

History
Prelims 2019
Examiners' Report

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2019

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS

Along with the FHS Examiners' Report, this is a new style Report which concentrates on candidates' performance in the exam, with administrative matters reported separately to the Faculty's Examinations Sub-Committee.

I: Statistical overview

Table 1: Performance of candidates by gender

Year	All HIST cands	No + % of Ds, all	No + % of Ps, all	F	No + % of Ds, F	No + % of Ps, F	M	No + % of Ds, M	No + % of Ps, M
2019	227	64 28.20%	163 71.81%	109	18 16.52%	91 83.49%	119	46 47.46%	73 61.34%
2018	215	64 29.80%	151 70.23%	114	26 22.80%	87 76.32%	101	38 37.62%	63 62.37%
2017	219	74 33.80%	145 66.21%	118	28 23.78%	90 76.28%	101	46 45.50%	55 54.45%
2016	234	87 37.18%	147 62.82%	133	38 28.57%	95 71.43%	101	49 48.51%	52 51.49%

Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2019

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles I - c.300-1100	37	11	48
History of the British Isles II – 1000-1330	52	1	5
History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550	19	2	21
History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700	41	9	50
History of the British Isles V – 1688-1848	29	9	38
History of the British Isles VI – 1830-1951	49	13	62

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
EWI I: 370-900	61	20	81
EWI II: 1000-1300	53	13	66
EWI III: 1400-1650	67	19	86
EWI IV: 1815-1914	46	21	67
OS 1 – Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx)	33	29	62
OS 2 – The Age of Bede, c.660-c.740 (No takers in 2018-19)	-	-	-
OS 3 – Early Gothic France c.1100-c.1150	7	2	9
OS 4 – Conquest & Frontiers: England & the Celtic Peoples 1150-1220 (No takers in 2018-19)	-	-	-
OS 5 – English Chivalry & the French War c.1330-c.1400	9	2	11
OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450	6	5	11
OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance	7	3	10
OS 8– Witch-craft & Witch-hunting in early modern Europe	17	6	23
OS 9 – Making England Protestant 1558-1642	7	2	9
OS 10 – Conquest & Colonization: Spain & America in the 16 th Century	30	8	38
OS 11 – Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815	17	4	21
OS 12 – Women, gender and the nation: Britain, 1789-1825 (suspended in 2018-19)	-	-	-
OS 13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914	13	2	15
OS 14 – Haiti and Louisiana: The problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery	35	11	46
OS 15. The New Women in Britain & Ireland, c.1880-1920	5	2	7
OS 16 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921	15	1	16
OS 17. 1919: Remaking the World	15	1	16
OS 18 – Radicalism in Britain 1965-75	7	1	8
OS 19 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH)	2	1	3

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
OS 20 – Augustan Rome (AMH)	1	9	10
OS [21] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870	1	13	14
Approaches to History	105	38	143
Historiography: Tacitus to Weber	83	19	102
Herodotus	1	-	1
Einhard and Asser	5	-	5
Tocqueville	11	4	15
Meinecke and Kehr	6	-	6
Machiavelli	1	2	3
Vicens Vives (new)	4	2	6
Trotsky	3	-	3
Quantification	8	7	15

History of the British Isles (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	63	23.16	41	30.38	22	16.06	34.92
Pass	208	76.48	93	68.88	115	83.94	55.27
PPass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	1	0.36	1	0.74	-	-	-
Total	272	100	135	100	137	100	-

European & World History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	81	27.0	51	34.0	30	20.0	37.03
Pass	218	72.67	99	66.0	119	79.33	54.59
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	1	0.33	-	-	1	0.67	100.0
Total	300	100	150	100	150	100	-

Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	99	30.10	56	34.35	43	25.90	43.43
Pass	230	69.90	107	65.65	123	74.10	53.48
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	329	100	163	100	166	100	-

Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	34	23.78	14	22.58	20	24.70	58.82
Pass	109	76.22	48	77.42	61	75.30	55.96
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	143	100	62	100	81	100	-

Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	28	27.46	22	36.07	6	14.63	21.43
Pass	74	72.54	39	63.93	35	85.37	47.30
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	102	100	61	100	41	100	-

II Marking & Classification

A. General Comments on the Examination

227 candidates (109F, 119M) sat the examination. 64 candidates (18F, 46M) achieved a distinction, 162 a pass (91F, 72M), and one candidate (M) was assigned a partial pass, with one paper to be retaken in September. The two highest distinctions were awarded to male candidates, the third highest to a female. The overall standard was in line with the previous year, although the proportion of distinctions continues to decrease.

The Chair is particularly grateful to Andrea Hopkins, Isabelle Moriceau and the History Faculty Undergraduate Office for their administration of the setting, marking and examining process.

Administration

History Prelims was overseen by a Chair and five other members of the Board. For unavoidable reasons, the Chair initially appointed had to step down at the beginning of the Trinity term, to be replaced by another member of the Board. This was effected with minimum disruption to the process of setting and examining. Step marking was not used this year.

Medical Certificates and Factors Affecting Performance

The board considered 11 cases notified under Part 13, including a late one; in two of these the candidate's overall classification was affected, being raised to a distinction.

B. Equality and Diversity Issues and Breakdown of the Results by Gender

28.2% of female candidates received a distinction, compared to 47.46% of male candidates. This gender disparity is the widest in the last four years. It is significantly wider than the previous year, when the equivalent figures were 29.8% and 37.62%. The medium term trend is uneven, but the gap in performance is stubbornly persistent. This is not the place to consider the possible determinants of this pattern, but the Examinations Committee of the Faculty of History ought to give priority to reviewing the issue further.

III Comments on Papers: General

(BIP)- History of the British Isles I: c. 300-1100

A total of 48 candidates took this paper this year. There were 11 firsts (marks of 70+: 23%), 31 upper seconds (marks of 60-69: 65%), 13 lower seconds (marks of 50-59: 13%). The scripts contained much cause for cheer with plenty of excellent work on display. However, by comparison with other papers, there were slightly fewer firsts and more lower seconds than the average for PRELIMS as a whole this year. The most common explanation for stronger candidates failing to cross the 70 threshold was that they fell down on the 'engagement' criteria by not addressing the terms of question directly; and the most usual explanation for marks below 60 was that candidates failed to substantiate their arguments with sufficient depth or precision. The most popular questions were, in descending order, numbers 23 (on Mercia or West Saxon kingship), 4 (on conversion to Christianity), 15 (evaluating the importance of categories of primary sources), 11 (on women or queenship), 2 (on sub-Roman Britain), 10 (on the late Anglo-Saxon state) and 15 (the Norman Conquest). Six questions attracted no answers: questions 5 on kingdom growth before 750, 12 on the peasantry, 13 on the economy, 14 on Wales and Ireland, 17 on monastic reform, and 18 on pastoral care. Although question 6 on Mercian or West Saxon kingship proved popular, several candidates seemed unable to deploy substantive material on economic and cultural factors to address the specific terms of the question. In general terms, students of this paper would be well advised to register that there was more to kingship beyond military might and the development institutional apparatus, and that it often drew inspiration from its continental neighbours. Though the question on Wales and Ireland received no takers, there were some strong answers to the questions on sub-Roman Britain and northern Britain which necessarily ventured outside of lowland Britain/England, and several of those who answered the question on Scandinavian activity drew on case studies from different parts of the British Isles – a comparative approach which often resulted in the strong answers. The answers to the question on primary sources also elicited several lively and well-informed answers.

