: Oral Examination / Examined by Certification**

### **German B IV: German Prose: 1890-1933 / Examined by Certification**

## **ITALIAN**

### **Italian I: Comprehension and Essay**

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
22 59.46%	15 40.54%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
84 – 78	78 – 74	74 – 64	64 - 50

37 candidates sat this paper. The standard of this paper was on the whole very good, with 16 candidates awarded distinctions, 10 candidates receiving marks between 60 and 69, 7 receiving marks between 50 and 59, and 4 between 40 and 49.

The passage set for Reading Comprehension, entitled *Lilli Gruber sfida il maschilismo. "Care ragazze, mettete la giacca"* was a slightly edited extract from an article published originally in *Il corriere della sera* and concerned with gender discrimination and the existing gender gap in the Italian society. While the passage selected presented a challenging style with several idiomatic expressions (e.g. 'Lei fa muro'; 'in una frazione di secondo'; 'serrare le fila') it was understood by the majority of candidates. The answers produced highlighted in general an ability to finely understand the intricacies of the text along with the use of an appropriate language register with overall few grammar mistakes. The last question in the Reading is the one which posed more difficulties for the candidates. This was partly due to the fact that the question invited for a personal view on the meaning and efficacy of the title chosen by the author of the article. Nonetheless the question attracted some good answers, with interesting, well-structured and well thought out arguments.

The Guided Essay (a choice of two narratives, an essay or a letter) standard was also quite good with most essays having an appropriate length and a solid structure. Overall all candidates produced coherent and clear texts with only some imprecisions vocabulary wise. Some exceptional candidates demonstrated their secure use of complex syntax, variety of subjunctive structures (e.g. a very good range of causal/purpose/concessive/consecutive conjunctions) and sophisticated knowledge of idiomatic language.

Scaling of marks was needed in this paper in order to bring a higher-than-average median into line with results for the previous 3 years, according to the marks safeguard for 2021 that ensures candidates' marks are not advantaged or disadvantaged by the changes in assessment required in response to the pandemic.

**Italian II (IIA: Translation into Italian, and IIB: Translation from Italian) / Examined by Certification**

**Italian III: Italian Lyric Poetry / Examined by Certification**

**Italian IV: Modern Italian Narrative and Cinema**

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
10 27.78%	26 72.22%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
72 – 70	70 – 68	67 – 64	64 - 51

36 candidates sat this paper

Responses were generally very good, with 10 candidates achieving a distinction, 24 awarded marks between 60 and 69, and 2 between 50 and 59. There was one instance of rubric infringement, which incurred a penalty. There were no fails.

Candidates who achieved the highest marks were those who engaged closely with the terms of the question and applied the knowledge they had of the works studied to produce focused and analytical answers. Weaker responses were those that strayed from the question, included imprecisions or a lack of focus. On the whole, though, candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the examined works and the contexts of their production.

The most popular questions in Section A were those on Calvino's *Il cavaliere inesistente*, Pavese's *La luna e i falò*, and Ortese's *Il mare non bagna Napoli*. A number of students also answered on Levi's *Se questo è un uomo*, and a few on the film, *I cento passi*. In the comparative part of the paper, section B, there were a variety of responses and interesting combinations of works from among the narrative texts and the film. Overall, candidates demonstrated that they were well prepared for this paper.

**LATIN AND ANCIENT GREEK**

**Latin Texts [1 candidate in CML]**

Plenty of good work here, from candidates new to Greek or Latin, and an admirable overall standard. Candidates can assure themselves of good marks for half the paper if they prepare the set texts carefully, and many did so. The best comments focused on the detail of the passage rather than leaving it hazy; but one also should stand back from the passage to see what is notable about it, rather than just amassing particulars.

**Paper V (Latin and Greek Unseen Translation) [3 candidates in CML]**

Candidates are offered four passages, one in prose and one in verse in each language, and have to pick two. Most went for either Latin or Greek; only one chose one passage in each language. The overall quality was good, with most papers in the 2:1 range and twice as many over 70 as under 60. The best work was on the Latin side. All candidates ought to be



congratulated for dealing quite successfully with two complex passages in a relatively short time in these adverse circumstances.

### Paper VI (Translation and Commentary) [3 candidates in CML]

The remarks on Greek Texts and Latin Texts apply here too. There was much excellent work on this paper, and some really impressive comment. Dates were welcome (especially on Virgil and Cicero); sometimes, though, they were not right or even close. The argumentative strategy seen in the passage of *Pro Caelio* is more complex than most candidates realized.

