

FHS 2023
History
Examiners' Report
DRAFT 4

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS IN THE FINAL HONOUR SCHOOL OF HISTORY 2023

A. EXAMINERS' REPORT

Overall Performance

FHS 2023 occurred during a UCU-mandated Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) which started on 20 April and was called off on 6 September.

Overall Performance

FIGURES AS AT 9 OCTOBER 2023

95 candidates, or 36.5% of the cohort were awarded Firsts. This compares with 40.8% in 2022, 50.5% in 2021, 51.7% in 2020, 48.7% in 2019, 45.96% in 2018, 38.7% in 2017, 34.8% in 2016, 29.61% in 2015, 31.44% in 2014, 24.22% in 2013, 22.22% in 2012, and 29.4% in 2011. The marks profile has thus returned to pre-Covid levels, specifically somewhere between the levels of Firsts achieved in 2017 and 2016.

There were 260 candidates classified, compared to 206 in 2022. A total of 21 candidates withdrew, compared to 22 in 2022.

165 candidates, or 63.5% of the cohort were classified in the Upper Second Class. This compares with 59.2% in 2022, 48.7% in 2021, 46.4% in 2020, 50.9% in 2019, 53.2% in 2018, 61.3% in 2017, and 65.2% in 2016. 2 candidates were awarded 2.2s, compared to none in 2022, 2 in 2021, and 1 in 2020. No Third was awarded.

86 MCEs from 67 candidates were considered by the boards. This resulted in remedial action being deemed appropriate in 5 cases.

This was the largest cohort of main school historians to be examined for fifteen years, in large part a result of A Levels having been cancelled in 2020, and fewer candidates than usual missing their Oxford offers for 2020 entrance. Some examiners wondered whether the lack of A Level exam experience and wider Covid-disruption during the Sixth Form had a lingering impact on some candidates (though this cohort had sat Prelims in 2021).

The overwhelming majority of main school candidates received fully classified degrees in July, despite the major complications arising from the MAB. It was a matter of great regret to the Board that 14 candidates nevertheless initially had to graduate DDH (deemed to have deserved honours) because of missing marks. Once the remaining marks arrived in early October, fully classified degrees were agreed in the same week and the candidates notified on Friday 6 October.

B. REPORTS ON INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

a) History of the British Isles

BIF 1: The Early Medieval British Isles, 300-1100

A total of thirteen candidates submitted portfolios for this paper; there were four firsts (31%), three high upper seconds (31%) and six marks in the low sixties (46%). The candidates between them attempted a good range of questions such that twenty of the thirty questions attracted answers. The most popular

questions were 28 (on Scandinavian settlement, six answers), 24 (conversion to Christianity, five answers), and 3 (royal women, 3 answers). The topics that were not answered did, however, include some major topics: peasants, saints, pastoral care, law, gender roles, slavery, buildings and Domesday Book. This might occasion surprise, but the sample is small.

The fact that nearly half of the candidates only just obtained upper second marks is disappointing and appears to vindicate the faculty's decision to scrap this mode of examination after 2024. However, candidates in its final year would be well advised to learn from what differentiates stronger and weaker candidates.

The former conveyed the clear impression that they understood what the primary sources are, were able to articulate some of the problems involved in handling particular forms of evidence, and used them directly. They had evidently read widely during term and the exam period and were therefore able to draw persuasively from an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources, approaching questions from a good range of perspectives in thoughtful and sophisticated ways. They wrote with clarity, energy, purpose, and a sense of ambition, conveying an independent voice. They made efficient use of the word limit, maximising the value of each sentence and paragraph, generating densely-argued material which answered the question clearly and specifically, especially in conclusions. They also proof-read their work carefully before submitting.

The weaker candidates, by contrast, offered little evidence of direct engagement with primary sources, or sustained criticism of the nature of the evidence; answered the questions narrowly and with insufficient and/or imprecise substantiation; seemed to re-hashing tutorial essays without significant additional reading or research; ran out of steam before they had reached the word limit, or wasted words with padding and repetition; and ended with summaries or bland generalisations, as distinct from conclusions focussed on the specific terms of the question.

BIF 2: The British Isles in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1330

In what has turned out to be the penultimate outing of this format for examining British History in Schools, the problems which have led to its demise remained very evident in the British History II scripts. Of the 20 submitted, three secured First Class marks, fourteen 2.1 marks (most of them low), and three 2.2 marks. As this profile suggests, overall the quality of responses was disappointing compared to what one might hope for, and much lower than what was routinely the case when the paper was examined in the traditional way. This is unsurprising because candidates wrote these essays in the dog days following the end of the Trinity term of their second years, when their views of the subject were only partially formed, when they were presumably tired after the exertions of the year, when they had still not achieved their full potential as historians, and when those of a nervous disposition were afforded nine days in which to panic. Answers could ramble, and include much irrelevant detail, as candidates attempted to fill up the 2000 word space available. Proof reading was poor in a paper which afforded plenty of time to do it: it is a great mistake to misspell Becket as several did, to suggest that Edward I aspired to rule Great Britain, to talk repeatedly about 'the Georgian Revolution' pushed through by the papacy in the late eleventh century, etc.

Some candidates were impressively up to the minute in terms of the latest research – Domesday Book being a striking example. By contrast, several of those who attempted a popular question on historical writing clearly had not read any of the writers on whose works they commented. In a take-away paper this is even less forgivable than it would be under traditional examination conditions. The lesson is that, depending on the topic being addressed, it is prudent to know quite a lot about the sources as well as about modern scholarship discussing those sources. This is of course true whatever the format of the exam. Bibliographies attached to essays tended to be full, but it was clear that some candidates had not consulted works included in them.

The most popular question by some margin was that on Jews in England, a development which illustrates the agility of outline papers. Five years ago, the Jews would have been a niche interest. Unfortunately, most answers said much the same things, at various levels of competence. This is a highly technical topic, because of the role of Jews in royal finance. Those technicalities need to be mastered in order to produce a

convincing answer. More broadly, the technical detail necessary to write such an answer on legal issues – eg. the procedural reforms under Henry II – was for the most part lacking. There is another important lesson here for candidates. The solution is to be found in the small number of excellent, clear books and essays on the subject.

The next most popular question, on saints' cults, prompted greater variety and imaginativeness in response, which was welcome. As is so often the case, those who attempted Welsh, Irish, or Scottish questions tended to evince a confidence which carried the examiners along. The amount of literature to be mastered for these subjects is also less forbidding. The question about imperial aspirations of English monarchs was, however, answered solely by reference to these British and Irish territories. Candidates seemed to have forgotten entirely about continental possessions, a topic covered extensively and richly in the historiography, and of well-evidenced concern to contemporaries. Perhaps candidates have unconsciously absorbed a Brexit mentality.

Questions 2, 4, 5, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 29 and 30 – over 40% of those on offer – attracted no answers, though most of these were straightforward, and concerned with major topics on which there is an extensive literature.

BIF 3: The late Medieval British Isles, 1330-1550

Twenty-nine students took the take-home paper in June 2022 (26 main school and 3 joint school). Eight students achieved marks of 70 or above (27.6%); nine achieved marks of 65-69; ten had marks of 60-64; and there were two marks below 60.

The best answers were marked by extensive and original discussions of primary sources and a keen awareness of current and older historiographical positions. The weaker essays tended to be based on very limited reading, confined to pre-2000 publications. This was disappointing. All students had access to the Faculty bibliography and online lecture materials, which together indicate an extensive and up to date reading list for canonical and marginal topics alike. Tutors may wish to update their reading lists more often, but equally there is no excuse for students accepting the sufficiency of a reading list that has not been kept up to date by a tutor. For example, rehashing the 'golden age of women' debate of the 1990s without any reference to the past 25 years of scholarship ought to ring alarm bells for any second year student. The examiners would like to see more comparison across the British Isles; any student attempting such work is likely to be rewarded.

BIF 4: Reformations and Revolutions, 1500-1700

69 candidates took the paper this year. Due to the cumulative volume of such a large number of 6,000 word take-home papers, the marking was split between a number of examining pairs. Overall, 13 candidates received 1st class results, 51 2.1s [divided 29 in the 65-69 category; 22 in the 60-64], 4 2.2s. and 1 3rd.

The most popular question - with very mixed results - was q. 14 (witchcraft), with others including q. 3 (national and ethnic identity), q. 5 (patriarchy), q. 10 (popular protest), q. 24 (Tudor monarchs and the church), and q. 27 (religious motivations during the civil wars). There were few takers for q. 4 (landscape), q. 6 (literacy), q. 8 (crime), and q's 16-22, i.e. London, Wales, Scotland, overseas ventures, economic growth, the natural world, and (perhaps surprisingly) political thought. Questions addressing aspects of the last half-century covered by the paper generally attracted little attention. As this suggests, many candidates focused on the earlier or later parts of a 'core' period running from the break with Rome to the end of the civil wars, and there was a good deal of variety in terms of how frequently candidates ventured beyond England.

A small number of exceptional scripts showed what can be achieved in this format. These had been produced by candidates who had read impressively widely; made sharp historiographical interventions; and offered arguments that were both clear and nuanced. The terms of the question were subjected to sharp analysis. Essays were well introduced, and their internal organisation clearly sign-posted. Discussion was thematic, rather than merely chronological. The prose on display was often elegant and always clear and easy to read. These candidates also tended to make telling use of quotations from primary sources.

