

Examination Conventions for Ancient and Modern History in the Preliminary Examination 2025

1. Introduction

These conventions have been approved by the Board of the Faculty of History and the Board of the Faculty of Classics. Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

2. Rubrics for Individual Papers

2.1 History Papers

The following papers will be examined by three-hour timed written live examinations taken in Examination Schools. **This year the European and World History papers will be typed in Examination Schools rather than hand-written** (Candidates who are unable to type and need to have an alternative mode of completion from the one set for European and World History papers, can apply via their college through the exam adjustments process). The regulations define the history of the British Isles as ‘the history of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and of other territories in so far as they are specifically connected with the History of Britain’.

	EUROPEAN AND WORLD HISTORY PAPERS (in date order)	
A16143P1	European and World History from 370 to 900 (the Transformation of the Ancient World)	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers.
A18359P1	European and World History from 1000 to 1300: Communities, Connections and Confrontations	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) may be answered with reference to any part of the period and, where relevant, to any part of the world.
A16145P1	European and World History from 1400 to 1650 (Renaissance, Recovery and Reform)	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. Each question should be taken from a different section.
A16146P1	European and World History from 1815 to 1914 (Society, Nation and Empire)	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers.
	OPTIONAL SUBJECT PAPERS (in order of paper code)	
A10170H1	Optional Subject: Witch-craft and Witch-Hunting in Early Modern Europe	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A10171H1	Optional Subject: Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx)	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should demonstrate knowledge of AT LEAST THREE prescribed authors, and should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed texts.
A10173H1	Optional Subject: Early Gothic France	Candidates must answer THREE questions and

	from c. 1100 to c. 1150	COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A10177H1	Optional Subject: Conquest and Colonization: Spain and America in the Sixteenth Century	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A10178H1	Optional Subject: Revolution and Empire in France from 1789 to 1815	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A10190H1	Optional Subject: Women, Gender and the Nation: Britain, 1789-1825	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A10191H1	Optional Subject: Nature and Art in the Renaissance	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A10194H1	Optional Subject: Crime and Punishment in England, c. 1280-c.1450	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A14712H1	Optional Subject: Haiti and Louisiana: the Problem of Revolution in an Age of Slavery	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A14713H1	Optional Subject: Making England Protestant, 1558-1642	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A15247H1	Optional Subject: The New Woman in Britain and Ireland, c. 1880-1920	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A15248H1	Optional Subject: 1919: Remaking the World	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A17124H1	Optional Subject: The Mongols	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A17147H1	Optional Subject: The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1883-1921	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A17518H1	Optional Subject: Imperial Republic: The United States and Global Imperialism, 1867-1914	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.

A17519H1	Optional Subject: Viewing Communism: Cinema and Everyday Life in Eastern Europe, 1944-1989	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A17520H1	Optional Subject: Living with the Enemy: The Experience of the Second World War in Europe	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A17931H1	Optional Subject: Alfred and the Vikings: Conflict, Culture and Identity in the Early Middle Ages	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A18360H1	Optional Subject: Global USSR: Empires, Borders and Identities	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A18676H1	Optional Subject: When Neighbours Became Strangers: Violence, Community and Identity in Late Ottoman Syria, c.1840-1900	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A18677H1	Optional Subject: Brigands in a Landscape: Banditry, Rural Crime and Rebellion in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Region, c.1750-1950	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
A19094H1	Optional Subject: Sexuality, Climate and Politics: the world of Edward II, 1307-1327	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should illustrate their answers, as far as possible, by reference to the prescribed authorities.
	PAPER IV PAPERS	
A10180H1	Paper IV: Approaches to History	Candidates must answer THREE questions chosen from TWO OR MORE sections (A-G) of the paper and COMPLETE all their answers. Candidates are encouraged to answer questions with reference to specific studies or examples.
A10181H1	Paper IV: Historiography: Tacitus to Weber	Candidates must answer THREE questions and COMPLETE all their answers. They should demonstrate knowledge of AT LEAST THREE authors studied in this paper. Questions 15 to 18 should be answered by reference to AT LEAST TWO authors.