There seems a lot to do on this paper in three hours: 3 passages of 20+ lines, and 3 commentaries. Admittedly candidates were typing this year, and their speed was amazing. But one wonders if shorter or fewer passages would be a good idea.

### Paper VII (Essays) [3 candidates in CML]

Much fine work here. As ever, it's worth looking closely at the question to see what it is getting at, rather than just noticing a key word. The questions in Section C invite the candidate to look beyond the set texts; credit was given when candidates brought in other material, thought about the issues, and did not simply stick together separate sections on individual set texts. Admittedly, a question like 'Is any classical literature apolitical?' could not hope for a comprehensive answer; but an answer which sticks rigidly to two texts is not really meeting the bill. Altogether, though, a very nice set of scripts.

## LINGUISTICS

### Paper VIII (General Linguistics)

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
2 6.90%	27 93.10%	0

There were 29 candidates with a choice of 20 questions for Paper VIII. Questions 15 and 16 were the most popular followed by Q 2. The Table shows the precise distribution. Two questions were not chosen by any candidate.

Number of candidates answering each question

Question Number	No of Candidates	Highest Mark	Lowest Mark
1	1	68	68
2	11	51	67
3	1	67	67
4	6	56	67
5	0	n/a	n/a
6	2	65	65
7	5	57	68
8	1	60	60

9	3	62	74
10	5	54	70
11	3	59	71
12	1	64	64
13	1	68	68
14	1	68	68
15	18	56	73
16	11	56	71
17	7	58	69
18	7	60	73
19	3	65	72
20	0	n/a	n/a

Discrepancy of 10-15 marks between candidates for any given question is shaded in green

Discrepancy of more than 15 marks between candidates for any given question is shaded in red

With respect to the bands, the distribution was as follows:

85-100	0
70-84	2
55-69	26
40-54	1

As we can see, in this paper the most candidates fall within the High Pass band.

There were no failures, and no one received a High Distinction mark. The highest mark was 72 while the lowest was 54.

### Paper IX (Phonetics and Phonology)

There were 12 questions set (of which one had 4 choices, so 15 effectively). The number of candidates selecting each question was:

q.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	8c	8d	9	10	11	12
N	22	10	17	7	2	6	8	5	2	4	1	6	21	1	0

From this it can be seen that the most popular questions were: in section A, q. 1 (transcription), q. 2 (parametric diagram), q. 3 (phonetic similarities and differences between pairs of similar English words); in section B, q. 8 (choice of essay topics); and in section C, q. 10 (evidence for syllable structure). Question 12, which all candidates shunned, was on phonological phrasing in utterances.

The detailed transcriptions offered for question 1 were in general well done. However, the same level of detail given in that question did not extend to most answers to q. 3, phonetic similarities and differences between pairs of similar words. Most of those answers focussed only on *phonemic* differences, about which there was not much to say as they are typically minimal or near-minimal pairs. The entire *point* of this kind of question is to test what candidates know or can observe about fine details involved in the phonetic realization of phonological contrasts.

Question 9 asked candidates to use phonological rules to describe nasal place assimilation and variation in the English -s plural; although most answers did mention some relevant distinctive features, almost no answers actually stated the rules formally. (Most stated a rule imprecisely, in English.)

The distribution of candidates across the different bands was originally as follows:

High distinction (85–100): 1  
 Low distinction (70–84): 11  
 High Pass (55–69): 14

Low Pass (40–54): 2  
Fail (0–39): 0

The median obtained this year was 68. Since this was more than 3 marks distant from the median of the last three years (63), in accordance to this year's Conventions, the Senior Examiner scaled the marks down so as to obtain a median of 65. This was effected via subtraction of 3 marks from the final result of all candidates. After scaling, the distribution of candidates across the different bands looks as follows:

High distinction (85–100): 1  
Low distinction (70–84): 8  
High Pass (55–69): 17  
Low Pass (40–54): 2  
Fail (0–39): 0

N.B.: At the time of submission of this report one of the candidates had not submitted their script.

### **Paper X (Grammatical Analysis)**

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
14 48.28%	15 51.72%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
83 – 71	70 – 69	68 – 64	64 – 57

The standard of answers for Paper X: Grammatical Analysis was overall high, and candidates showed a good understanding of analytical techniques and theoretical points. There were 12 questions, of which those requiring syntactic (questions 1 and 2) or morphological (question 12) analysis of data were the most popular (19, 17 and 13 answers respectively). Only four candidates answered question 7, on ergativity, but the standard of these answers was very high. No candidates attempted questions 5, 6 or 8. Overall, the strongest answers contained a range of material and illustrative examples, often from more than one language, and crucially, were well-structured and clearly explained. Weaker answers often lacked structure and were more restricted in content.