The majority of work, though, was in the solidly competent mid- to high-2.1 bracket. This format of examination does tend to tilt many candidates towards the earnest reproduction of a lot of detailed factual information at the expense of sharp argument and up-to-date historiographical engagement. Some popular topics - notably witchcraft - attracted relatively unimpressive answers that felt like warmed-up and mildly tweaked tutorial essays. There was more of this from candidates at the lower end of achievement, often matched with too little proof-reading, and a disappointingly narrow range of reading. It was particularly dispiriting to see many candidates submit essays with very poorly formatted bibliographies, prompting tariff reductions in the process. Adhering to clearly stated Faculty norms should not be difficult. If the take-home essay paper format persists next year, the most important single message to candidates is that they should aim to read more if they wish to produce work of a high standard, especially - but not only - in major monographs.

BIF 5: Liberty, Commerce, and Power, 1685-1830

Candidates wrote on a wide range of topics, and it was especially good to see so many tackle the question concerning debates over the abolition of slavery, though there was a tendency to dive into the details of those debates rather than in drawing on what often looked like reassuringly wide reading to think independently regarding a debate that is far from over. Political history continued to attract most responses, particularly debates over the Glorious Revolution and its long aftermath. It remains the case that not enough candidates think across the nations that constitute 'Britain' when responding to political questions. Social and cultural history was also pleasingly represented in a range of responses, and the revival of economic history as a major aspect of study of the period similarly inspired some perceptive and thoughtful essays. Intellectual history is still a minority pursuit in this paper, despite a rich secondary literature and a variety of stimulating primary material. Religion is gradually growing as a field in which the best candidates respond well and thoughtfully. There was the occasional instance of a good candidate considering the evidence of material culture, but this remains underexplored by too many approaches to this paper. Too many candidates, including some of the best, continue to stay in roughly the same territory when selecting their questions, political historians writing political history, social historians writing social history, and so on; the best candidates wrote across a range of fields and did not find themselves repeating material across answers, as tended to happen with some who stayed in what they considered to be their safety zone. The best papers were ones in which candidates took the occasional thoughtfully calculated interpretative risks. Candidates should be encouraged to think thematically when preparing for this paper, giving depth to their extended essays and avoiding a tendency to reheat tutorial essays, something that the extended takeaway paper was specifically designed to prevent. They should stand back a little when reading the paper and think hard about what they want to say and how exactly they want to say it. Too many people identified what they thought safe topics on which they had previously written rather than thinking hard about what the questions were raising in addition to what they had thought about before. There is time for thinking before writing, something that the best candidates clearly did, and which all should be encouraged to do.

BIF 6: Power, Politics, & People, 1815-1924

32 Candidates submitted essays for assessment this year (24 HIST, 1 HENG, 1 HML, 6 HPOL)

Of the 30 questions on the 2023 BIF6 paper, most had at least one response from candidates and, there was a good spread of responses overall. Questions on Chartism, the Reforms of the 1830s, and enthusiasm for Empire attracted multiple answers. Many students who answered on Chartism missed the implications of the terms of the question and focused exclusively on the men of the movement without considering the role of gender, some of those writing on the Reforms of the 1830s considered these very narrowly, missing changes in municipal politics and referring exclusively to the historiography of the late twentieth century – this narrowness is disappointing given that the take-home paper provides an opportunity to think more deeply about the nuances and particular demands of the questions selected. Across the board, the weakest answers did not engage with recent historiographical debate, or were simplistic in their engagement with ideas about social control or ideas of gender. The strongest essays developed thoughtful and nuanced

arguments that engaged closely with the terms of the question and related their discussions to the recent scholarship. The overall standard of scripts was solid, with 7 candidates awarded First-Class marks, and some of those who did not achieve First-Class marks overall doing well on particular essays. The very best scripts showed evidence of wide reading and often engaged effectively with primary source material, as well as taking on board the encouragement in the rubric to 'to display some breadth of knowledge overall, whether thematically, geographically or chronologically', which again, the take-home paper should provide a good opportunity to do. Candidates should also consider the benefits of writing in different registers (episodic / thematic), on different dimensions (political / cultural / social etc), and in a British / Irish / Scottish / 4 nations / and not merely English frame. When addressing some themes, - eg religious change – such narrowness was particularly problematic. The weakest scripts tended to result from candidates producing overly narrow or very superficial responses.

BIF 7: Changing Identities, 1900 to the present

62 candidates were examined by take-home paper. 17 candidates got marks of 70 or above and 45 candidates marks of 60-69. As this suggests, the majority of the scripts were either competent or highly competent. None was disastrous; conversely, only a handful were really outstanding.

All but three questions on the paper were attempted; those that were not were Q12, about whether Ireland, Scotland and/or Wales were more modern than England, Q27, about Britain's military resources, and Q30 about the relative feminisation of elites. There was some bunching, with the most popular questions being Q14, 'Did the cultural permissiveness of the 1960s only become a reality for the mass of the population in the 1970s?' (23 answers) and Q25 'How distinct were the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in twentieth-century Britain?' (19 answers). Not all the answers to either of these questions successfully engaged with the terms of the question. Other popular topics included second-wave feminism, the Conservative Party and modernity, popular enthusiasm for empire, and the impact of mass immigration on class identity. The omission from the take-home paper of a question on religion was regrettable, as it meant that students were not able to answer on a topic that many of them had covered in tutorials.

In general, the markers thought that the best answers were those that took the opportunity of having some more time, and greater access to resources, to produce more distinctive arguments that drew on a wider range of evidence than is possible in a timed examination. The next (and final) cohort to sit the BIF 7 take-home paper might fruitfully bear this in mind when they sit the take-home paper in Trinity 2024.

BIT (a) Bodies of Feelings: gender and sexual identity since c.1500

Fifty-two candidates completed the take-home paper in June 2022. This was the highest number of candidates for the paper since it was introduced in June 2018. Candidates attempted a wide range of questions. Some of the most frequently answered questions asked candidates about the regulation of sexuality across the British Empire; sex education; and transgressive dress. Less frequently answered questions included the Reformation policing of misdemeanours; class and reproduction; the labour market and singleness; the regulation of abuse; and the distinction between physical and mental health.

Marks for the paper were more widely spread than in previous years. Some candidates excelled by producing answers that drew on a very wide range of reading to form original arguments about continuity and change across more than 500 years and across the British Isles. These strongest answers also engaged critically with concepts in the reading and in the questions, such as 'patriarchy', 'liberation', or 'the state'. Many of the most impressive answers brought their secondary reading into conversation with relevant primary sources to offer thought-provoking and new perspectives on this scholarship.

Weaker answers drew on very limited reading. This meant that they either provided broad-brush and clichéd accounts that were historically inaccurate or answers that were unjustifiably narrowly focused in answering these thematic questions. Weaker candidates struggled with the central challenge of the paper of making precise arguments that are informed both by reading across more than 500 years and by the analysis of diversity within each time period, such as through place, class, and race, as well as gender and sexuality.

All candidates showed that they had engaged seriously with the challenges of the paper and of the demanding take-home format.

BIT (b): The Making and Unmaking of the UK, 1603-present

(was suspended no takers)

b) EUROPEAN AND WORLD HISTORY

EWF 1: The World of Late Antiquity, 250-650

The paper had a wide spread of questions, enabling candidates to utilise the range of knowledge developed across the sessions. Questions were designed to be either targeted to specific subjects/periods or to be more suited to broader conceptual interpretations across periods/themes. Focused exam questions included: three on the Middle East and the rise of Islam; one on Sassanian Iran; three on the Roman Empire and early Byzantium. Eighteen broader questions included three on political history; four on religious history; two on gender studies; three on cities; one on rituals and the operation of politics; four on environmental and socioeconomic history; and one methodology question. Of the ten candidates on the paper, we had two AMH, two HPOL and six HIST. While candidates attempted a wide range of the questions, there was a preference for either the very specific questions or the very broad, especially political history (8, 9, and 17 were attempted by four of the ten sitters). There was limited uptake of those questions to do with gender, environmental, or social history. Grades for exams ranged evenly from 58-75, with a good average of 67.7.

EWF 2: The Early Medieval World, 600-1000

No report needed as only three candidates

EWF 3: The Central Middle Ages, 500-1500

There were eleven candidates for this paper. Two obtained marks of 70+, five obtained marks in the range of 66-69, and four in the range 62-65. The answers were spread evenly across the paper such that most of the questions were attempted by at least one candidate, and none of the questions attracted more than three answers. The candidates also collectively answered with reference to a broad geographic range of case studies, including material on Rus, the Mongols, China, Japan and Africa as well as Byzantium and western Europe. It is apparent that this has become firmly embedded as a genuinely 'European and World' paper in teaching and learning. The strongest answers evinced a willingness to answer questions with reference to more than one case study, using comparison to achieve analytical breadth and depth; this also enabled candidates to avoid the temptation of recycling tutorial essays in the exam. The stronger candidates also took care to answer the question set, not the questions answered in tutorials; developed arguments and worked towards a clearly stated conclusion; and substantiated consistently, deploying evidence and example regularly and with precision. A slight disappointment was that relatively few candidates demonstrated evidence of sustained engagement with primary sources. A learning point for future candidates is that examiners are likely to reward such endeavour: put simply, case studies developed up with direct reference to primary sources tend to be much persuasive than those that depend on the secondary literature alone.

