

**Examination Conventions for History,
Ancient and Modern History,
History and Economics,
History and English,
History and Modern Languages,
History and Politics
in the Final Honour School of 2025 (papers examined in year 2)**

1. Introduction

These conventions have been approved by the Board of the Faculty of History and the Boards of the Faculties of the other parent schools in the case of joint schools with History, with respect to course work in History to be submitted in year 2, that is, in Hilary and Trinity Terms of 2024. 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

A. History and all joint schools with History

History of the British Isles 1-7 and Theme Papers A and B [course work to be submitted in year 2 - Candidates will be examined by means of three essays of no more than 2,000 words each, under titles from a question paper published by the examiners on Wednesday of eighth week of the Trinity Term in the year preceding the final examination. The essays must be submitted via InSpera by noon on Friday of ninth week of that term. Detailed procedures governing this process will be published by the Board.

Candidates must submit essays in answer to THREE of the questions below. They are encouraged to follow their own interests in the history of this period whether thematically or chronologically. They may also note that 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'.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) may be answered with reference to any part of the period and any part of such territories. Candidates are also encouraged to display some breadth of knowledge overall, whether thematically, geographically or chronologically.

No essay must exceed 2,000 words, not including title page, references or the bibliography; over-length work will be penalized according to the published tariff. References must be in the form published in the Handbook for the Final Honour School of History*.

*The FHS Handbook 2023-25 is the correct version for second years

B. History and English ONLY

History and English Bridge Papers:

‘A Flame of Fire’: reading, reform and salvation in late medieval England

Representing the City 1558-1640 (not running in 2023-24)

Women’s Life Writing: gender and social change, 1870-1930

[Course work to be submitted in year 2]

One compulsory interdisciplinary bridge paper, which shall be examined by an extended essay of between 5,000 and 6,000 words, including footnotes and notes but excluding bibliography. The list of topics for these papers was published to candidates by the beginning of the first week of the Michaelmas Term in the year preceding the final examination, and shall be available thereafter from the English Faculty Office and the History Faculty Office. Candidates must obtain written approval from the Chair of Examiners for the Honour School of History and English for the proposed essay title, not later than Friday of the eighth week of the Hilary Term in the year preceding the final examination. The completed essays will be submitted digitally via InSpera by 12 noon on Friday of the first week of Trinity Term of the year preceding the final examination [Friday 26 April 2024].

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	First Class
60-69	Upper second
50-59	Lower second
40-49	Third
30-39	Pass
0-29	Fail

3.2 Qualitative criteria for different types of assessment

The examining criteria are similar across the range of papers, but there are individual differences between different types of paper, so we have given the criteria and descriptors in full for all paper types.

A. The HISTORY OF THE BRITISH ISLES TAKE-HOME ESSAYS will be assessed on the following criteria:

Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - close attention to the question - a sophistication of argument, appropriate to the length of the essay
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - awareness of relevant historiography - range of issues addressed
Argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - logical coherence of argument - clarity of structure - critical examination of evidence
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accuracy of factual content - selection of the best and most telling examples to support the argument - use of primary sources. This may include quantitative or visual material where relevant. (If primary sources are utilized via a secondary work this is acceptable if clearly referenced.)
Organisation & Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarity, fluency and elegance of prose - accuracy of grammar, spelling, and punctuation - correct use of referencing

These criteria will inform the following mark bands:

FHS: I	86-100	Answers will be so outstanding that they could not imaginably be better within the 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 finalist.
	75-79	Answers will be of the highest quality that an examiner might reasonably expect from a candidate within the 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	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	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	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	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.

B. HISTORY AND ENGLISH BRIDGE PAPERS in public examinations will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identification and clear delineation of an interdisciplinary subject, appropriate to the word length of the essay/dissertation - awareness of historiography, literary history and critical traditions where relevant - depth and sophistication of comprehension of and engagement with issues - grasp and handling of critical materials
Argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coherence, control, independence and relevance of argument - clarity and sophistication of development of argument; - conceptual and analytical precision - originality of argument - quality of critical analysis of text in the service of argument
Evidence/Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of primary texts - sophistication of methods of research - relevance of information deployed - depth, precision, detail and accuracy of evidence cited

	- relevant knowledge of primary texts
Organisation & Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarity and coherence of structure - clarity and fluency of prose - correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation - correctness of apparatus and form of footnotes and bibliography

These criteria will inform the following mark bands:

I	86-100	The essay will be outstanding for its originality and sophistication, featuring a highly sophisticated and critical understanding of the implications of the chosen topic, and of its context in the secondary literature.
	80-85	The essay will excel across the range of the criteria, and will be both distinctive and thought-provoking in its argument and/or use of evidence. The essay will be well-written, focused and cogent, answering its own question(s), which will be important ones, and analysing relevant texts and sources incisively and precisely. It will demonstrate a confident grasp of both the challenges and opportunities presented by interdisciplinary work, and will deal both penetratingly and accurately with the disciplinary assumptions of both History and English, and also with relevant critical theories and historiographical debates. The choice of topic, the argument and the selection of evidence will be superbly well-tailored to the demands of the prescribed word length.
	75-79	The essay will be excellent in its combination of quality of problem-identification and research-design, range and sophistication of engagement with historiographical and literary critical or language context, coherence, clarity and relevance of argument, and quality of primary evidence adduced. The essay will be well-written, focused and cogent, answering its own question(s), which will be worthwhile ones, and analysing relevant texts and sources incisively and precisely. It will demonstrate a firm grasp of both the challenges and opportunities presented by interdisciplinary work, and will deal accurately with the disciplinary assumptions of both History and English, and also with relevant critical theories and historiographical debates. Some first-class answers may be distinguished by the sophistication or originality of the argument, approach or interpretation; others may contain a particular wealth of relevant evidence; some of the best work in this range may combine these characteristics. In all cases, the choice of topic, the argument and the selection of evidence will be well-tailored to the demands of the prescribed word length.
	70-74	First Class marks should be awarded to essays that are consistently impressive across all criteria of conceptualisation, argument,

		evidence, and interdisciplinarity. Such work may combine truly outstanding performance on some criteria with high competence that would otherwise merit upper-II:1 marks on other criteria.
II.1	65-69	An essay in the upper-II:1 range will be highly competent across all criteria, and very clearly so where marks just below 70 are awarded. It will address a suitable interdisciplinary question, and answer it by analysing a respectable range of relevant texts and sources. It will show appropriate awareness and understanding of the relevant secondary literature in both History and English, together with an adequate sense of the implications of interdisciplinary approaches. A given essay may do better justice to either the historical or the literary aspects of its topic, but it will merit a mark in this range if both aspects are present and at least one of them is handled to a high standard. An essay that raises some organisational or evidential problems, but is distinguished by sophisticated or original engagement with an interdisciplinary problem, may also merit a mark in this range.
	60-64	An essay which the examiners consider to be of average quality across most criteria should be placed in this band. It will be consistently competent and should manifest the essential features described above, in that they must offer an argument in response to a clearly-identified problem based on evidence acquired in research; 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	An essay toward the top of the II:2 band will be of reasonable quality, showing some solid competence in meeting the criteria, though also some deficiencies. It will address an interdisciplinary question; it will comment on at least some primary sources/texts; and it will show some awareness of the secondary literature in both History and English. It is likely to be flawed in two or more of the following ways, however: imprecise answer to the question; inconsistent presentation and referencing; unclear writing; unduly unbalanced emphasis on either the historical or the literary aspects of the question; narrow range of sources; limited awareness/understanding of the historiographical/critical context; poorly-chosen question; failure to integrate parts of the material into an effective analysis/argument; errors of fact.
III	40-49	A third-class essay will, as a minimum, address an interdisciplinary question, using at least some source material and showing some understanding of the literary and/or historical context. It will tend to have a larger number of the flaws listed in the box above, and/or will manifest them to a worse degree. A very short essay

		which nevertheless has promise may fall into this band.
Pass	30-39	Provided that the essay addresses a recognisably interdisciplinary question and engages with at least one source, it will typically be worthy of a pass mark. Essays in this category will typically feature many of the flaws in the II.2 box, but to a more serious degree. They will be marred by high levels of factual error and irrelevance, generalization and lack of information, and poor organization and presentation; and they may be very brief.
Fail	<30	An essay that does not address an interdisciplinary question and/or does not base any of its content on the analysis of a source, will be deemed to fail. Other reasons for failure may include plagiarism, gross inaccuracy, gross failure of expression, or grossly short weight.

3.3 Verification and reconciliation of marks

Each script/item of work is marked independently by two examiners or assessors (sometimes referred to as 'blind double-marking'). The two assessors then discuss each script/item of work and give it an agreed mark, which should be within the range of their initial marks. If the assessors are unable to agree on a mark, the script/item of work is then referred to a third assessor, who may be an external examiner or an internal examiner on the FHS Board of Examiners with appropriate period expertise.

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 in 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, or some fraction of 12 in the case of a twelve-gobbet Special Subject 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 late or non-submission

The scale of penalties agreed by the board of examiners in relation to late submission of assessed items is set out below. Details of the circumstances in which such penalties might apply can be found in the Examination Regulations (Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 14.)