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## **MODERN GREEK**

There were two candidates in Modern Greek who sat all four papers for the Preliminary Examination in Philosophy and Modern Languages in which an overall distinction was achieved.

### **Paper I: Prose Composition and Linguistic Tests**

Both candidates performed very well in the linguistic tests part, but in the translations there were some grammatical and lexical errors.

### **Paper II: (IIA: Translation from Modern Greek and, IIB: Reading Comprehension) / Examined by Certification**

### **Paper III: Literature I: Modern Greek Poetry and Prose / Examined by Certification**

## Paper IV: Literature II: Twentieth-Century Greek Prose in Context

Candidates answered a wide range of questions on history, literature/cinema and the historical context of specific literary texts. They showed a good understanding of twentieth century developments in Greek society and culture and their readiness to work on this area further in the next part of their degree.

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## PORTUGUESE

### Portuguese I: Aural Test, Prose, Composition, and Linguistic Tests

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
9 56.25%	7 43.75%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
77 – 73	73 – 71	70 – 66	64 - 62

This year's exam format, incorporating elements of the usual Paper I and IIA, but with the element of translation into English removed from the Reading Comprehension, allowed well-prepared candidates to excel in Section A of the paper. Accordingly, the Senior Examiner decided that scaling for this section of the paper would be required.

Candidates performed very well in Section B too, aided by the fact that they were able to research vocabulary. Most mistakes came in the form of awkward or incorrect syntax. While most candidates offered competent translations, few stood out for their sense of style.

Marks were lower in Section C on average. While the essays were written in sound Portuguese, comparatively few scripts demonstrated ambition of thought and/or sophistication of language; at the lower end, many pieces were poorly structured.

Overall, after scaling was factored in, Paper I still produced a high number of Distinction marks (over 50%).

### Portuguese II (IIA: Translation from Portuguese and, IIB: Translation from Portuguese and Portuguese Reading Comprehension) / Examined by Certification

### Portuguese III: Literature I: Prescribed Texts / Examined by Certification

### Portuguese IV: Literature II: Prescribed Texts

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
2 12.50%	14 87.50%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
72 – 68	68 – 66	65 – 65	64 - 62

Overall, the scripts this year showed that candidates had engaged well with the texts prescribed and had a good understanding of the issues they raise. The commentaries demonstrated a solid grasp of the passages set, but at times needed to find more balance between moments of very close analysis and giving a sense of the interest of the passage as a whole. Candidates also need to be careful to explain their points carefully in order to persuade their reader: assertion is not the same as argument. The very best essays were

focused and lucidly written, using the questions set as a springboard for thinking. Sometimes lack of clarity got in the way of essays which nonetheless had moments of insight.

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## RUSSIAN

There were 13 candidates for course A (post-A-level) and 12 for course B (RAI). The following papers were certificated: II, BII, BIIB, III, BIII, BIV, XI, and XIII. That left I, BI, IV, and XII to be examined through Inspera.

Tutors and course teachers/ convenors (for centralised classes) were asked to confirm regular attendance. Additionally, in the case of all certificated papers except BIV (which, as with Russian oral for the post-A course was certificated solely on the basis of attendance and performance records) they were asked to submit marked written work for each candidate (4 pieces in papers II and BII, III, and BIII, and 1 in papers XI and XIII). The examiners were impressed by the high standard of submitted work, not to speak of the care and attention expended by the markers, and were happy to confirm passes in all cases.

The examination of the papers handled through Inspera generally went fairly smoothly, though a few scripts were uploaded late. A candidate drew the examiners' attention to a cut-and-paste error in Paper I Section B Question 5, where candidates are invited to use a list of prepositions in a gap-filling exercise; two lists of prepositions in fact appeared, one in the instructions for the question and the other immediately below. The assessor for the paper established that it was in fact possible for the candidates to complete the question accurately using either of the two lists, or a mixture of both, and that marks lay within the expected range; there is accordingly no reason to suppose that any candidate was disadvantaged by this minor error.