EWF 4: The Global Middle Ages, 500-1500

12 students sat this paper: 6 received a first-class mark, 6 an upper second class. This was the fourth year in which the paper has been examined, and the scripts demonstrated a cohort of candidates who were meaningfully engaged with debates around the existence of a global Middle Ages. Answers were generally thoughtful and demonstrated a strong grasp of the relevant theoretical and historiographical frameworks, even if candidates occasionally lacked the detail necessary to bolster their conclusions. Questions on the utility of world systems, the existence of a medieval genre of travel writing, and the relationship between states and their environments proved particularly popular, but there was a good spread of answers across

the paper. Candidates also demonstrated considerable geographical range, and all the scripts showed an ambition to think broadly and look across the globe. Stronger answers were distinguished by their ability to draw together examples from different regions, cultures, and societies, addressing what medieval communities might meaningfully have held in common (or not). Less successful answers tended to approach questions in more anecdotal ways, comparing different societies without considering underlying structures or the significance of the phenomena they were describing. The very best scripts were able to point to problems with evidence and ambiguities in our understanding at the same time as offering a compelling overarching argument. Future candidates should note that answers on climate and disease are likely to do well when they show precise handling of quite technical evidence. Indeed, those candidates who were able to discuss and explain (e.g.) the mechanisms by which we can access historical climate data or recent work in the genomics of plague produced impressive answers. While such questions can require candidates to embrace what might (anachronistically) be called a 'scientific' vocabulary, this is not something they should be afraid to deploy.

EWF 5: The Late Medieval World, 1300-1525

Thirteen candidates took this paper, gaining 4 firsts, 7 2.1s, and 2 2.2s. Most papers were very good – relevant and well-informed (all the 2.1s and 2.2s were in the upper half of the class in each case); the weaker papers typically showed a lack of grasp of key concepts or underlying knowledge. Of the 26 questions, 16 received at least one answer, including a broad range of themes. Geographic range was good, with discussions of material from Japan, South America, the Mamluk state and Mali, as well as France, Italy, Hungary and the Byzantine world (though interestingly not China, or inland Asia, despite the presence of specific questions and abundant literature on both areas). The examiners noted that questions with a broad conceptual remit could often be answered with the use of multiple examples or a single case-study, but candidates wishing to do the latter must take particular care to be sure that their material addresses the hypothesis in the question, and they would be well-advised to consider how representative their chosen example is.

EWF 6: Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700

23 candidates sat this paper. The most popular question was Q.8 on the prosecution of witchcraft (nine), followed equally by Q. 12 (Reformation leaders), and Q. 26 (princely courts and artistic innovation) with seven takers apiece. Of the 30 questions, 11 did not attract any responses (see attached spreadsheet of question breakdown). Overall, three first class marks were awarded, with the majority of marks (18) in the mid 2.1 region. There were two marks in the lower-second range. No candidate failed the paper.

The best answers were thoughtful, covered the bulk of the time period, and delivered cogent, well-argued responses which were rich in examples (including primary-source quotations and opinions) and engaged critically and thoroughly with relevant scholarship. Sophisticated answers considered variations across space and time, and were able to argue clearly and skilfully on both sides of the question, with clear structure to the response.

Weaker responses tended to read like rehashed tutorial essays without sophisticated or thoughtful engagement with relevant literature. The witchcraft question, despite being the most popular, saw some poor answers which failed to grasp the concept of "local". There were some disappointingly narrow answers to the questions on Catholic resistance to change (Q. 14) and on Reformation leaders (Q.12) with simplistic and factually erroneous opinions. Some candidates also failed to understand the concept of a composite state (Q.29) and were quick to launch into rehearsed answers on Spanish decline.

EWF 7: Eurasian Empires. 1450-1800

Forty-Six candidates sat this paper and largely acquitted themselves very well, with a few scripts very much excelling. Twelve candidates were awarded a 70 or higher, and four received a 59 or lower. Candidates used the range of the paper well, with questions on Japan, mainland Southeast Asia, Russia, the Indian Ocean, military technology, climate/disease, and history writing the only ones not to attract answers. The questions on the Safavids (18 responses) and Mughals (14), religious expansion (17), and gender and

sexuality (16) were clearly the most popular. It was gratifying to see notably good answers on West and Central Africa, and the Safavids, which shows the way in which teaching is evolving too. Some answers on Africa were pleasing in their capacity to discuss state formation where European involvement was minimal while many answers on the Safavids showed a nuanced understanding of the chronology of changing religion-state relations. A number of answers on the Mughals indicated a good awareness of recent historiography on the wellsprings of Akbar's approach. In other parts of the paper, more historiographic awareness would have been desirable (the Americas, for e.g., or even on early modernity, the most obviously historiographical topic). Students can find the Part B questions more challenging insofar as they are asked to generalize across many parts of the world while still substantiating their arguments with appropriate evidence. While restricting the range of case studies to one part of the world may allow that substantial engagement to come through, candidates should be aware that the paper also rewards breadth. It is inherently more challenging to bring divergent cases together and the risks/rewards involved here will be recognised by markers. The Part B topic that attracted the best answers was probably gender and sexuality, particularly where candidates were able to consider the limits to the state's role in policing these areas or the relevance of non-state dynamics. One feature of weaker answers across the paper was failing to address the precise terms of the question, for example, ignoring the reference to the 'drivers' of early modernity for question 15, or the 'when and where' proselytizers were able to adapt in question 16.

EWF 8: Enlightenments and Revolutions: Europe 1680-1815 (1680-1848) (Old and new syllabus)

The popularity of the paper continues to grow: both examiners do not remember a year with as many students sitting the EWF8 exam as 2023. 30 students took the exam, of which 20 were single-school historians, 4 History & Politics students, 2 each on the History & Modern Languages (Old Regs.) and History & English degrees, and one each reading Ancient & Modern History and History & Economics. Overall, candidates were well informed and did impressive preliminary reading across topics, geographical areas, and themes. While there was no high-flying script that deserved a mark in the higher reaches of the first-class category, none proved less than fully satisfactory. The median mark was 66, and examiners agreed on a first-class mark for 6 of the 28 New Regs. scripts. Some topics retained their traditional attraction (the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, and to a lesser degree Russia and Prussia); there were very few attempts to tackle non-European questions. Indeed, we should seriously consider culling such questions from the EWF8 exam. They originated at a time when there were no FHS papers on early modern Asia; now that EWF7 has proved a successful and popular paper, there is no reason to include Asian topics as an appendix in an exam script of a thoroughly European paper.

EWF 9: From Independence to Empire: America 1763-1898

16 candidates were examined this year, achieving seven Firsts (43.75%), seven 2.1s (43.75%), and two 2.2s (12.5%). Candidates answered a strong range of questions across the paper as a whole. In Section A 50% of questions were answered showing a marked preference for questions one on the American Revolution and eight on the agency of the enslaved (which was answered by 13 of the candidates, typical of the pattern of student interest on this paper). Section B was less diversely engaged; question 11 being answered six times and 12, 14, and 20 one each demonstrating a marked preference for candidates to answer on the antebellum period. Just two questions were not answered in Section C (26 and 30).

The examiners were impressed with the strongest first-class answers that were outstanding for the breadth and precision of their reading and demonstrated inventive approaches to the questions, and in Section C those candidates that defined their terms and case studies effectively were more successful than those that answered through a smattering of different examples where the argument lost momentum and the analysis lacked depth. Student interest in slavery led the majority of candidates to answer Q8, which showed a range of inventive responses, but also some answers that engaged the question indirectly and showed evidence of having been pre-prepared or a repetition of tutorial essays, or merely itemised types of resistance without engaging with the conceptual approaches of historians.

EWF 10: The European Century, 1820-1925

Fourteen students took this paper. 19 out of the 30 questions on the exam were attempted by at least one student. There was some concentration on questions specific to particular countries and periods, such as qu 6 on dynastic loyalty in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, qu 13 on Dreyfus, and qu 14 on confessionalism in Germany. Given the specific reading and preparation related to these topics, this concentration is understandable. However, on occasion it would make more sense to risk one of the more broadly framed questions, especially if candidates do not fully understand specific terminology. This was the case in qu 12, which referred to 'the dynamic of "totalisation" in the Franco-Prussian War'. None of the questions on the Ottoman Empire were attempted, although it was cited in some other answers; nor were any questions that focused on the post-First World War period. The best answers were characterized both by their understanding of the historiographical issues implicit in questions and by their ability to cite apposite examples. Especially convincing were those answers that deployed wide knowledge of primary sources (including autobiographies, literature, music and painting) appropriately.

EWF 11: Imperial & Global History 1750-1930

We marked 28 scripts, grading them in the rather narrow range 59-71%. We found ourselves unable to stretch higher. This is a common enough situation, but one examiner's recollection suggests even good students may be finding written exams a notch more difficult. However, we were able to give seven firsts (25%). Of 25 questions, 19 found customers, the two most popular being on gender and the British raj in India and on racism and its effects, at 10 answers each. Islamic entanglements with imperialism attracted eight answers. We were also pleased to see that questions on Japanese and Qing Chinese imperialism were fairly popular, with seven and six answers respectively. The question on whether infectious disease helped or hindered imperial expansion also had six answers – more than usual, if memory serves, which may be a COVID effect. We found some of the handwritten answers time consuming though not impossible to decipher, and feel that the Faculty should begin investigating secure word-processing technology for examinations.

EWF 12: The Making of Modern America since 1863

33 candidates sat the European and World 12, America since 1863, paper in the 2022-2023 Academic Year. This included ten joint schools students. 9 candidates received marks in the first-class range, 22 candidates received Upper Second Class classification, and two candidates received Lower Second Class classifications. 19 Questions attracted responses, while ten questions had no taker. The questions on Jim Crow, New Deal, McCarthyism, and the New Conservatism were particularly popular. The asterisked questions attracted not many takers; even though those allow students to score higher in terms of originality. The results overall were strong and most scripts demonstrated a detailed knowledge and understanding of the historical specifics as well as the historiography. The very best answers stood out in the way they brought historical specifics and historiography in a fruitful conversation with each other in order to present an original and compelling argument. The responses that consistently achieved high marks were those that offered a multi-faceted and nuanced response to the question set. The highest quality responses were all tailored to the specifics and offered a clear, thoughtful 'take' which demonstrated original analytical thinking and interpretative boldness.