2.2 Ancient History Papers

2.2.1. Ancient History papers

A10053H1	Greek History 650-479 BC	Candidates should answer THREE questions.
A10054H1	Roman History from 241 to 146 BC	Candidates should answer THREE questions.
A10055H1	The World of Homer and Hesiod	Candidates must answer Question 1 and TWO other questions.
A10056H1	Augustan Rome	Candidates must answer Question 1 and TWO other questions.

A10057H1	Sallust <i>Jugurtha</i>	Candidates should answer Question 1 and TWO other questions. Candidates are required to illustrate their answers by reference to the set text.
A10182H1	Foreign Texts: Herodotus V 26 – VI 131	Candidates should answer Question 1 and TWO other questions.

2.2.2 Language Papers

A10074H1	Beginning Ancient Greek	Candidates should attempt both parts. Part 1 comprises three compulsory questions on set texts. Part 2 comprises one passage of unprepared translation. Marking scheme: 25% of overall mark for each question.
A10075H1	Beginning Latin	Candidates should attempt both parts. Part 1 comprises three compulsory questions on set texts. Part 2 comprises one passage of unprepared translation. Marking scheme: 25% of overall mark for each question.
A10076H1	Intermediate Ancient Greek	Candidates should attempt both parts. Part I comprises three compulsory questions on set texts. Part II comprises one passage of unprepared translation. Marking scheme: Part I, 25% of overall mark for each passage; Part II, 25%.
A10077H1	Intermediate Latin	Candidates should attempt both parts. Part I comprises three compulsory questions on set texts. Part II comprises one passage of unprepared translation. Marking scheme: Part I, 25% of overall mark for each passage; Part II, 25%.
A14349H1	Advanced Ancient Greek	Candidates should attempt all three questions. In Question 1, candidates must translate three passages from the set texts in D.A. Russell, <i>An Anthology of Greek Prose</i> . In Question 2, candidates must translate two passages from the other set texts. Question 3 comprises one passage of unprepared translation. Marking scheme: 33⅓ % of overall mark for each question.
A14350H1	Advanced Latin	Candidates should attempt all three questions. In Question 1, candidates must translate three passages from the set texts in D.A. Russell, <i>An Anthology of Latin Prose</i> . In Question 2, candidates must translate two passages from the other set texts. Question 3 comprises one passage of unprepared translation. Marking scheme: 33⅓ % of overall mark for each question.

3. Marking conventions

3.1 University scale for standardized expression of agreed final marks

Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

70-100	Distinction
40-69	Pass
0-39	Fail

Marking Descriptors

Numerical marks on a scale from 0-100 will be given (0-85 for language papers).

3.2 Qualitative criteria for different types of assessment

The following criteria will be used in marking the three-hour question papers.

3.2.1. Essays

<p>Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• directness of engagement with the question• range of issues addressed• depth, complexity, and sophistication of comprehension of issues and implications of the question• effective and appropriate use of historical imagination and intellectual curiosity
<p>Argument:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• coherence, control, and independence of argument• conceptual and analytical precision• flexibility: discussion of a variety of views
<p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• depth, precision, detail, range and relevance of evidence cited• accuracy of facts• understanding of historical debate• critical engagement with primary and/or secondary sources
<p>Organization & Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clarity and coherence of structure• clarity and fluency of prose• correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation

These criteria inform the following mark-bands:

FHS: I Prelim: Distinction	86-100	Answers will be so outstanding that they could not imaginably be better within the time constraints of the exercise. These marks will be used very rarely, for work that shows remarkable originality and sophistication in putting forward persuasive and well-supported new ideas, or making unexpected connections.
	80-85	Answers receiving marks in this range will be of consistently excellent quality across all criteria, and will be both distinctive and thought-provoking in their argument and/or approach. Answers will be above and beyond the examiner's expectations of an Oxford student.
	75-79	Answers will be of the highest quality that an examiner might reasonably expect from a candidate within the time constraints inherent in the exercise. Although there may be some limitations in terms of scope and originality relative to responses which receive 80+, answers will be excellent overall, and be characterised by sophisticated engagement with the issues, real analytical depth, factual precision and detail, and independence of argument, as well as strong, incisive engagement with evidence and historical debate, and clarity and coherence of presentation.
	70-74	First Class marks should be awarded to answers that are consistently impressive across all criteria, and that show strong knowledge, analytical skills, and judgement indicating a highly able undergraduate historian. Answers in this range will make a clear, detailed, and fully-supported argument, demonstrate nuance, and be thoughtfully constructed. Compared to responses awarded marks of 75+, they may be less imaginative in their handling of the question, less wide-ranging in scope and/or achieve less depth of detail, and be structured in a way which is effective and efficient rather than impressive and incisive.
FHS: II.1 Prelim:Pass	65-69	Answers in the upper-II:1 range will be of above average quality across all criteria, and very clearly so where marks just below 70 are awarded. They must exhibit some essential features: addressing the question directly and relevantly across a good range of issues; offering a clear argument involving consideration of alternative interpretations; and substantiating their argument with accurate use of relevant evidence and contextualization in historical debate, within a structure which has been well thought through. They will, though, fall short of First Class quality because their handling of some of the material is uneven, because the writing loses focus or momentum at times, or because the analysis is good rather than genuinely impressive. Essays which are very competent but which lack distinctive qualities in terms of argument and analysis may be placed at the lower end of this band.
	60-64	Answers which the examiners consider to be of average quality across most criteria should be placed in this band. The candidate must show consistent competence by answering the question, demonstrating sound analytical skills based upon a good level of knowledge, and a discernible level of argument, prioritisation and problematisation. Answers will show many similar characteristics to those of above average quality, but will tend to exhibit less ambition, range, depth, precision, knowledge and perhaps clarity.
FHS: II.2 Prelim:Pass	50-59	Answers toward the top of the II:2 band will be of reasonable quality, showing some specific knowledge and attention to the question that has been asked, and will otherwise be competent across at least some of the criteria. Lower II:2 answers will cover fewer of the criteria, and/or do so

		less competently. They may talk around the question rather than answering it, or they may seem to be answering a different question than the one set. They will nonetheless exhibit some positive qualities in their presentation of evidence and analysis. Answers will be put in this band if there is limited focus on the specifics of the question, and if there is minimal, undeveloped argument or very limited or inaccurate use of evidence. Answers may have a ‘by numbers’ quality, fail to identify specific evidence – or misunderstand the evidence in a way that is manifest – be either too narrow or too general, or be characterised by unsubstantiated assertion rather than argument based on evidence. Answers which are too short or written in a very unclear way are also likely to fall into this band.
FHS: III Prelim:Pass	40-49	Answers will cover only some of the criteria, and/or will do so only very partially, but will exhibit some vestiges of the qualities required, such as the ability to see the point of the question, to deploy information, or to offer some elements of an argument. Such qualities will not be displayed at a high level or consistently, and will be marred by irrelevance, incoherence, error and poor organization and presentation.
FHS: Pass Prelim: Fail (Retake)	30-39	These marks will be used very rarely, for scripts that display almost no knowledge or understanding of the salient issues and which fail to cover any of the criteria. They will be marred by high levels of factual error and irrelevance, generalization and lack of information, and poor organization and presentation.
FHS: Fail	<30	Scripts will fail to exhibit any of the required qualities. Candidates who fail to observe rubrics and rules beyond what the marking-schemes allow for may also be failed.