### COURSE A (Post A'Level)

#### Russian I: Translation into Russian and Grammar Exercises

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
8 64.54%	5 38.46%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
80 – 75	73 – 70	70 – 65	65 - 58

The general standard of performance in this paper was creditable, with a high number at Distinction level – 8 out of 13 scripts - and the ability of most candidates to be accurate in their application of grammatical rules. Students generally performed well in the translation from English into Russian, although the passage set was undoubtedly demanding in terms both of vocabulary and of grammatical structures. The grammar section of the paper mostly revealed accurate knowledge of aspect, use of cases and case endings. However, a minority of students coped less well with the formation of participles, complex numerals and negative constructions.

#### Russian II: (IIA: Translation from Russian and, IIB: Comprehension) / Examined by Certification

#### Russian III: Poetry / Examined by Certification

## Russian IV: Prescribed Texts

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
4 30.77%	9 69.23%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
77 – 70	69 – 68	68 – 63	61 - 54

The standard of answers was generally high, with the best scripts at an excellent level, engaging critically with secondary literature as well as showing a thorough and perceptive knowledge of the set texts. The main faults in weaker scripts were lack of precision (strings of information that did not address the question/was irrelevant to the commentary passage and was poorly linked to an overall argument), failure to demonstrate knowledge of the originals (inaccurate translations, quotation exclusively in English – typing in Cyrillic may be a problem for some, but transliteration would have been an acceptable alternative), and sloppy style, sometimes to the point when it was hard to grasp the meaning (time should be allocated for reading through).

In the translation from Dovlatov, candidates uniformly rendered the word администрация as 'administration' (rather than management, the more natural English term). A more serious fault in a few cases was the misunderstanding in the commentary itself of 'Выглядел он почти интеллигентно', leading to misplaced speculation on the level of the mayor's intelligence, as opposed to his status as a member of the intelligentsia. While there was much persuasive discussion of Dovlatov's humour generally, the paradoxicality of one passage, 'Его охраняли двое хмурых упитанных молодых. Их выделяла легкая меланхолия, свидетельствующая о явной готовности к драке,' tended to slip under the radar, while the clash of register in 'несколько заслуженных работяг' was registered neither in the translation nor in the commentary.

## Russian XI: Introduction to Russian Film Studies / Examined by Certification

### Russian XII: Russian Church Slavonic Texts and Elements of Comparative Slavonic Philology

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
1 16.67%	5 83.33%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
71 – 65	64 – 64	64 – 59	52 - 52

In the section of the paper on Russian Church Slavonic, most candidates chose to translate and comment on both passages. Most candidates were able to produce respectable to very good translations of the passages, but the quality of the grammatical commentary was more variable, with some errors that revealed a poor grasp of Church Slavonic grammar.

In the section of the paper on Comparative Slavonic Philology, the questions on the *jers* and on liquid diphthongs attracted most answers. They showed generally respectable, sometimes good knowledge, but also various mistakes and omissions. Proper understanding is, however, still relatively rare at this level.

### Russian XIII: Elementary Polish / Examined by Certification

## RUSSIAN / COURSE B (Ab Initio)

### Paper BI: Translation in Russian and Grammar Exercises

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
3 25%	9 75%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
81 – 76	67 – 61	60 – 50	50 - 41

There were twelve candidates this year, and they performed creditably, including three Distinctions. Students displayed generally accurate knowledge in all areas of language acquisition - prose and grammar exercises. Candidates generally performed well in the translation from English into Russian, although the piece was testing in terms both of vocabulary and of grammatical structures. The grammar exercises set were the same as for Course A. The candidates for Course B did well, showing a firm command of most aspects of grammar, including the formation of participles and gerunds, although some students coped less well with more complex numerals and negative constructions. Such strong performances indicate that the students should be well equipped to derive maximum benefit from their Russian course in Yaroslavl' next academic year.

### Paper BII: (BIIA: Translation from Russian and, BII B: Comprehension) / Examined by Certification

### Paper BIII: Dictation and Aural Comprehension / Examined by Certification

### Paper BIV: Oral Test / Examined by Certification

## SPANISH

This year brought two particular changes: the certification of some papers (Paper IIA/B and Paper IV), in addition to the oral; and the migration of all examined papers to the Inspira platform in open-book format. A brief report on certification is included below.

**Open-book exams:** For the first time, Prelims candidates had access to online resources, notes, and other printed material during exams, though they were explicitly instructed not to use translation software such as Google Translate.