EWF 13: Europe Divided, 1914-1989

There were 31 candidates for this paper this year. Candidates were required to answer one question from each of the three sections (pre-1945, post-1945 and thematic). Scripts generally well within the mid 2:1 region, but there was a scattering of firsts and some high 2:2s. The weaker responses were descriptive, overly vague and weak or incorrect in detail, and/or lacking in terms of argument. Scripts were largely clustered around a relatively small number of questions. The pre-1945 essays focused on war and extremism: principally the effects of WWI, Communism and Fascism, and, particularly, ordinary participation and genocide. Weaker answers here rehearsed the functionalism/structuralism debates and missed the significant scholarship over the last 20-30 years on participation, bystanders, etc., which they

struggled to frame within the question. Popular post-1945 questions were the role of Moscow in 1989 – better answers discussed and weighed a variety of factors and in particular were sensitive to the short and medium term – and 1968. More effective responses to the latter balanced discussion of east and west and probed the idea of ‘coherence’. Answers to section C were somewhat disappointing in that questions on the effects of war, violence and economic globalization invited imaginative approaches. The question on gender was very popular. In general, better responses to this section moved beyond the **episodic and the descriptive** to provide a more cogent broader and analytical vision of the whole period.

EWF 14: The Global 20th Century, 1930-2003

41 students sat the EWF 14 exam in 2023. The range of marks was very much in the expected range, with a median and mean score of 65. Five students earned a mark of 70 or above, representing just 12% of the scripts marked. While this number is within historical norms (pre-2013), it is low for the present era in which it is not uncommon for 20-30% of undergraduates to leave with a First Class degree. On the other end of the spectrum only three scripts scored below a 60, and none scored below a 58.

One challenge with the exam is avoiding repetition between essays, something that even the examiners found challenging when designing questions for the exam in the first place

The top three questions answered were ‘To what extent was genocide a distinguishing feature of the period?’ (19), ‘Was the end of the Cold War primarily a Soviet failure or a Western success?’ (18), and ‘Was the Cold War primarily an ideological conflict?’ (10). Outside of the top two questions response rates rapidly fell off. 19 questions were answered 5 or fewer times, and four questions (‘To what extent was the Second World War a result of the financial crises of the 1920s and 1930s?’; ‘How important was global pressure and activism in ending apartheid in South Africa?’; ‘Why did the US invade Iraq in 2003?’; and ‘How successful were efforts to curb population growth?’) were not answered at all. The frequency of essays on genocide (most answers referring to the Holocaust) and the end of the Cold War suggest a serious problem with the paper. Despite nominally being a global history paper essay responses leaned very heavily towards Western/European topics. Both of the top two questions could just as easily have been responses to EWF 13 essay questions. More effort needs to be made to remind students of the global remit of this paper.

Moving forward I feel that, above all else, the paper needs to have a much stronger sense of identity. Shifting the start date from 1930 to 1945 may help, by clearing up some of the attention frequently given to the Second World War, a conflict that can be studied across many other papers if a student so desires. References to any post-1989 history were extremely rare in exam scripts, so tightening the time period may also push tutors and students to engage with the entire range of the paper. A shift from ‘global’ to explicitly ‘Global South’ would likely also help push students and tutors to really engage with African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American histories, which are woefully underrepresented in the undergraduate curriculum at present.

EWT (A) Masculinity & its Discontents, 200-2000

21 candidates sat the paper, eight of them obtaining first class marks; the remainder received 2.1 marks, most of these above 65. In other words, this paper continues to elicit work of notably high calibre. The level of engagement with the themes and the material is heartening. The most popular questions (five or more responses) were those on the family, colonialism, violence, and sexuality; nine questions attracted under five answers; eight questions on a range of topics (e.g. childcare, peer group pressure, castration) went unanswered. It remains an open question whether the move last year to setting 24 as opposed to 16 questions is productive. The best answers were those willing and able to advance and sustain a line of argument through specific case studies. This could, but did not need to, involve a fluency with cultural theory. One thing which was pleasing to note is that the distinction between queer and gay was better articulated than in scripts from the previous year. Conversely, scripts which jumped straight into downloading case studies with less discussion of the question and its ramifications did slightly less well. Overall, however, this is a paper with few discontents.

EWT (B) Global Networks of Innovation, 1000-1700: China, Islam and the Rise of the West

No report needed as only three candidates

EWT(C) Waging War-in Eurasia

Twelve finalists sat the paper this year (AMH 2; HECO 2; HPOL 2; HIST 6). Perhaps unsurprisingly with twice as many candidates the spread of marks was more extensive than in 2022 – the lowest at 60, with three first-class marks including one outstanding paper which received 75. With one exception all candidates chose to answer two ‘case study’ questions and just one thematic one, which is in line with previous years. Question 1 on the Mongols and nomadic warfare was popular, but with four answers less so than in previous years where almost every candidate had answered it. Instead the most popular question was no.9, on Napoleon’s invasion of Russia, with five answers. Three candidates answered question 5 on the Qing Conquest of Inner Eurasia, and two on the Northern Wars (not usually a popular topic). This was the same number as chose Q.15 on the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, which was much less popular than normal (this, it must be said, made marking the paper more varied and interesting for the examiners). Of the thematic questions the most popular was no.17 on nomadic warfare which was answered three times, with No.18 (the military revolution/divergence) close behind on two. It was good to see two candidates attempting two of the most difficult questions – 25, on gender, and 27, on ‘war writing’, and producing very good answers. The pattern seen in some other years – where the ‘thematic’ essay received a lower mark than the two ‘case studies’ did not really apply this year.

There were four instances where the examiners differed by more than six marks in their evaluation, which in three cases led to the first marker revising his opinion downwards from the first class to the upper 2:1 bracket, and one where it settled on a borderline mark of 70. Overall the standard was encouraging, with only two answers clearly in the 2:2 range at 58, and only three papers with marks below 65. Thanks to the return to invigilated exams last year we did not have to worry about plagiarism or ChatGPT.

C) FURTHER SUBJECTS

FS 1: Anglo-Saxon Archaeology c. 600-750; Society and Economy in the early Christian period

9 students took the Early Anglo-Saxon Archaeology paper, considerably more than usual. The primary and secondary marker agreed that the paper was challenging; nonetheless students attempted a broad range of essays, encompassing social and economic themes in equal weight. Some questions attempted were quite open-ended, leaving room for the student to interpret them in different ways. In some cases, this led to significant omissions. The narrowness of focus on one particular source, or one assemblage, was the major limiting factor; for instance, in a question on stone sculpture, most students discussed only Bewcastle and Ruthwell, failing to bring in other examples. The overall marks nonetheless indicate a solid performance, and were clustered in the mid-high 60s: 5 students achieved 66, 2 further 68 and 2 further marks above 70. The strongest papers demonstrated wide reading and knowledge of a range of sites, made connections between different subject areas and gave appropriate and accurate examples. It was refreshing to see recent excavations featuring in the stronger essays.

FS 2: The Near East in the Age of Justinian and Muhammad, 527-c.700

There were 15 candidates. Of these 4 candidates gained a first class mark. No candidate was awarded a mark below 60%. Final marks fell in the range 62-73. This year the assessors attempted a different kind of question in Section A, where questions were not asked about specific authors, but rather more open issues were addressed to which candidates were invited to apply particular set texts. This approach worked well, and guaranteed that a range of set texts were addressed. What differentiated stronger from weaker scripts was serious reflection on questions, disciplined and original arguments, and detailed knowledge of the set texts and relevant secondary materials.

FS 3: The Carolingian Renaissance

(suspended in 2022-23)

FS 4: The Crusades, c. 1095-1291

16 candidates sat this paper. A revision session was offered in the first half of Trinity Term by the convenor, and there were also some meetings with individual tutors. Unsurprisingly, most of the performances in the examination were clustered in the mid-to-high 2:1 range. Six candidates secured a First-class mark, which represents an increase on last year. It is well worth noting, though, that only two of these candidates did not require some serious discussion by the markers. There were four 2:2s, right at the upper end of the spectrum – and, once again, that represents a change from last year. It may be concluded that the markers were more successful in spreading out the possible range of grades than some of their predecessors have been. Out of the 14 questions on the paper, 9 received at least one response. It has to be admitted that this is noticeably lower than last year. The most popular questions were those in Section A, since there is not that much choice in that particular area. In Section B, candidates preferred to answer on the course and outcome of the First Crusade, holy war and political legitimation, and the Latin perspective on Byzantium. Responses to the source-based questions continue to vary a great deal. Once again, the best marks tend to be awarded to candidates who actually engage with the set texts, rather than those who rely on a general sense about what the key debates are. It has to be said, though, that the clustering of answers is a significant problem in both sections. Candidates tend to respond on subjects like the First Crusade, Byzantium, Saladin and Villehardouin – and they do this because they are confident of covering the ground in these areas. This means that candidates are far less inclined to take risks and ‘have a go’ at the other questions that are provided. Tutors may well need to do more to emphasize to students that it is a good idea to tackle the less popular subjects, in which it is easier to say something new, different and interesting. At the same time, setters and revisers may want to think about tightening the range of questions so as to reflect, a little better, what candidates have actually studied. This is, in short, an excellent and popular FS – but it is well worth considering what shape and focus it should have going forward.