(BIP) History of the British Isles II: 1000-1330

A total of 53 candidates took this paper this year. There were 11 firsts (21%), 32 upper seconds (marks of 60-69: 61%) and 8 lower seconds (marks of 50-59: 15%) and 2 thirds (marks of 40-49). This distribution reflects a healthy quotient of lively, thoughtful work, but does shave a longer than usual tail of disappointing scripts. Those that slipped below 60 tended to manifest weakness in relation to the evidence criteria in the faculty's descriptors, which stress the importance of the 'depth, precision, detail, range and relevance of evidence cited, accuracy of facts, understanding of historical debate, and critical engagement with ... sources'. The most popular questions were, in descending order, questions 1 (on England's vulnerability to conquest in the eleventh century), 11 (Magna Carta), 5 (relations between crown and church), 2 (Domesday Book), 18 (Jewish communities), 10 (queens and women). Otherwise, there was a good spread of answers, and every question attracted at least one answer. The questions on queens and aristocratic women, identity, historical writing, towns and commerce, Jewish communities and gender attracted some especially lively and thoughtful work. This suggests that candidates are finding thematic strands of the paper are stimulating, which is a positive sign. The best answers to the question on Magna Carta displayed a good understanding of what the text itself says as well as its historical hinterland; the same applies to the question on Domesday Book. Questions 1 to 3 attracted some strong answers, and although it came out too late to have much impact this year, future candidates should note that a volume on

1066 edited by Davis Bates was recently published, which should enable students engage with recent work that approaches the subject from a range of fresh perspectives. The best answers to question 9 on the kingdom of the Scots engaged effectively with Alice Taylor's important recent book.

(BIP) History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550

On the whole, the quality of the essays this year was high. 6 students scored a first class mark, 15 scored 2:1s, and one mark of 53 was awarded. The best essays were characterised by a nuanced sense of chronological and geographical variation, by careful attention to the terms of the question, and by a sophisticated and up-to-date awareness of the historiographical landscape. By the same token, many essays were brought down by their unwillingness to engage with scholarly debates, and by an uncritical reliance on problematic assumptions about serfdom, feudalism, bastard feudalism, Englishness and so on: a few reflections on the complexity of these terms and their implications would immediately have lifted the quality of these essays. The vast majority of essays contained quite detailed evidence: students seemed well-informed.

As ever, there was significant bunching of answers around popular topics like heresy, revolts, epidemic disease, kingship and religion. A handful of students produced well-informed and interesting answers on Irish and Scottish politics, and there was, overall, a good sense that students were thinking about the British Isles as a whole.

There were no answers to questions about art or architectural history, universities, reading or rituals. Questions which mapped less obviously onto the popular tutorial topics did not attract any candidates.

Most problematic were answers on the environment and on women. In the former case, students failed to think through the implications of what is meant by 'environment', often using it rather as a hook to discuss epidemic disease. In the latter case, essays were marred by a lack of engagement with up-to-date scholarship, and a lack of nuance and sophistication in thinking about the range of female experience.

(BIP) History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700

The best students were able to say something interesting and thoughtful, with an eye on historiographical debates and engagement with primary source material. Students focused dishearteningly heavily on the grand political narrative, particularly the reign of Elizabeth. Lots answered on rebellion, as usual, though rebellions were generally seen as things that happened in Tudor England (or sometimes Ireland). The Scots, evidently, were mercifully non-rebellious. There was general agreement that Charles I was a Bad King, though the best students recognised the structural problems he faced. Hardly anyone answered on Thomas Cromwell. No one tackled Protector Somerset. Answers on social history were remarkably bad. Nobody wrote well on the poor law, relying on outdated historiography and evading the question. Students frequently confused the economy with the fiscal health of the state. The history of women's agency produced some bad answers, such as those who implied that the only women with any agency were those who became queens regnant. Some regions and social groups were treated with rather patronizing disdain: Ireland ('tribal'), the North ('backward', 'up north'), and ordinary people ('the masses', the 'popular classes', the 'common masses', the 'populace'). There was, though, some good engagement with secondary literature: lots have read recent work by Alexandra Shepard, plenty knew their Patrick Collinson, and their David Underdown. No one, though, has read any Steve Hindle,

Alexandra Walsham's work on the reformation wasn't widely considered, and I do hope Christopher Haigh doesn't find out about the student who confused them with AG Dickens.