**Marks safeguard:** As in all other subjects across the university, examined papers with cohorts of more than 30 candidates were subject to the marks safeguard, introduced centrally this year as a form of Covid-19 mitigation. This meant that examiners were obliged to bring the median mark for any paper in this bracket to within one or two marks of the median for the years 2017-19 (Prelims were cancelled in 2020), with scaling applied where the median was too high or too low. In Spanish, no such scaling was applied.

### Spanish I: Prose Translation into Spanish and Translation of Sentences into Spanish

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
11 14%	69 86%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
75 – 67	67 – 62	62 – 58	57 - 40

The open-book format did not prevent candidates from making errors, but it did make it more difficult for examiners to judge the extent of a candidate's knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Although candidates were given explicit instructions not to use machine translation software such as Google Translate, their access to sophisticated online resources such as Linguee made this, in many ways, a very different paper from previous years. Examiners therefore looked for opportunities to reward candidates for their attempts to render nuanced and contextualised uses of language (register, tone, dialogue, idiom, etc), especially in the prose passage, as well as rewarding high levels of accuracy. The median mark for this paper was in line with the median for the years 2017-19, so no scaling was applied.

The passage for translation was taken from Pat Barker's novel *Border Crossing* (2001). It tested candidates' ability to produce accurate and idiomatic prose in Spanish, giving them plenty of scope to demonstrate their linguistic ingenuity and range. Credit was given to those who came up with idiomatic renderings of common expressions (e.g., 'Yeah, go on' was successfully translated by many, while 'How's it going?' proved more elusive; as ever, candidates needed to have read and understood the passage in its entirety to produce the best translation in context). Widespread mistakes included the literal translation of verbal forms such as the gerundive: 'a badger pulling' was often rendered as *un tejón tirando* (a relative clause, as in *que arrastra*, was rightly employed by many; the imperfect subjunctive –*que arrastrara*– would have been even better). Similarly, *inclinándose para besarla* was not accurate: *al inclinarse* was needed here, and it was pleasing that many candidates handled this correctly. A common problem was the direct translation of constructions involving a verb followed by a preposition in ways that made no sense in Spanish: e.g. *recorría las tiendas por* is meaningless; *ahora recorría las tiendas buscando/en busca de* was necessary and correctly employed by some. Unfortunately, word-by-word translation was a problem for several candidates: 'standing at the bar' resulted in the curious image of Tom standing on the bar counter (*de pie en la barra*); *junto a* prevented the problem in many of the better answers. A related situation arose with adverbs: 'after', in 'dragging things after her', cannot be translated as *después*. Specially challenging was the image 'like a badger pulling fresh bedding into its sett', with strong renditions including *hojas* or *heno fresco*, quite far from the *sábanas limpias* or *ropa de cama limpia*, which incongruously juxtaposed badgers and clean bedsheets. Several mystifying badgers '*tirando una cama limpia en su madriguera*' also appeared.

Misuse of the preterit and the imperfect was common throughout this passage. 'Fiery Fred was her latest fix' was challenging on a number of levels, but the stronger candidates handled it with flair and ingenuity. A small number of candidates opted for a Spanish version of the name (especially nice was *Pedro Picante* which playfully retained both the meaning and the alliteration). '*Fue su última dosis*' came up more often than examiners would have liked (*droga* was much better, while other students explored the possible meanings of *solución* with varying degrees of success). A more serious problem was that many candidates opted for *fue* instead of *era*, which was the tense needed here.

The sentences tested a number of grammatical structures, as well as candidates' ability to choose the best Spanish word or phrase to use in context. Worryingly, many candidates still confuse *preguntar* and *pedir*, and many did not know the imperative of *poner*. Most candidates coped remarkably well with the imperfect subjunctive, although the present subjunctive proved difficult for some: '*pon algo que suena*', for instance, was relatively widespread. That said, a majority of candidates employed the subjunctive correctly in the prose passage; renditions such as '*antes de que finalice la semana que viene*' were spot on, as was the use of *probablemente* followed by the subjunctive. Throughout both exercises, examiners noted problems with direct and indirect object pronouns, and misuse of relative and reflexive pronouns (including in constructions such as the incorrect *sus ojos se habían lagrimeado*, or *se habían llorado*, in the prose passage). It was pleasing that many candidates used phrases such as '*No me imagino que Bélgica vaya a ganar*' or similar, but the issue of direct translation of English constructions was all too common, resulting in '*No*



veo a Bélgica ganando'. Another example of the same problem was '¿Te llamas ornitólogo?', which makes no sense in Spanish. At the upper end, candidates coped very well with the different challenges posed by the use of the passive voice in English. Many candidates showed a pleasing familiarity with idiomatic phrases in Spanish (*según yo, a mi modo de ver, mal que me pese*, and many others), as well as handling relatively complex aspects, such as adjective order, correctly (for instance, in '*la enorme cartera negra que llevaba consigo a todas partes*'). As ever, the best way to prepare for this exam is both conscientious grammatical revision and sustained exposure to Spanish through printed sources and digital media.