FS 5: Culture and Society in Early Renaissance Italy, 1290-1348

Not needed less than five candidates

FS 6: Flanders and Italy in the Quattrocento, 1420-1480

Not needed only one candidate

FS 7: The Wars of the Roses, c 1450-c.1500

Nine candidates sat the paper, gaining two first-class marks, five 2.1s (two high, three low), and two 2.2s. The paper was quite a stretching one, with some unusual questions, but candidates mostly rose to the challenge and seemed to enjoy thinking about their answers; all but three of the questions attracted at least one answer, and the ones that went unanswered addressed fairly familiar topics: parliament, the insolvency of Henry VI and the pressure for political reform. On the whole, candidates showed a decent knowledge of the set-texts, though it is becoming clear that some of them struggle to read middle English, and this is something the convenor will try to address with an extra class next year. Not all candidates succeeded in linking together a detailed knowledge of the source material with the more familiar demands of writing analytically and argumentatively. The best answers showed a capacity to think originally, to argue fluently and relevantly, and to supply well-chosen and detailed evidence from the sources. Weaker answers were impressionistic, thinly- or loosely-illustrated, descriptive, or poorly-focused on the point of the question.

FS 8: Gender and Protestant Cultures in England, 1558-1659 (new)

Seven students took the inaugural Gender and Protestant Cultures finals exam in 2023, and the overall standard was impressive. Three firsts were awarded, and all marks were at least of a solid 2:1 standard.

The candidates knew the set texts well, and were able to compare them to each other with confidence, and at times, real insight. Given the overall standard of comprehension, the occasional misreading of texts did rather stand out. More significantly, candidates sometimes opted for borderline (at best) eccentric readings of the primary evidence without feeling the need to justify why their interpretation was convincing. Candidates must remember to pinpoint evidence to support the lines of analysis that they wish to pursue, or run the risk of looking like they have simply misunderstood what they have read. Some very strong answers were held just below first class level for one of two reasons. First, a lack of engagement with the big historiographical arguments. While candidates usually did a good job of attaching primary texts to secondary scholarship which contextualised them directly and explicitly, there was less ambition when it came to connecting the material to larger debates about the nature and processes of the long reformation. Second, most candidates were strikingly more confident when it came to gender than theology – for instance, some otherwise excellent answers to Q7 were let down by a failure to pick up that ‘calling’ refers to a theological concept and isn’t just a synonym for a job. Overall, though, it was a pleasure reading these answers, many of which used a firm foundation in knowledge of the texts to build interesting and distinctive arguments.

FS 9: Literature and Politics in Early Modern England

11 Candidates took the Literature and Politics FS this year. Most of the scripts were of a good rather than excellent quality, with 10 in the 2:1 range and one candidate achieving a First. Candidates tended to prefer questions from section A, and More and Spencer were especially popular. Candidates did best when they took hold of the question and answered it directly while drawing on an appropriate range of set texts; some of the less successful answers drifted from the question which had been set.

FS 10: The Iberian Global Century

(N Bailey/C Tarruell) (IM emailed NB – 4.10.23, AH reminder 1.11.23, 8.2.24 and 19.2.24)

FS 11: Writing in the Early Modern Period

Not needed as fewer than five candidates

FS 12: Court culture and Art in Early Modern Europe, 1580-1700

Twelve candidates sat the paper. Overall three first class marks were awarded, and the remaining marks were high to mid 2.1. The most popular question was Q.1 on Louis XIV and his courtiers, followed equally by Q.6 (courtly festivities and ‘the people’), Q.9 (courtly collecting) and Q.10 (court artists), and then by Q.7 (masculinity/femininity and artistic commissions). Four questions did not attract any responses - Q.2 (courtly festivities), Q. 8 (Protestant courts), Q.11 (changes in court culture) and Q.12 (courtly ceremonial and festivities).

The best work on this paper provided careful engagement with the question and subtle source analysis, with prescribed sources being deployed in an informed way. Such work was also sensitive to political, cultural and regional contexts, the social hierarchies within the ruling elites, and the complexities of social and gender status.

Weaker responses tended to rehearse historiographical positions in an uncreative way (notably when tackling Q.1), provide the requisite number of case-studies without much by way of in-depth comparative analysis, and/or fail to give due weight to each prescribed text in a question (e.g. for Q.1 and Q.6). They also lacked a broader knowledge of the period in which to situate and understand their subjects, and were less adept at identifying and unpacking conceptual terms such as ‘the people’. Candidates are encouraged to tackle a wider range of questions and, for Section B in particular, consider developing case-studies found within the very rich secondary literature, as well as those within the prescribed sources.

FS 13: War and Society in Britain and Europe, c.1650-1815

Twelve candidates sat the paper. Overall three first class marks were awarded, and the remaining marks were high to mid 2.1. The most popular question was Q.1 on Louis XIV and his courtiers, followed equally

by Q.6 (courtly festivities and 'the people'), Q.9 (courtly collecting) and Q.10 (court artists), and then by Q.7 (masculinity/femininity and artistic commissions). Four questions did not attract any responses - Q.2 (courtly festivities), Q. 8 (Protestant courts), Q.11 (changes in court culture) and Q.12 (courtly ceremonial and festivities).

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FS 14: The Metropolitan Crucible: London 1685-1815

Eight students took the paper this year, and the overall performance was good. Although only one student gained a clear first-class mark, two others scored 69, and all candidates received clear upper second marks. These scores reflected a lively engagement with the set texts, a good understanding of metropolitan development across a number of themes, and in several cases a nicely independent minded approach to answering questions. The stronger candidates helped their own cause by providing clear analytical frameworks at the outset, using current historiography to structure the discussion. Weaker candidates tended to be more descriptive in answering questions, and less able to draw out distinctive features of the metropolitan context, including change over time. All candidates could have thought more carefully about the nature of sources and pressures which genre placed on what could be and was said, particularly in Section A. Nonetheless, the examiners were pleased by the general standards achieved by the candidates.

FS 15: Histories of Madness and Mental Healing in a Global Context

Twelve students sat the exam for the FS on Madness and Mental Healing in a Global Context on Thursday, 25 May 2023. Students were provided with 8 possible questions in Section A (demonstrating knowledge of set text/primary sources) and 8 possible questions in Section B (demonstrating more thematic and comparative knowledge). The course is designed thematically around topics that include a range of periods and geographic case studies. I have opted for the model of 7 classes and 5 tutorials. Many of the primary sources are buttressed by historiographical sources that are either directly relevant or are thematically complementary. The range for final agreed marks was fairly tight (62 to 73). There were no significant disagreements between examiners regarding the marks. The questions answered displayed a few clusters of either popularity or confidence in the content. For both sections (16 questions total on the exam), 9 different questions were chosen with a very strong cluster on one particular question on the subject of 'the anti-psychiatry movement'. Seven questions were not chosen and 4 questions had only one student opting for it. There may be some preference or greater confidence in more modern sources but it is also clear that students enjoy engaging with issues of gender, race and visibility. Some care will be given in future to ensure that students feel all questions are accessible, but clear preferences may still remain apparent.

FS 16: Medicine, Empire and Improvement/Imperial Pathologies

Five candidates sat the paper. Candidates tackled a range of questions, particularly in part 1 (sources). In part 2, Q 14 (on political debates regarding contagion) was particularly popular, with three of five candidates answering this. Performance was strong, with two candidates achieving firsts; two with mid to high 2.1, and one candidate with a low 2.1. The strongest scripts engaged with the question and key concepts, provided careful source analysis and criticism, analysed the information provided, were conceptually precise, and had an informed understanding of historiographical debates. Weaker scripts paid

less attention to the requirements of the question and struggled to structure material, sometimes taking medical categories for granted rather than analysing them historically.

FS 17 Constructing the First New Nation: A Political History of the United States

(suspended in 2022-23)

FS 18 – Nationalism in Western Europe, 1799-1890

This further subject had a small cohort but rather a good crop of exam papers (3 clear firsts out of seven). Top papers managed to combine engagement with primary sources, good general knowledge of the period and issues, and some reflection on theories of nationalism. This is a tall order given the time constraints, but it is instructive that some of the best answers were also among the shortest. More does not necessarily mean better: a shorter answer that directly addresses the precise question asked may achieve higher marks. Given that this is a Further Subject, the treatment of the prescribed authorities is a consideration, but a primary source does not necessarily trump contextual knowledge. For instance, it is not credible to write that the borders of Germany were never in doubt just because this is claimed by one of the prescribed authorities, given that three wars were fought in this period over just this issue.

FS 19: Intellect and Culture in Victorian Britain

Not needed fewer than five candidates

FS 20: The Authority of Nature: Race, Heredity and Crime, 1800-1940

24 candidates sat the exam; 7 students gained first class marks (70+) and the lowest mark was 62. Overall scripts showed an impressive attention to primary evidence; knowledge of secondary literature; and an effort to address the question. The weaker arguments either displayed evidence of attempting to shoehorn pre-prepared claims into an answer on a particular topic, or failed to engage with the issue in sufficient detail, or contained more than one factually incorrect statement.

Almost all questions were attempted, with questions 5 (was US eugenics more or less racist than British counterpart); 12 (what caused fears of degeneration at the end of the C19th); and 13 (what roles did women play in the eugenics movement) being the most popular, attracting 5, 6 and 10 answers respectively.

The answers concerning the causes of fears about late C19th degeneration were sound in terms of invoking imperial anxieties and fears about miscegenation, urbanisation and immigration, but they said less about contemporary attacks on artistic 'decadence' or the relevance of alleged reversion to type in the natural world. On the comparison between Britain and the US on eugenics, most answers followed the line that the US brand of eugenics was concerned much more with race than the British variety, though one answer bravely bucked the trend and pointed to the obsession with feeble-mindedness in Goddardian eugenics.