Lateness	Cumulative mark penalty
After the deadline but submitted on the same day	-5 marks (- 5 percentage points)
Each additional calendar day	-1 mark (- 1 percentage point)
Max. deducted marks up to 14 days late	-18 marks (- 18 percentage points)
More than 14 calendar days after the notice of non-submission	Fail

Failure to submit a required element of assessment will result in the failure of the whole Second Public Examination.

3.7 Penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter

The Board has agreed the following tariff of marks to be deducted for over-length work:

Percentage by which the maximum word limit is exceeded	Penalty <i>(up to a maximum of -10)</i>
Up to 5%	-1 mark
Over 5% and up to 10%	-2 marks
Over 10% and up to 15%	-3 marks
Each further 5%	-1 further mark

3.8 Plagiarism

If examiners suspect plagiarism and the material concerned accounts for no more than 10% of the whole piece of work, it is likely that this can be dealt with by the examiners as an instance of poor academic practice (e.g. web sources with no clear authors; incomplete or shoddy referencing). Markers will grade the work on its merits. The board will then use its judgement to deduct up to a maximum of ten points depending on the gravity and extent of the poor academic practice reported to the Chair of Examiners by the markers in question. If the consequence of the deduction would result in an overall Fail classification, the case must be referred to the Proctors.

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.

Turnitin is fully integrated into Inspira and full similarity reports will be available on each submission. These reports will not be available to assessors marking submissions, but are available for consideration by the Exam Boards.

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 FHS of History, Ancient and Modern History, History and Economics, History and English, and History and Politics, each item in the assessment is given equal weight, and counts as one paper (including the compulsory undergraduate thesis). In the FHS of History and Modern Languages, each item of assessment is given equal weight and counts as one paper with the exception of the Oral Examination, which counts as 0.5 of a paper.

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

The rules for classification are as follows:

First:	Average mark of 68.5 or greater. At least two marks of 70 or above. No mark below 50.
Alternative route to a First (ARF):	At least 50% of the papers must have a mark of 70 or above. The average mark must be 67.5 or greater. No mark below 50.
Upper Second:	Average mark of 59 or greater. At least two marks of 60 or above. No mark below 40.
Lower Second:	Average mark of 49.5 or greater. At least two marks of 50 or above. No mark below 30.
Third:	Average mark of 40 or greater. Not more than one mark below 30.

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.

In the joint school of History and Modern Languages:

First:	Average mark of 68.5 or greater. At least two marks of 70 or above. No mark below 50.
Alternative Route to a First:	At least 50% of the papers must have a mark of 70 or above. The average mark must be 67.5 or greater. No mark below 50.
Upper Second:	Average mark of 59 or greater. At least two marks of 60 or above. No mark below 40.
Lower Second:	Average mark of 49.5 or greater.

	At least two marks of 50 or above. No mark below 30.
Third:	Average mark of 40 or greater. Not more than one mark below 30.
Pass:	Average mark of 30 or greater. Not more than two marks below 30.

For the purposes of establishing the average, the mark on the oral examination, if it is expressed out of 100, shall be halved. The total of marks on all papers shall then be divided by 9.5 (or 10.5).

To attain a First by the above method, a candidate must obtain at least one mark of 70 or above in a content paper (i.e. a History or a literature paper).

To attain a First by the Alternative Route to a First, at least 50% of the papers must have a mark of 70 or above (discounting the mark on the oral examination), and the average mark must be 67.5 or greater.

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 of 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

It is not permitted to resit any papers in the Final Honour School of History or its joint schools.

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.

Submitting an MCE

Before submitting your notice you can seek advice from your college office. You should carefully read the guidance for students on the [Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners](#) . For technical instructions on submitting an MCE notice please refer to the [Student self service manual](#), page 54.

- Students can now submit mitigating circumstances notices to examiners directly in Student Self Service. You can also submit an MCE via your college, if you need the MCE to be raised on your behalf.
- You are encouraged to submit one main MCE covering all papers affected for each University Examination, however you can submit a further MCE if new circumstances have arisen since you submitted your first.
- You should submit a statement in support of your MCE to explain in a clear and concise manner how your performance in assessment has been impacted (either in the box provided or as an attachment) along with supporting evidence. Evidence could include – medical certificates or letters, statements from college officers or tutors, statements from a counsellor or other support person. Any additional information should be uploaded as supporting documentation (2MB file limit per document). Please make sure that any supporting documentation submitted with your notice is not password protected as this will prevent your notice from being processed.
- Your College Office can submit an MCE on your behalf but you will need to supply them with your statement and supporting evidence.
- Notices should be submitted as soon as possible after completing the affected assessments and must be received prior to noon on the day before the exam board.
- The examiners will consider your mitigating circumstances and any supporting documentation.
- You will be able to view the outcome of your MCE via the results screen in Student Self Service when your year outcome has been released.

7. Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.

The FHS Board of Examiners for 2025 has not yet been appointed.