## Spanish II: (IIA: Translation from Spanish and, IIB: Translation from Spanish (informal register)) / Examined by Certification

### Spanish III: Literature I: Prescribed Texts

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
17 21%	63 79%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
80 – 68	67 – 64	64 – 59	59 - 44

Due to the shift to open-book format, this year's paper did not include a passage for translation from a set text. This meant that candidates had three hours to complete one commentary and two essays, giving them a little more time than usual for each exercise. Candidates had a choice of commentary passages from 'Rinconete y Cortadillo,' *El médico de su honra* and *La fiesta del Chivo*, and a choice of two essay questions on each of the four texts studied for this paper.

Overall, the paper produced a normal run of marks, a healthy proportion of Distinctions (21%), and no fails. However there did seem to be a slightly lower level of preparedness than in a normal year, and several candidates scored marks in the 40s. It was also noticeable that there was often a lack of consistency in the performance of individual candidates across the three questions. Most candidates did not reach the advisory threshold of 1500 words for essays, though many were able to produce very good responses in fewer words. However there were several short weight (incomplete) answers, and others that were complete but barely more than 500 or 600 words, indicating that time pressure was not necessarily alleviated by the different distribution of questions or the open-book format.

Many candidates were able to write lucidly and produce very coherent responses, but a significant number struggled to express themselves clearly. This lack of fluency was at times as much of a hindrance as any difficulty candidates might have had with the texts themselves. For a cohort that did not take A-levels, this suggests that ongoing practice in writing timed essays will be essential to developing their skills in this area.

Candidates attempted all commentary passages, with a marked preference for 1c (from *La fiesta del Chivo*), closely followed by 1a (from 'Rinconete y Cortadillo'). Among the essays, the favourite was 3b (on heroes and villains in *Médico*), followed by 2b (on genre in 'Rinconete y Cortadillo') and 4b (on Machado's sense of belonging to a once great nation).

### Commentaries:

The strongest commentaries contextualised the passage in terms of its significance to the text rather than just its relation to the plot, and worked from the text outwards by identifying details that exemplified key areas of interest more broadly. Overall, most showed a good understanding of the passages and commented capably on their content. However, even with open books, too many struggled to place extracts precisely, finding it difficult to identify where they came in the work, or give important context to explain them. Weaker commentaries relied on paraphrase, with some descriptive elaboration but little analysis or attention to form. There was a tendency to take a general idea gathered from a lecture and

misapply it to the passage in question, often leading candidates down blind alleys. Candidates at the lower end of the spectrum often didn't identify quite basic textual information in commentary passages, such as the reason for Manuel Alfonso's compromised speech in *La Fiesta del Chivo* (which was variously put down to age or even nervousness) or the identity of the *caballero* in 'Rinconete y Cortadillo' – in these cases the impression was that the primary texts had not been read, or at least not in sufficient detail.

### Notes on commentary passages:

1a – One or two candidates struggled to identify who was present in this passage, on one occasion confusing the *caballero* with Monipodio, on another with Chiquiznaque. A few candidates noted the position of Rincón and Cortado in relation to the scene and the significance of this to the narrative perspective (the other members of the *cofradía* have dispersed after the warning of the arrival of the *alcalde*, and R&C, not knowing where to hide, are left to overhear the exchange). Only one or two recognised that the *caballero*'s correction of Chiquiznaque precisely echoes Rincón's correction earlier in the text ('*sodomita* querrá decir vuesa merced'), which surely isn't accidental, though many candidates commented, more or less effectively, on the significance of malapropisms and linguistic dexterity more broadly. At the top end there were some very good observations about the combination of humour and underlying violence in this passage, and the significance of this to the question of moral judgement.