The best answers came in responding to the question on women in the eugenics movement, where many students offered both a sophisticated treatment of the US/UK contexts of the work of Stopes and Sanger, as well as an account of why thousands of women were attracted to a movement that was ostensibly progressive and scientific while occasionally being overtly misogynistic.

FS 21: The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830-1971

15 students sat the FS 21 exam in 2023. The range of marks was in the expected range, with a median score of 66. Two students earned a mark of 70 or above, representing 13% of the scripts marked. No student scored below a 60, and the marks were heavily concentrated in the mid-60s. This may suggest that the exam is slightly too predictable, although I suspect this is a consistent problem for popular, well-designed Further Subjects.

The spread of questions answered was acceptable. The question on Palestine and historiographical debates was the most popular (with 9 responses), although this is presumably a fairly common occurrence. Only two questions went unanswered: one on the United Arab Republic and another on the Cold War in

the Middle East. It seems likely that the UAR was avoided since it would require a deeper knowledge of Syrian history to answer well (students tend to leave the paper with an excellent knowledge of Egypt). Likewise the Cold War dynamics are not always explored in great depth, so students may prefer to answer other topics and bring in the Cold War as appropriate, rather than write an entire essay on it.

On the whole students performed well in their exams, and the paper seems to be operating as intended. It recruits well, student engagement tends to be strong, and these are both reflected in the exam results.

FS 22: Transformations and Transitions in African History since c. 1800

In 2023 13 candidates sat the exam for this paper, of which 3 were in Joint Schools. This was a particularly high achieving cohort. Eight candidates achieved an agreed first-class mark, and 3 candidates an upper second. The remaining two candidates obtained a lower second. As in previous years, the essays were of a consistently high standard across the paper. There was a little less in the way of clustering than in previous years, with only one question (interestingly on a gendered history of Africa) receiving no takers. There was a good spread of essays on Section B questions, the most popular being that on the Partition (5 answers), which is still perceived as the pivotal moment in the continent's modern history, and that on nationalism/decolonization (4 answers); the other questions mostly attracted two or three takers. There was a little more clustering in the Section A source-focused questions, with six essays each on Q.2 (on Lugard, ever popular, and Smuts and their writings on colonial administration) and Q.5, dealing with Itote's Mau Mau General. Notably, there was relatively little interest in the 'precolonial' source questions, suggesting that despite our best efforts students' gaze tends toward the twentieth century. As I observed in last year's report, this may reflect the slightly briefer coverage of certain topics in classes/tutorials, but at the same time, students taking this ever-popular paper come with almost no prior exposure to African history in the curriculum. They therefore sometimes avoid topics in the exam which require sensitive handling and more in-depth reading, and stick to the 'solid', more easily navigable topics noted above.

FS 23: Modern Japan

10 candidates sat the paper, and everyone passed. The cohort was offered a two-hour revision session in Week 1 of Trinity. Five candidates received a mark of First Class, with the highest mark being 76, which is a good improvement from last year when only three managed to do so, and the highest mark was 71. This year's marks reflect the normal patterns of achievement from previous years and thus it appears that the 2022 academic year was abnormal. The marks ranged from 56 (the lowest) to 76 (the highest). The assessors observed that a good range of questions were responded to. All of them more or less successfully used the evidence and examples well, and some of them had original and in-depth analytic discussion. Save one candidate, they understood the significance of each question, and overall, their analytical and conceptual skills and knowledge acquired in the course were amply demonstrated in the way they contextualised their response in historical contexts and historiographical debates.

FS 25: Nationalism, Politics and Culture in Ireland, c.1870-1921

There were 13 candidates for this paper; 11 from History, and 1 candidate from each of History and English and History and Politics. Two candidates achieved marks of 70 and above, while the rest ranged between 62 and 68. The majority achieved marks of more than 66 and several candidates produced at least one excellent answer. The questions on cultural nationalism and radical women were by far the most popular, with socialist thought and Fenianism also attracting several candidates. It was good to see some candidates attempting questions which ranged across the whole period. The best of these balanced detail and argument and displayed a thorough knowledge of the texts. Weaker essays were too descriptive, didn't engage well with texts or lacked precision.

FS 26: A Global War, 1914-1920

Eleven students were registered for Finals this year, and ten actually sat the paper. Comparisons with previous years are a little difficult in the absence of previous reports, but from memory both the numbers

and the range of marks were broadly similar, with three scripts meriting a First class mark overall, but none beyond the 71-72 range. The lowest mark was 63, and there was one particularly poor answer to Q.14 which received a 2:2 mark from one examiner. There were two instances where the examiners' raw marks were more than six points apart, which led in one instance to the mark being lowered and in the other to it being raised, though in neither case was a grade boundary crossed.

The most popular question in Section A was no.5 on gendered experiences of war, answered by four candidates, closely followed by no.7 on novels which was answered by three. In section B it was question 12 on motivation and material conditions in war, answered by six candidates and hence the most popular question of all. Questions 1, 4, 9 and 13 attracted no answers at all. With two exceptions most candidates chose to answer two questions from section A and one from Section B – marks for the latter were on average slightly lower, though this was not a significant gap.

All candidates showed the necessary awareness of and reference to the set texts, though as usual some made much better use of this than others.

FS 27: China since 1900

Questions tackled:

1 – 9; 2 – 6; 3 -10; 4 – 2; 5 -1; 8- 8; 9 – 5; 10 – 2; 12 – 7; 15 -3; 15 – 4; 16 -12.

This year's paper saw a wide range of questions tackled, suggesting engagement with a broad number of topics taught within the Further Subject. The question (16) on the distinctiveness of the Cultural Revolution was particularly popular, with the best answers drawing on the set texts in detail. There were also many attempts at the questions on the late Qing, with good answers understanding the distinction between revolution and reform, and on women's emancipation during the Republican period. Some of the less strong answers failed to define terms adequately, for instance "modernity" in the context of question 3 and also 12 (relating to the May Fourth Movement). There were fewer takers for broader, more conceptual questions such as 10, which asked for a judgement on the Republic as a whole, though those who tackled it produced some of the most original thinking across the batch of scripts (eg the idea of the Republic as a regime cut off in midstream). The best answers were familiar both with details of secondary scholarship as well as the prescribed texts (some strong answers used these in part B as well as A). Overall, the papers showed real understanding of the often complex reality of 20th century China.

FS 28: The Soviet Union, 1924-1941

Seven candidates set the examination for 'The Soviet Union' Further Subject in Trinity Term 2023. The marks varied from 65% to 73%. Both the mean and the median mark were 69%. Candidates attempted all questions except 3, 5, 13, and 14 (see the full list of questions below). Questions 4 and 11 were most popular, each tackled by three candidates. It is difficult to draw any conclusions on this basis given the small sample size.

The quality of all answers was good and very good. Some candidates' marks suffered from overreliance on secondary sources/insufficient engagement with the set primary texts. At the lower end of the marking scale, candidates did not introduce/contextualise the primary sources with sufficient care. Answers tackling questions of Soviet foreign policy would have benefitted from a more critical take on key conceptual frameworks. Apart from that, no single theme/issue proved more or less problematic than others – questions attempted by multiple candidates resulted in answers of varying quality.

FS 29: Culture, Politics and Identity in Cold War Europe, 1945-1968

This year's examination marked a new stage in the evolution of the set texts for this now quite long-standing Further Subject. The paper was sat by 16 candidates, and a couple of them sat a modestly different Old Regs paper which reflected the need to accommodate students who had studied a previous range of set texts.

The quality of the performance was high: four candidates achieved marks above 70; two were slightly below 60. And the remainder were stretched across marks between 60 and 69.

The newer set texts were responded to well by the students, with good essays notably on Heinrich Böll (Billiards at Half-Past Nine), Milos Forman (Loves of a Blonde), and Pier Paolo Pasolini (Mamma Roma). However, some students continue to adopt an overly cautious approach to Section A questions, preferring to compare two set texts named in the question in their treatment of a defined topic; rather than using the set texts to explore wider issues of textual evidence.

Section B essays were predominantly well done. Questions on Americanisation, on patriarchy, and on 1968 were particularly popular, reflecting the predominant themes of the historiography. But one regretted the paucity of answers to questions on less canonical topics, such as nationalism, or the impact of decolonisation on Europe.

Such expressions of regret are the privilege of examiners. But the overall impression derived from this year must be that the post-1945 period retains its sense of historical novelty, prompting students to explore the rapidly changing forms of gendered and class identities, lifestyle and sexualities evident in Europe, east and west. In particular, the diversity of subjective source materials appeals to a wide range of candidates, who particularly appreciate the opportunity to study feature films alongside other primary sources, rather than within a specific genre of Film History.

FS 30: The Jews in Poland in the Twentieth Century: History and Memory

Seven candidates took the paper, six History, one History and Politics. No candidate received a mark below 60. An impressive three candidates received a mark of 70 or above. The quality of the answers was impressive overall. There was a good level of knowledge and a sensitive and intelligent engagement with the set texts.

FS 31: Britain at the Movies: Film and National Identity since 1914

This year's results were in line with previous years. Of the twelve candidates, a quarter secured a mark of 70 or over. The remaining candidates all gained marks above 60, except one whose paper was short-weight. Only one question on the paper was not attempted; this was, surprisingly, the question on Empire, which has been a popular topic in past years. The most-answered question this year was on New Wave and masculinity; half the candidates attempted this question and this might reflect students' particular interest in using film to explore aspects of identity such as gender. The other questions which attracted a significant number of answers – each eliciting responses from a quarter of the cohort – were those on cinema-going, national identity, Black or Queer Cinema, and music or cinematography. The strongest marks were distributed across a wide range of questions, although the question on Black and Queer Cinema did draw out some particularly astute and well-informed answers. What made these and other high-scoring questions particularly successful was their close analysis of the set texts, contextualised with reference to details of their production and reception, as well as to their wider historical context, and demonstrating critical evaluation of relevant secondary literature. The best answers combined this level of knowledge and understanding with sophisticated conceptualisation of the question and clearly structured and argued answers. Conversely, the poorest answers lacked precision and depth either in the handling of evidence or in intellectual engagement with the questions. Overall, however, candidates demonstrated impressive skill in analysing the set texts to draw out their historical significance in response to the questions.