(BIP) History of the British Isles V: 1688-1848

Some interesting responses were produced. The best were creative, thoughtful, engaged with both historiography and used primary materials. Weaker answers, as ever, evaded the question. The Glorious Revolution proved ever popular, with some solid responses, but in general there was a good spread of responses, suggesting that the course is being taught refreshingly broadly. Some questions were tackled less well than others: the abolition of the slave trade drew some thoughtful responses, even if relatively few students acknowledged the agency of slaves and former slaves. Perhaps most disappointing were responses to the question about the law: several students wrote competent essays about the criminal law, without even noticing that this was just one part of the English (let alone British) legal system.

(BIP) History of the British Isles VI: 1830-1951

There were sixty-two candidates. All but three of the twenty questions (on land reform, cities, and representation) were attempted and, encouragingly, there was a good spread of answers across the rest of the paper. The most popular questions were on empire (answered by 40 per cent of candidates), war (by 32 per cent), and gender (by 31 per cent).

These most popular questions also prompted the greatest conformity, both in evidence used and arguments formed. Many answers to these seemingly straight-forward questions were answered with few signs of imaginative or critical thought. Some of the superficially less familiar questions prompted greater independence of thought and depth of evidence. For instance, the question on national identity and education prompted some fresh and thoughtful responses, as did the question on to whom Conservatism appealed. Answers on change over time that required some chronological precision were generally badly done, and few students could write about both the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Candidates who wrote on empire, public worship or separate spheres tended to jump between small examples with no attempt to think about the difference between 1860 and 1930. First-year students should be encouraged to make timelines to help them to think more carefully about chronologies and causation. Few students were able to think in sophisticated ways about place. Class and gender were made into formulaic determining categories, so that the British Isles beyond England and local cultures were rarely explored. It is helpful to think about how particular practices and ideas were made to matter across the British Isles. The question on class was answered particularly poorly and descriptively, showing very little understanding of what class was.

Most answers were organised into paragraphs and provided some relevant evidence. The best scripts showed the ability to think precisely, both in consistently answering the question set and in using pertinent evidence. Many candidates, however, wrote in consistently general terms about topics and the meaning of questions was very seldom examined. First-year students would benefit from learning to establish meaningful ways to assess how 'significant', 'radical' or 'distinctive' a phenomenon was in its specific historical and historiographical context.

EWH I: 370-900 (The Transformation of the Ancient World)

Eighty-one candidates sat this paper, 23 got marks of 70 and above, 50 have marks between 60-69, 8 got marks of 53-59. The overall standard was good: 90% of candidates secured marks of 60 or above, with nearly 60% securing 66 or above and 30% securing 70 or above; 10% secured marks in the 50s.

The paper continues to attract a large number of students and continues to be one of the real success stories of the Oxford history syllabus. Most questions were pitched at a thematic level so that candidates were given a free hand as to what evidence they brought to bear on them. Here the paper clearly meets the desire of the faculty to encourage a global as well as a European perspective in so far as a large number of candidates responded by addressing questions with detailed reference to Byzantium, the caliphate, and T'ang China. Geographic range aside, there was a greater bunching of answers than in some years, with the question on the barbarian successor states attracting answers from well over half of the candidates. However all but two or three of the questions attracted answers. Perhaps predictably the exceptions were the questions on the peasantry and the divide between town and countryside: economic history appears to be one of the casualties of the widening of geographic horizons. Candidates could usefully be reminded that it is sometimes easier to engage the interest of an examiner if they tackle less obvious topics and questions.