1b – Again, too many candidates failed to explain exactly what is going on in this passage, and how the various characters are related at this stage in the play. Stronger scripts recognised the use of dramatic irony, and the self-referential identity of Enrique's 'amigo', but few identified the overall technique being demonstrated here (that of 'engañar con la verdad', which is used by characters elsewhere in the play, e.g. Mencía alerting Gutierre to an intruder's presence in the second Jornada, both of which raise questions about characters' errors in judgement). There was some nice analysis of images such as 'llaves' and 'pecho,' and the significance of the words 'culpa,' 'celos' and 'albedrío' to the broader themes of the play, though few candidates recognised the ambiguity of Mencía's closing lines, as either self-justification or a veiled invitation to Gutierre to continue his pursuit of her. Finally, only a relatively small number of candidates identified the metre (*décimas*), or the significance of rhyme in the passage, though those that did very effectively explored the use of formal features to convey thematic concerns.

1c – Most candidates focused on the interactions between Manuel Alfonso and the young Urania, the inappropriate nature of their exchange, and its implications for the dénouement of the novel. Others commented helpfully on the exploration of the theme of memory in this passage, and the contrast created between the older Adelina and the younger Manolita. Stronger commentaries recognised the use of shifting tenses, but fewer were able precisely to identify the shifts in narrative perspective. There was a great deal here for candidates to comment on with respect to form, as the passage exemplifies several of Vargas Llosa's characteristic literary techniques – several candidates discussed the significance of knowledge of the 'dato escondido' to a reading of the passage, but many didn't identify the obvious use of nesting / 'cajas chinas' of one narrative contained within another. Only the best candidates identified and discussed the significance of both, or connected them to the overall presence of Vargas Llosa's structuring devices throughout the novel.

### Essays:

At best, essays were well contextualised, showing a good understanding of relevant cultural, literary or historical issues, as well as handling technical concepts and vocabulary with ease. There were often insightful points that showed candidates had enough familiarity with the texts to be able to think on their feet, and candidates were rewarded for building thoughtful arguments based on good textual knowledge, even where there was a degree of implausibility or inaccuracy in the elaboration of ideas. In these cases quotes were used

sparingly but sensibly, supporting and illustrating analytical points rather than acting as fillers. The weakest essays regurgitated poorly digested lecture notes, with often garbled terminology or contextual information, tending also to rely on plot summary. In some of the more popular questions the same textual examples cropped up again and again, and candidates are encouraged to find alternative ones to supplement those provided in lectures. Too many candidates begin their essays with 'this book was written by x in x and is about x,' which is clumsy and unnecessary, and there were frequent typos in quotes as well as misspelt character names – switching off autocorrect should help avoid this, though candidates also need to take care.

### **Notes on essay questions:**

On Cervantes, the question on literary genre produced several responses that followed a similar path of discussion of the *picaresque* and the *entremés*. Stronger answers were able to discuss both Cervantes's use of these genres, as well as his departure from and innovation within them. The strongest essays also incorporated competent discussion of the pastoral and/or the romance, and Monipodio's *patio* as an inverted Arcadia. A number of candidates placed their discussion within the context of the question of the *novela's* literary exemplarity, which in the best cases helped to provide a more cohesive overall structure, though in some cases the relationship between the two was not well understood or elucidated. The best answers to the question on 'entretenimiento honesto' identified the context of *deleitar y enseñar* and the 'ejemplo provechoso' that Cervantes claims combines the two, while exploring such complicating elements as narratorial ambiguity and irony in determining the 'honesty' of the story's entertainment. Weaker scripts took a very moralistic approach to the question, regarding complexity or ambiguity as inherently dishonest and confusing the story's elusiveness with a moral failure, while failing to recognise that a reader can both laugh and judge at the same time.

On Calderón, the question on heroes and villains produced a pleasing range of responses, demonstrating good individual engagement with the text. The most frequently analysed characters were, perhaps predictably, Mencía, Gutierre, and Pedro, but many responses also profitably considered Enrique, Leonor, and Coquín. The question on honour required an understanding of what the honour code represented both socially and dramatically, and this was often lacking in candidates' responses. Some candidates who answered this question also made the mistake of equating the society in which the play was written with the one in which it is set. One really excellent answer made very subtle distinctions between different characters and their motivations, considering the textual and dramatic clues that might lead us to conclude that characters are not always as honourable as they would have us believe.

On Machado, the question on 'apparent artlessness' produced some interesting discussions of the role of ekphrasis within the collection, as well as the relationship between Machado and contemporary schools of visual arts. Few candidates, however, took the opportunity to interpret the term 'artlessness' with a broader reference to poetic artifice, which left some essays with too narrow a scope. The question on Machado's sense of belonging to a once great nation offered candidates an opportunity to explore the *noventayochista* perspective in his collection, though there were also good attempts to outline the different tone of the Leonor poems, as well as to identify hopefulness rather than bitterness in the depiction of the landscape. Most candidates chose a good range of poems to discuss and were able to draw out useful points of detail, though at the lower end the selection of poems was too limited, or the readings of the poems were not convincing.