3.2.2. Commentaries (‘Gobbets’)

In exam papers containing extracts from primary source texts for comment (‘gobbets’) the following criteria will be used:

<p><i>Immediate context of the extract:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relation of the extract to the wider text from which it is drawn • representativeness/distinctiveness of the extract within the wider text • precise meaning or significance of terminology or points of detail • identification of key individuals, institutions or events
<p><i>Clarification of the extract:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • authorship, authority, and purpose • audience • contemporaneity or employment of hindsight • conditions of creation, transmission, reception, and preservation • genre • language or visual style
<p><i>Wider context of the extract:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationship between the extract and other set texts • relevance of the extract to wide historical developments • relevance of the extract to historiographical debates

Organization & Presentation

- clarity and coherence of structure;
- clarity and fluency of prose;
- correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

These criteria inform the following mark-bands:

I	86-100	Scripts will be so outstanding that they could not be better within the framework of a three-hour exam. These marks will be used rarely, for work that shows remarkable originality and sophistication comparable to the best published work.
	80-85	Scripts will excel across the range of the criteria.
	75-79	Scripts will excel in more than one area, and be at least highly competent in other respects. That is, they must be excellent for discussion of the meaning, contexts and significance of the extract and for clarity of structure and expression. Truly outstanding features may compensate for mere high-competence elsewhere.
	70-74	Scripts will be at least very highly competent across the board, and probably excel in at least one group of criteria. Relative weaknesses in some areas may be compensated by conspicuous strengths in others.
II.1	65-69	Scripts will demonstrate considerable competence across the range of the criteria. They must exhibit some essential features, explaining the meaning of the extract and identifying its provenance and significance in a clearly expressed answer. Nevertheless, additional strengths (for instance the range of issues addressed, the sophistication of understanding, or the range and depth of detail) may compensate for other weaknesses.
	60-64	Scripts will be competent and should manifest the essential features described above, in that they must place the extract in context and elucidate key points within it; but they will do so with less range, depth, precision and perhaps clarity. Again, qualities of a higher order may compensate for some weaknesses.
II.2	50-59	Scripts must show evidence of some solid competence in expounding information and analysis. But they will be marred by a weakness on one criterion or another: failure to identify the extract or the issues it raises, failure to place it accurately in context, or poor explanation and expression, including incorrect prose.
III	40-49	Scripts will fall down on a number of criteria, but will exhibit some vestiges of the qualities required, such as some ability to contextualize the extract or discuss its meaning and significance Such qualities will not be displayed at a high level or consistently, and may be marred by irrelevance, incoherence, error and poor expression.
Pass	30-39	Scripts will display a modicum of knowledge or understanding of some points, but will display almost none of the higher qualities described in the criteria. They may be marred by high levels of factual error and irrelevance, generalization and lack of information, and poor organization and presentation.
Fail	<30	Scripts will fail to exhibit any of the required qualities. Candidates who fail to observe rubrics and rules to a degree beyond that taken into account in the marking-schemes may also be failed.

3.2.3. Language papers

General. Elegant and resourceful use of English will be rewarded, as will accuracy in detail and effectiveness in conveying the spirit of the original. While candidates should endeavour to show

that they have understood the grammar and syntax of the original, they should avoid over-literal and unnatural English.

80-85 (High First class): outstanding and memorable, showing all first class qualities to a remarkable degree. Reads like a good publishable version: sense, register and nuance of the passages all admirably handled. The odd failing may be allowed.

70-79 (First class): candidate has got the passages mostly right, with only minor errors or very few errors. Deals intelligently with difficulties. Handles the stylistic variations of the passages well, and achieves a natural English style.

60-69 (Upper Second class): candidate has grasped the general sense and drift of the passages well, though with quite a number of errors.

50-59 (Lower Second class): candidate has essentially grasped the drift of the passages, but has made more, or more serious, errors than in a II.1 script.

40-49 (Third class): candidate has not grasped much of what is happening in the passages, and has made numerous and grave mistakes, but has shown some knowledge and understanding.

Below 40 (Fail): very poor quality work, showing little knowledge of the language (or, in a prepared text, of the context and content of the passage).

3.3 Verification and reconciliation of marks

Each script is marked by one examiner or assessor. Scripts may be scrutinized by the Board of Examiners for any of the following reasons:

- a) The original assessor has requested further scrutiny
- b) One or more questions on the exam script are short-weight
- c) The candidate has failed to comply with the rubric
- d) The candidate has a SpLD
- e) The candidate made a Mitigating Circumstances application
- f) The mark is out of line with the candidate's other papers
- g) The mark is below 50
- h) The assessor was new
- i) The candidate is on a borderline and has one paper marked 70 or more and one or two papers marked 68 or 69; or has two papers marked 70 or more and one paper marked 59; or has two papers marked 70 or more but an average mark of less than 67.