In terms of quality the candidates producing first class answers tended to think carefully about establishing (and justifying) parameters which allowed them to look at salient and revealing evidence in a detailed manner. In contrast many of the weaker answers relied on generalised assertions; if they made a nod to evidence it was often in terms of unnamed burial sites or unnamed sources thereby failing to appreciate the importance that historians attach to precision and specificity. Candidates who answered the question on what did successful rule depend (the second most popular question) often felt compelled to range across the whole period at the expense of carefully analysing a salient body of evidence. Many rightly asked what defined success but most provided their own random definitions rather than looking at what specific contemporary sources said on the matter.

Such caveats aside, it is clear that a large proportion of the students taking this paper continue to be inspired by its big themes and debates. Indeed it is striking how many candidates were ready to think comparatively even when this was not demanded by a question - this ought to leave them well-prepared for the Disciplines paper in the second year.

EWH II: 1000-1300 (Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours)

Sixty-six candidates sat this paper: fifty-three for History and thirteen for joint schools. Every question was attempted except questions 6 (role of literacy or record-keeping) and 15 (our knowledge of lives of serfs and slaves). The most popular questions were in order of preference: 9 (heresy = 33 essays), 8 (crusades = 25), 11 (ritual/ideology in rule = 20), 14 (feudalism/frontiers = 20), 7 (empires = 18), 5 (Latin Church = 13), closely followed by 17 (relationship with neighbours = 10) and 20 (most significant development in period = 10). Of these, rather surprisingly, the most interesting and varied answers were in response to question 8.

Conversely, there were three questions on women/men/gender which attracted between them just 13 responses (of the total 198 essays). The overwhelming majority of essays, that is, the other 185 essays, barely mentioned women. Many exam scripts did not mention women once. The world of EWH2 seems to be a world in which only men are worth studying and writing about, that is, provided they were not slaves or serfs. This is something that

should worry everyone teaching the paper and everyone taking the paper. Of those essays that did look at women, men and gender, about half took an old-fashioned view in which women's lives were determined by Patriarchy unless they were Eleanor of Aquitaine or Matilda of Tuscany, and men were assumed to be so universally empowered that the multiple constraints (public and private morality, status, circumstances, age, ability, clerical celibacy, performative masculinity, heteronormativity, their parents, their children, other men, women...) upon them were not even considered. The power of individual women was seen as finite and contingent on male death/absence, while that of individual men apparently lasted forever, and was not contingent on the death/absence of a male relative or female regent. And so on. This is not difficult to do better, and those essays that did this well, either directly in response to one of these three questions, or in broadening and nuancing their social analyses in other essays, impressed. For example, candidates who considered things like the importance of crusades for women running households during prolonged absences captured much more of the social impact than those who saw crusading as significant only to the men who went. Yet few of the answers to question 5 considered whether women's interests were represented, hardly anyone looked at the role of women, wives, regents, dynastic marriages, etc, for question 7, or explored the roles of women in communities discussed for questions 14 and 17.

The most popular question concerned heresy. As usual, a significant proportion of candidates went into this exam without having read or understood the work in this field in the last twenty years, which has completely altered the terms of debate. There were endless citations of Lambert, and hardly anyone seemed to have read even the introduction to the useful 2016 collection edited by Sennis that sought to capture the state of the field from all perspectives. The same problem arose for a number of other questions, where students who were drawing on more recent (as in, post-2000) perspectives and new questions often did better than many others because they understood what the questions were getting at and had something fresh to say and to think with. This is something tutors should attend to with the regular updating of reading lists. Finally, candidates who had a sound grasp on one or more non-Western European societies (usually the Mongols or Byzantium, but occasionally Song China or the Abbasid caliphate) were able to make more imaginative analytical comparisons in response to the general questions. Nearly everyone answering question 11 wrote about the Capetians and made exactly the same argument with exactly the same pieces of evidence. Anyone writing about anywhere else, and especially essays that looked at more than one place/society/dynasty, were at an immediate advantage. This includes candidates who were evidently taking the paper as a strictly 'European' paper but had a good working knowledge of governance of a 'frontier' society: Sicily, Iberia and Byzantium being the usual examples.