On Vargas Llosa, the question on Urania gave rise to some spirited defences of the character, which showed good knowledge of the text and her role within it. However, only the strongest essay (which was very strong indeed) took seriously on board the criticisms contained in the question and sought to address them precisely, accepting their validity in part, but also pushing against them in an informed and sophisticated manner. The question on the influence of Vargas Llosa's sociopolitical views on the novel tended to become very biographical and descriptive, or get bogged down in questions of historical accuracy. One

very good answer aimed to show that the novel was not only socio-political in nature but also a questioning of the relationship between history and fiction, allowing the candidate to move the argument onto more fertile ground.

**Spanish IV: Literature II: Prescribed Texts / Examined by Certification**

**Spanish XI: Introduction to Hispanic Film Studies / Examined by Certification**

**Spanish XII: Introduction to Spanish Medieval Studies / Examined by Certification**

**Spanish XIII: Introduction to Short Fiction in Spanish**

Class profile

Distinction	Pass	Fail
3 50%	3 50%	0

Quartiles

1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q
72 – 70	70 – 70	68 – 66	62 - 62

The standard of answers on Paper XIII was high, with three scripts being awarded distinction marks (50%) and the other three earning marks in the 60s. In section A, each of the two texts for commentary received four answers. Most commentaries on Cervantes made interesting points on style, narrative voice, and character development. Commentaries on Merino’s *microcuento* also went beyond themes and discussed aspects of tone, the notion of scale through both form and content, and those elements that might particularly invite a reader’s response (that said, one candidate kept referring to the story as a ‘passage’, and another employed the pronoun ‘they’ for the self-identified male narrator). Rulfo was the most popular choice for essays, closely followed by Zayas, with Cortázar receiving two answers (one of them on a comparative essay with Rulfo), and Merino one. In general, essays showed a very good understanding of the primary texts and their context. A majority of essays were well written and clearly structured. Those essays that demonstrated close engagement with the question and developed a strong, compelling argument, scored the highest marks. Candidates should remember to use line numbers for commentaries, and that translating is superfluous in this exercise. They should also remember not to use colloquial language in an academic essay, and watch out for both typographical errors and the misquoting of titles of primary texts.

**Certification**

Some ML papers were certified this year, including Paper II and either Paper III or Paper IV. Spanish was the only language to examine Paper III rather than IV. The certification process was outlined by USC at its October 2020 meeting, with further detail communicated to tutors by the Chair of the exam board during the Easter vacation.

To achieve certification, students had to complete at least four pieces of written work per paper to a pass standard, with one piece submitted to the examiners for moderation. College tutors were responsible for submitting their own students’ work. In sole papers (further topics), students had to complete at least one piece of written work to a pass standard, as well as offering a seminar presentation or equivalent. In this case, the course convenor was responsible for submission.

Examiners had been instructed to moderate at least 20% of the total submission in their language. In Spanish, submissions were read from every college in at least one paper, so the total number moderated was in fact closer to 25% for Papers IIA and IIB, and 45% for Paper IV. For the sole papers, four out of six submissions were moderated for Paper XI, and three out of six for Paper XII, with one piece of work moderated for every candidate in this cohort.

One college tutor flagged a candidate as not having achieved a pass standard in Paper IV, so in this case all four pieces of work were submitted for moderation. The

examiners agreed that, of these four pieces (three commentaries and one essay), only one was in the pass range, though two pieces were very close to the borderline. This candidate therefore failed Paper IV, but was given the opportunity to resubmit three pieces of work in September, achieving a low pass..

**General observations on Papers II/A/B and IV:**

Paper II/A/B: There was evidence of a wide range of ability in the translations submitted for moderation, though many were of a high standard and some were clearly excellent. Some of the comprehension errors were surprising given the work was completed for class and not in exam conditions, including some misunderstanding of such basics as gender and agreement. The range of passages chosen was extremely rich and varied, though consistent with the Prelims standard, and marking was mostly very thorough.

Paper IV: The submissions for Paper IV covered the full range of authors and texts on this paper without clear preference for one part of the paper over another, with a good mix of commentaries and essays. The standard was often high, and feedback from tutors was clear, helpful and fair.

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