FS 32: Scholastic and Humanist Political Thought

(not needed as fewer than five candidates)

FS 33: Political and Social Thought in the Age of Enlightenment

This was a pleasing set of results with some strong First Class work evident across most papers. A good range of questions was addressed, and the best candidates were careful to avoid any repetition in their answers regarding different thinkers. Most of those who attained a First-Class result in the paper did so consistently in all three questions, those who did not do so quite as consistently nevertheless offered strong evidence of exceptional work in their two best answers. The best candidates concentrated on the primary texts whilst showing thoughtful engagement with the secondary literature; occasionally candidates devoted too much

attention to interpretative literature at the cost of developing their own interpretation of the texts under examination, but this was only occasional. It was good to see candidates working across the full array of texts made available in Section B, with some especially strong responses to the challenges offered by the writings of Herder and Kant. The best candidates appreciate that this is an historical examination of theoretical literature, and they consequently strike exactly the right balance between ideas and their contexts.

FS 34: Political Theory and Social Science, c. 1780-1820

Sixteen candidates sat this examination, 10 from History and 6 from the Joint Schools. The interest in the subject this reflects is most welcome, even if a large cohort such as this tends to result in a more modest average performance. So there were not many first class marks (2/16). However, there were 4/16 on 67, with almost all the remaining candidates in the 2.1 range, except for one on 58. A broad range of questions was answered, with an understandable (and far from reprehensible) concentration on authors whose intellectual and cultural prestige is high: Hegel, Marx, Mill, Weber. Thus amongst the Section A authors Durkheim is the most neglected, which perhaps tells us something about the declining prestige of sociology. In Section B, besides Hegel, Bentham, Tocqueville and Bernstein attracted attention, Comte and Veblen did not. The examiners' principal exhortation to candidates is not unfamiliar: to excel in this paper and (more importantly) to get maximum intellectual benefit from it, a knowledge of broad contexts is not enough. This is a paper centred on classic texts, and careful and close reading of the texts is the very essence of independent intellectual engagement with these great and endlessly fertile authors. Verb. Sap.!

FS 35: Post-Colonial Historiography: Writing the (Indian) Nation

Nine candidates sat this paper. Two gained marks of 70 or above and seven achieved marks between 60 and 69 (of which most were in the high 60s). Eleven of the fourteen questions set attracted answers. Questions not attempted were all in section A: on a comparison of Ram Mohan Roy and Macaulay, on postcolonial critiques of Nehru and Gandhi and on the reception of novels by Salman Rushdie or Raja Rao. There was significant clustering around questions on methodological approaches to the history of Partition and on the debate concerning Indian nationalism and the 'Woman Question'. The strongest scripts attempted less conventional questions comparing ideological continuity and change in nationalist thought throughout the period, and on the response of diasporic writers to Indian postcolonial politics and culture. Less strong answers exhibited lack of balance between empirical detail and argument and offered descriptive rather than analytical accounts of postcolonial theory and/or historiographical debate. The best answers demonstrated precision of focus, excellent understanding of theoretical debates, deep knowledge of the set texts, and a capacity for critical analysis.

FS 36: Women's Liberation: Feminism in Britain, c. 1969-1990

Eight students sat this paper. They achieved marks ranging from high Lower Second Class to high First Class. Overall, one candidate received a Lower Second, two achieved Firsts and the rest attained Upper Seconds.

The candidates chose a wide variety of questions from the paper, with questions on political lesbianism and race and feminism being the most popular. Overall, the candidates demonstrated a very good breadth of knowledge of the Women's Liberation Movement and a good breadth of knowledge of the political and social context within which it operated. All displayed a very good understanding of a range of primary source material ranging from periodicals to personal testimonies to political tracts. Most displayed excellent linguistic precision, for example by distinguishing between sex and gender (an important distinction for second-wave feminists) and using 'lesbian' rather than the umbrella category 'LGBTQI+' (which was not in use during the period under investigation).

The weakest responses were flawed by a) a lack of critical evaluation of the historiography, b) a lack of focus on the specific question and c) unevicenced assumptions about the Women's Liberation Movement. The latter included the sweeping assumption that white feminists had little contact with and no interest in black feminists' concerns.

The strongest papers demonstrated an appreciation of a breadth of primary source material and a very good knowledge of the important historiographical debates. They used the latter to good effect in responses to section B. The very strongest responses to questions in section A offered thoughtful, critical evaluations of the uses to which different kinds of source material could be put and offered strong, original arguments based on their interrogation of primary sources.

FS 37: Modern Mexico

Fourteen candidates sat the exam (8 HIST; 1 AMH; 2 HML; 3 HPOL). Both assessors agreed that this was a particularly strong set of papers, with nine candidates achieving distinction marks and the remaining five candidates all achieving marks in the 60s. Candidates tackled a good spread of questions. The examiners agreed that candidates were able to offer nuanced answers to the questions, engaging well with both secondary and primary sources where relevant.

SPECIAL SUBJECT GOBBETS PAPERS

SS 1 gobbets: St Augustine and the last days of Rome, 370-430 (Gobbet exam)

Nine candidates took the paper; four of these obtained a first class mark. All of the scripts evinced a strong commitment to engaging with the set texts and their contexts. What differentiated them was their ability to channel energy into precision. The most successful answers were those which started with the passage and worked outwards. Taking the long route round from general context to work up to the passage was a less effective strategy. Generally, the stamina shown was impressive. But candidates as ever would be advised to think about pacing themselves across the paper, so that each passage gets its due share of attention.

SS 2 gobbets: Francia in the Age of Clovis and Gregory of Tours (suspended in 2022-23)

SS 3 gobbets: On the Road to Baghdad (892-1055)

The exam script was divided chronologically and thematically into four sections: the return of the Caliph and the court to Baghdad after the anarchy of Samarra; the evolution of court practices in the tenth century and shifting hierarchies; the status of women and the Buyids. The marks ranged evenly from 63 to 76, so generally a solid success rate with a third of the cohort (10 students) achieving a first class mark, and no grades below 2:1. Candidates exhibited a clear preference for gobbets which discuss the caliphate of al-Mu'tadid in Section 1, popular rebellions (gobbets A, B, C of Section 2), the status of women in court (gobbets A and B of Section 3) and the geography of Baghdad (gobbets D-F of Section 4). Students generally tried to avoid the gobbets specifically discussing the history of the Buyids which likely reflects the imbalance of the curriculum and the privilege given to the History of the early tenth century rather than the history of the Buyids. Overall, a successful cohort demonstrating a broad engagement with the issues and theories raised during the paper.

SS 4 gobbets: Byzantium in the Age of Constantine Porphyrogenitus

There were 10 candidates. Of these 4 candidates gained a first class mark. No candidate was awarded a mark below 60%. Final marks fell in the range 60-73. The performance of the cohort was consistent with previous years, and detailed knowledge of, and creativity in approaching, gobbets were the main keys to success. Stronger candidates were able to maintain a disciplined approach to a range of set texts, showing off a considerable grasp of the corpus, extracting particular details and linking well to associated historiographical issues. Weaker candidates tended too much to description over analysis, missed key aspects, and also made some mistakes. But the performance of the cohort at large was impressive.

SS 5 gobbets: The Norman Conquest of England

There were nine candidates for this paper. The distribution of marks were as follows: two firsts, two high

2i, three low 2i, and two 2ii. The strongest candidates manifested a strong command of the set texts; approached the gobbets critically and with forensic rigour, and reflecting carefully on the quality of the evidence; produced rich, full and precise answers, commenting on the specifics of each gobbet carefully; drew comparisons between the gobbets set and other relevant texts; moved well between the particular and the general, registering the importance of the gobbets for drawing wider conclusions and generalisations; and therefore succeeded in making perceptive and sophisticated points about the period. The weaker candidates fell short in relation to one or more of these considerations, the weakest in several.

SS 6 gobbets: The Peasants' Revolt of 1381

(suspended in 2022-23)

SS 7 gobbets: Joan of Arc and her Age, 1419-35

Twelve candidates sat the paper including one History and Politics and one History and English candidate. In the extended essay there were three first class marks, one at 2:2 level and the rest distributed across the range 64-68. The best answers contained close critical engagement with the set texts. The gobbets paper produced scripts of a slightly better performance and while some gobbets were done by everyone there was a reasonable range of coverage of all the passages set.

SS 8 gobbets: Painting and Culture in Ming China

(suspended in 2022-23)

SS 9 gobbets: Politics, Art and Culture in the Italian Renaissance: Venice and Florence

Overall the standard of responses was very good. The best answers identified the particular character of the source in question, and showed how this revealed a significant perspective. Candidates in these cases did not simply draw upon the image or text for description or information, but reflected on the assumptions and agenda which motivated the creation of the source. Less reflective answers tended to take the source itself for granted, and used the content merely to relate or illustrate things known from other sources. The best answers could draw upon alternative sources to clarify and underline the distinctive qualities of the source in the gobbet. Candidates in general demonstrated a good range of interest in and engagement with the diversity of prescribed sources, visual and textual. An area in which it would have been good to see more interest and a firmer grasp of the realities is religion.