EWB III: 1400-1650 (Renaissance, Recovery and Reform)

86 candidates took this paper, and on the whole they used the full range of the paper, although there was some bunching around questions 10 (Renaissance and art), 11 (Pre-reformation Christianity), 14 (Catholic Reform), and 20 (revolt) which each attracted more than 20 answers. Question 18 on absolutism received no answers, question 19 on republicanism only 1, while 8 (Scientific revolution) and 15 (the witch) invited only 4 and 3 responses, respectively.

The best answers to question 2 on the voyages of discovery had fluent, wide-ranging grasp of trade pattern change, and debates in economic history about bullion flow and Malthusian

processes. Many answers, however, made no reference at all to famous inflation/bullion/price revolution debate, which was a surprising omission. Question 7 however invited some of the weakest answers, often taken as an invitation to generalize about a European sense of superiority in a somewhat ahistorical way rather than looking more closely at the plural and evolving ways in which Europeans responded to the new cultural variety opening up before them. Question 6 on humanism was an invitation to explore several EWH III themes at once, but weaker candidates passed up on this opportunity and ignored the emphasis on the term 'challenge.' Indeed, as always with exams, and perhaps especially with prelims, failing to think through the precise terms of the question was a common route to a lower grade.

Some answers to question 10 on the social significance of art were undermined by the lack of definition of 'Renaissance', and devoted most of their attention, without explanation, to the Baroque. Question 11 on pre-Reformation religious life drew some fine and creative answers, although there was in general an under-appreciation of the role of this-worldly supernatural assistance in many answers. As for Question 12 on Protestantism, the term 'popular' was often interpreted simply to mean 'well-liked' rather than as reference to masses/lower social orders. Question 14 on Catholic reform, however, attracted large numbers, although many were a little formulaic, overly focussed on the Council of Trent and lacking in historiographic awareness. In answering question 20, the best scripts defined 'radical' carefully, and sustained this definition throughout the answer. The best scripts were built around a set of case-studies, which were argued from in-depth.

Indeed the recommendations for how to achieve success in this paper are far from mysterious: apart from answering the question, this involves having concrete evidence to call upon, showing some grasp of historiography, and being able to generalise while allowing sufficient nuance (for eg in terms of geographic and chronological variation). It was good to see that some candidates brought gender into their answers for other questions that question 1.

EWB IV: (Society, Nation, and Empire 1815-1914)

The overall performance on the paper was consistently competent, with students answering on a wide range of questions across economic, political, social and cultural history. Many showed a good awareness of how European history needs to be set in a broader context in order to understand complex processes such as industrialisation, which were a product of global networks and connections. The most popular question was No.2 on industrialisation, most of whom were able to introduce references to key works such as Bob Allen's *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*, and avoided framing their answers in purely national terms. Question 10 on the modernising ambitions of nationalist movements was also popular, although many students were unable to trace nationalist ideology back to the notion of popular sovereignty popularised by the French and American Revolutions, or explain how it evolved from a liberal to a right-wing ideology in the course of the 19th century. Question 13 on gender roles was also popular, and the best answers provided wide-ranging social histories of female education and the labour market across different European countries, although a few had a tendency to descend into anachronistic preaching. This was also true of some of the answers to question 15 on the scramble for Africa and 16 on European Imperialism and popular culture, where a disturbing number of students appear to still be in thrall to the Hobson-Lenin thesis. Very few candidates opted for question 12 on the 'second confessional age' and question 5 on the 'bourgeois century', but answers to these questions

were of particularly high quality. Only two candidates attempted question 19 on the origins of the First World War, suggesting that this old staple is becoming less popular as a tutorial topic.

Of the 46 candidates in the main school, eight scripts fell in the 2:2 bracket. Nine candidates in the main school received first-class marks.