3.4 Scaling

The Examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:

- a) a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or
- b) an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or
- c) a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that candidates' marks are not advantaged or disadvantaged by any of

these situations. In each case, examiners will establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling will only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed, and a complete run of marks for all papers is available.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, the examiners will review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes an appropriate performance within each class.

Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied will be included in the Examiners' report and the algorithms used will be published for the information of all examiners and students.

3.5 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

A mark of zero shall be awarded for any part or parts of questions that have not been answered by a candidate, but which should have been answered.

Omission of an entire question – the completed questions will be marked, and then the overall mark awarded as the average of those marks multiplied by the fraction of the paper completed (i.e. $\frac{2}{3}$ in the case of one essay missing from a three-essay paper).

Failure to complete an essay or question in full – the assessor will mark the question on its merits (factoring in its brevity) and calculate an average mark as usual from all the questions attempted.

All short-weight cases will be reviewed by the Board and the comment sheets will be scrutinised to ensure that all cases are being treated consistently.

Departure from rubric: where a candidate has failed to answer a compulsory question, or failed to answer the required number of questions in different sections, the complete script will be marked and the issue flagged. The board of examiners will consider all such cases so that consistent penalties are applied.

3.6 Penalties for non-attendance

Failure to attend an examination without authorization will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit of the assessment will be capped at a pass.

3.7 Penalties for poor academic practice and plagiarism

The Examination Board shall deal wholly with cases of poor academic practice where the material under review is small and does not exceed 10% of the whole.

If the material affected concerns more than 10% of the whole piece of work or more than poor academic practice, the Chair must refer the case to the Proctors, summarising the extent and seriousness of the plagiarism and including the relevant sources.

4. Progression rules and classification conventions

4.1 Qualitative descriptors of classes

[See descriptors and mark bands under item 3.2 above.]

4.2 Classification rules

In the Preliminary Examination in Ancient and Modern History each item in the assessment is given equal weight, and counts as one paper.

Classification in History and all joint schools except History and Modern Languages

The rules for classification are as follows:

Distinction:	Average mark of 67 or greater. At least two marks of 70 or above. No mark below 60.
Pass:	Agreed marks of 40 and above on all four papers.
Partial Pass (Retake):	Any one, two, or three papers with an agreed mark of less than 40.
Fail (Retake):	All four papers with marks of less than 40.

Before finally confirming its classifications, the Examining Board may take such steps as it considers appropriate to reconsider the cases of candidates whose marks are very close to a borderline, or in some way anomalous, and to satisfy themselves that the candidates concerned are correctly classified in accordance with the criteria specified in these Conventions.

4.3 Progression rules

No candidate shall be admitted to the Final Honour School of History or the joint schools with History unless he or she has *either* passed or been exempted from the First Public Examination *or* has successfully completed the Foundation Course in History at the Department of Continuing Education *or* has Senior Student status.

5. Resits

Failure to attend an examination (without good reason, such as illness) will result in the failure of the assessment. If a candidate has missed an examination through illness, their college must report this to the Proctors as soon as possible. In this case, the candidate may sit the examination/s missed in September for the first time – this does not count as a re-sit.

Any candidate gaining a mark below 40 in any paper or papers in the Preliminary Examination may be permitted to resit that paper or papers in the Long Vacation. Resits usually take place in the first two weeks of September. The mark for any resit of the assessment will be capped at a pass.

6. Mitigating Circumstances

Candidates may make a submission under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, that unforeseen circumstances may have had an impact on their performance in an examination. A subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence provided in support. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. Further information on the procedure is provided in the Examination

and Assessment Framework, Annex E and information for students is provided at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/problems-completing-your-assessment>.

7. Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

Christina Kuhn (Chair)

Roel Konijnendijk

George Garnett

Avi Lifschitz

Candidates **should not under any circumstances** seek to make contact with individual examiners.