Optional Subject 1: Theories of the State

A total of 64 candidates sat this paper, 35 History, 23 History and Politics, 2 History and Modern Languages, 3 History and English, and one History and Economics. Twelve achieved distinction level marks. The most popular question by some distance was 4 (on reasons why people might find subjection to Hobbes's sovereign acceptable), answered by as many as 40 candidates. Too many answers to this question missed its full implications, passing very quickly over issues such as the concept of authorization, sovereignty by acquisition, and other, more positive reasons for living under Hobbes's sovereign. Other popular questions were 6 (on Rousseau's account of freedom); 8 (on the consistency of Marx's views of the state); and 2 (on the importance to moderation to Aristotle's political thought). Candidates in general displayed a reasonably good grasp of the set texts and the political thought of the authors. Weaker answers tended to describe and summarize views rather than bring them under critical scrutiny, and there were a few strange misconceptions shared by a few candidates, such as the idea that Rousseau was a teleological thinker. The best of the answers were lucidly expressed, forcefully argued expositions of a given author's writings and thinking, and, importantly, sought to integrate some awareness and understanding of relevant secondary literature. They ranged beyond the set texts, drawing connections between works not just of the author under discussion but other contemporaries with whom they were or may have been in dialogue. They also began to show a good sense of the complexity of issues. Again weaker answers failed to take opportunities to use the set texts to draw out aspects of the authors' writings, the meaning of which is not necessarily straightforward, or may have involved some element of contradiction with what is said elsewhere, and has been subject to interpretation and debate. Admitting of complexity and difficulty need not in any way compromise clarity of exposition and argument. However, the crucial point may be the need to maintain as close a focus as possible on the texts and their contents, and to use them to drive the discussion and argument. One popular question which was, curiously, poorly answered, was 10 (on whether the meanings of the works of two or more of the prescribed authors should be understood principally in terms of their immediate historical context). This tended to elicit very general answers, both in terms of argument and the description of relevant historical background. Very few candidates were prepared to attempt an assessment of *how important* considering historical context might be, or, indeed, to think about what aspects of this were most influential. A good number of candidates answered q. 11 on the importance placed by the prescribed authors on the role of education and religion in a successful political community. The best of the answers confined their comparison to two of the authors, usually Hobbes and Rousseau, or, less frequently, Aristotle and Hobbes. Those candidates who sought to range more broadly, even on occasion seeking to encompass all four of the set authors tended to produce more superficial commentaries, which were not built around any kind of comparative argument.

Approaches to History:

This paper was taken by 143 candidates (105 were History and 28 were joint schools), 34 of whom achieved distinctions. At its best, Approaches invites candidates to adopt a more analytical and imaginative means of approaching the past, and the better candidates seized this opportunity, producing lively, engaged, and thoughtful answers, which were crisply and precisely expressed and strongly argued. On the other hand, it asks rather a lot of students in their first year – both to grapple with difficult theoretical texts and apply them to their own concrete historical examples. Weaker candidates tended to adopt too negative a view of the potential of engaging with literature on neighbouring disciplines, also often providing formulaic answers to questions demanding a more precise approach firmly rooted in the historical past and the evidence left by it. While the strongest answers showed a strong grasp of relevant theoretical literature, engaging critically with key concepts and ideas, this was much less evident in many. For example, the toughest sociology question was on disenchantment. Most candidates first conflated this with secularisation tout court, and then conflated secularisation with declining religious belief. Candidates writing on anthropology should be encouraged to show more engagement with actual anthropologists and their theories, and to work beyond the 1970s. Over-reliance on a narrow body of quite dated readings was a feature of too many answers, especially in some of the sections. Several candidates referred to ‘primitive cultures’ – a phrase which should have been excised long ago. Gender was the most popular section, usually attracting 2 out of 3 answers from individual candidates, and those currently thinking about the future of this paper may wish to consider why this is the case. A common perception among the examiners of this paper this year was that candidates in future years should be encouraged to seek out recent theoretical work and thinking in different fields and historical works drawing on them, and actively to avoid relying solely on well-trodden material for their answers. More positively, most candidates did try to integrate their own historical examples into their answers and the creativity on display here was one of the rewarding elements of marking the paper.

Historiography: Tacitus to Weber

There were 102 candidates taking the paper (83 for History and 19 for Joint Schools). This was a generally pleasing run of papers, with some genuinely outstanding work and very little below a decent 2:1 standard. The few weak papers were usually undermined by an underweight third answer, and suggested a failure of examination technique rather than of historical imagination or preparedness. There was, however, a marked tendency among those attempting one of the comparative questions to scant their third chosen historian in favour of the two on whom they had previously written individually; the rubric for this paper asks candidates to show knowledge of **THREE** of the chosen historians, and this really ought to denote (and hence to display) knowledge of a comparable depth of understanding. Occasionally, when writing a comparative answer, candidates were apt to repeat observations made in previous answers, a practice to be actively discouraged. There was a concentration on a small number of questions – Tacitus on tyranny, Machiavelli on religion, Gibbon on barbarism, Macaulay on politics, and Weber on social science – but with rare exceptions, these were good, considered, and thorough answers. The best candidates married their own reading of the primary texts with critical use of the leading authorities on the set texts (Syme on Tacitus, Markus on Augustine, Pocock on Gibbon, and Ghosh on Weber), but equally, some of the best work was very much the product of direct unmediated readings of the texts. Most candidates got a good balance between texts and contexts, and

very few emphasised the latter over the former. It was good to see strong criticism of aspects of the texts – Gibbon’s ‘Orientalism’, Macaulay’s partisan parochialism, Ranke’s Protestant predilections – but it was similarly good to read sound advocacy of what are now complex historical attitudes. One of the central aims of this paper is to train undergraduates in self-critical historical thinking, and this was a quality the great majority of papers actively presented. Joint honours candidates played to their strengths, and they should continue to do so, as Ancient and Modern History candidates ably compared Tacitus with later historians, and English and History candidates thoughtfully applied literary techniques to their interpretations. The considerable demands this paper sets were very largely met by a discerning and thoughtful cohort of examinees.

Foreign Texts: Vicens Vives (new)

Six candidates took this new paper (4 for History and 2 for Joint Schools). The overall quality was rather good. The spread of final marks was as follows:

70-79: 3

60-69: 3

The choice of the Spanish text (J. Vicens Vives, *Aproximación a la historia de España*, 2nd ed. 1960) has proved to be appropriate as candidates were generally able to locate the gobbets, while the quality and focus of their comments were more variable. All candidates have commented on gobbet 1-a, which specifically dealt with historiography, while they seem to have preferred gobbets concerning medieval or modern history of Spain than the early modern period.

Candidates answered four questions out of six. The two systematically avoided were one on the lack of reference to America in the *Aproximación* (q. 3) and the other on the extent to which this work reflects the political ideas of its author (q. 6). Conversely, all candidates answered the question about the influence of the *Annales* school on Vicens Vives’s methodology (q. 2), generally writing rather good essays. Even better essays were produced in the case of the second most popular question (66% of the candidates chose it), which was about the legacy of the *Aproximación* for Spanish historiography (q. 7): some candidates provided very personal and extensive answers and made good use of their reading of other pieces of Spanish historiography in English language. Each of the two remaining questions, concerning Vicens Vives’s view of the history of Spain as a whole (q.4) and the *Aproximación*’s dismissal of the study of ‘intellectual minorities’ (q. 5), was attempted by one candidate only. Overall, the candidates seem to have gained enough familiarity with the *Aproximación* and made good use of their understanding of Vicens Vives’s methodology and his intellectual exchanges, but tutors and lecturers (although it must be said that I have been the only person teaching this paper so far) could probably focus more on the historical context in which the *Aproximación* was produced and the political significance of writing such a work during the Francoist dictatorship.

Examiners:

Prof S. Baxter (Secretary)

Prof B. Harris (Chair)

Dr J. Healey

Dr A. Power

Prof A. Strathern

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Updated 11 Feb 2020