SS 10 gobbets: The Peasants' War of 1525

(suspended in 2022-23)

SS 11 gobbets: The Trial of the Tudor State, 1540-1560

19 candidates took this paper. They showed good signs of enthusiastic engagement with the field, but met with varied success the complex demands of writing gobbet answers. The best responses managed a judicious combination of different kinds of commentary, whereas others were, for example, knowledgeable about the authors of texts and able to assess critically their style or viewpoint, but unable to link extracts to other relevant set texts or to wider debates among historians, or to identify the significance of particular details, persons or phrases; others showed contrasting strengths. Answers that seriously misidentified events and people – a problem with the earl of Surrey's political difficulties, Anne Askew's trial, the exiles bill of 1555 and in particular the coup of 1549, which was variously placed among the events of 1547 or 1553 – naturally found it hard to provide accurate and relevant commentary beyond a basic level.

SS 12 gobbets: The Crisis of the Reformation: Political Thought and Religious Ideas 1560–1610

11 candidates took this paper of which 10 were from the History main school and one was HENG. The standard was high on the whole and 4 candidates got marks of 70 and above while 7 candidates achieved marks between 60 and 69. Gobbet responses tended to show a good level of understanding and

engagement with the set texts, and the best responses balanced precise discussion of context and content with some broader comments on the significance of the extract. Similarly, the best short essays offered direct and thoughtful answers referring clearly to the relevant texts.

SS 13 gobbets: The Thirty Years War

(suspended in 2022-23)

SS 14 gobbets: The Scientific Movement in the Seventeenth Century

The Special Subject Scientific Movement in the 17th Century had 11 students this academic year (2022-2023).

2 candidates got mark of 70 and above (first) and 7 candidates got a mark between 60 and 69 (2.1).

In the first grouping, the most popular answer was 1c, also Francis Bacon (Novum Organum, on the Idols), which was answered by 11 out of 11 students. The second most popular was 1b (Francis Bacon, Great Instauration), attempted by 8 out of the 11 students. 1e (Harvey) was answered by 6 out of 11 students. The rest were far less popular, with 1d (Oxford Statutes) attempted by 4 out of 11 students; 1a (Laud Statutes) only received one response, while 1f (Loggan image) was treated by 2 students.

In the second grouping, the most popular answer was 2b (Galileo, Starry Messenger, 2nd extract), being answered by all 11 students. 2a (Galileo, Starry Messenger, first extract) was the next most popular, being treated by 7 out of 11 students. 2c (Descartes, Discourse on Method) was addressed by 8 out of 11 students. The rest were sparsely addressed: 2e (Hobbes) by 2 students, 2d (Descartes, Principles of Philosophy) was only treated by one student, while 2f (Kepler image) by 2 students.

In the third grouping, the most popular answer was 3a (Sprat), with 10 out of 11 students attempting it. 7 out of 11 students treated 3c (Webster-Ward). 3b (Hartlib/Dury) was not as popular, with only 3 students addressing it. 3d (Oldenburg) was treated by 4 students, but 3e (Hooke) was again addressed by 7 out of 11 students. Only one student addressed the Vries engraving.

In the fourth grouping, the most popular was 4d (Boyle), answered by 9 students, followed by 4c (Ashmole) with 7 students answering it and 4f (Newton, Opticks) with 6 students treating it. 4b (Wormianum image) was tackled by 4 students, with 4a (Aubrey to Wood) and 4 (Newton to Hooke) being addressed by 2 students each.

Generally, canonical texts were the most popular: Francis Bacon, Novum Organum, Galileo, Starry Messenger, Descartes, Discourse on Method, Sprat's Royal Society, Boyle's Sceptical Chymist, Hooke's Micrographia. At the opposite end lie correspondence and images, with the Wormianum being the most popular of the latter category.

SS 15 gobbets: Revolution and Republic, 1647-1658

8 candidates took the paper this year. 1 received a 1st; 6 received 2.1s [all of them 65+]; and 1 received a 2.2. All but three of the gobbets attracted at least some answers, though there was some inevitable 'bunching' around gobbets relating to particularly prominent constitutional documents or key moments in time. As the mark profile suggests, there was a great deal of solid competence on display, but relatively little excellence - at least excellence that was sustained across a whole script. The very best work displayed a superb grasp of detail, strong sense of political contexts, valuable cross-references to related documents, and great sensitivity to language. Most scripts displayed at least some excellent responses, but tended either periodically to lose focus; to spend too much time on particular issues of context or authorship; or to fail to cover all of the key parts of the gobbet. The least effective answers involved fundamental errors like mistaking one text for another, and therefore offering discussion of the wrong people or events.

SS 16 gobbets: English Architecture, 1660-1720

A pleasing number of candidates gained marks in the First Class and most other papers were given strong Upper Second results. A good mastery of the gobbet technique was evident, and a wide selection of gobbets was tackled, mostly to sound interpretative ends. Cross referencing saved candidates from the danger of repetition across gobbets as well as gaining them time to elaborate on each gobbet selected. There were

especially good responses on the visual gobbets, but also close and attentive work was devoted to written texts. Most papers were thoughtful, and all showed evidence of the virtues of concision and economy in their answers.

SS17: Imperial Crisis and Reform, 1774-84

Fifteen students sat the paper this year. Although answers generally demonstrated a sound knowledge of the principal themes of the course, poor gobblet technique often held candidates back, and only one paper scored a clear first-class mark. The most persistent and glaring fault was failure to engage with the wording/detail of extracts, with too many answers very quickly moving to generalised discussion. This meant that the significance of extracts was left largely unexamined, and opportunities for thinking about the suggestive language and imagery of sources were not taken. Even the stronger candidates did not always read the extracts with sufficient care, and students should resist the temptation to rely too heavily on pre-prepared answers. Such inflexibility inevitably means that important features of the extracts are neglected or passed over very cursorily, and candidates need to ensure that they set aside time in the examination to think about how they might engage most productively with the precise wording of the gobblet. They should also look for opportunities to cross-reference set texts, for this invariably brings precision and ambition to their analysis. Had more candidates managed to do these things, this would have produced results more in line with their performance in the extended essay.

SS 18 gobblets: Becoming a Citizen, c. 1860-1902

Eleven candidates took this paper, with four being awarded First-Class marks, and solid answers being submitted by all candidates. The strongest scripts paid close attention to the specific gobblets cited, contextualising them within the text, and within the set sources as a whole; they drew out key themes on the basis of perceptive attention to the text and related these to debates in the historiography. Scripts at the stronger end also ranged across different genres of sources, which allowed for perceptive comparisons and some consideration of genre as well as content. Weaker scripts tended to restrict themselves to the autobiographical material which inevitably restricted the range of historiographical engagement and cross-references. Some of the weaker responses also struggled with timing, spending too much time on long answers at the start of the paper, leaving only time for very brief and rushed answers for the last questions. Candidates are encouraged to practice writing to time, and also to consider the benefits of answering across a wider range of types of source.

SS 19 gobblets: Race-Sex & Medicine in Early Atlantic World

(suspended in 2022-23)

SS 20 gobblets: Art and its Public in France, 1815-1867

Not needed, fewer than five candidates

SS 21 gobblets: Slavery, Emancipation and the Crisis of the Union, 1848-1865

Only 2 out of 16 students got a first on this paper, which is lower, I suspect, than on many other papers and lower than I had hoped. There were relatively few students who had the historiographical range to be able to set the gobblets in their fullest context. While most students were able to provide plenty of detailed knowledge about the sources, only a minority were able to get to the next stage and explain the historiographical and historical stakes. I have slightly re-organised the teaching for this year and hope that more sustained historiographical writing at an earlier point in the course will better prepare students for the exam.

SS 22 gobblets: Race, Religion and Resistance in the United States, from Jim Crow to Civil Rights

15 candidates took the paper. Every question was answered by at least one candidate. The majority of answers showed a very good understanding of the sources and the broader themes of the paper. The best answers identified the key issues raised by the extract, and struck a good balance between detailed

contextualization and broader analysis. Stronger answers also made reference to relevant historiography, where appropriate. Five scripts were awarded first class marks.

SS 23 gobbets: Terror and Forced Labour in Stalin's Russia

(Suspended in 2022-23)

SS 24 gobbets: Empire and Nation in Russia and the USSR

Eight students sat the paper this year – a record for a paper which usually has two or three, or in exceptional years five. The overall standard was very high, with the lowest mark for both the Gobbet Paper and the Extended Essay being 64.

Three candidates received first-class marks for the Extended Essay (including one outstanding 77).

Between them the candidates chose just four of a possible eight essay questions, with three candidates opting for that on Soviet nationalities policy, two for revolutionary politics in Transcaucasia, two for the Russian Empire and the First World War and one for the continuities between the latter and the Civil War. It is not really possible to compare this with previous years owing to the small numbers involved.

On the Gobbet paper five candidates received first-class marks, though these were all within the 70-73 range, reflecting the challenging nature of the exercise. There were only two instances where candidates actively misinterpreted a source – in both cases, curiously, not one in Russian but a visual source, where despite the origin of the publication from which it was taken being clearly stated (*Aziatskaya Rossiya*) they misattributed it to the Prokudin-Gorskii collection. Almost every candidate chose to comment on the passage from S. An-Sky's diary (in English) and on Stalin on the Nationality Question (in Russian), but otherwise there was a very good spread of commentaries, with every passage getting at least one response, and no sign of candidates deliberately favouring those which did not have to be translated from Russian. The only exception was the second visual source, a still from Turksib, which was ignored – perhaps because it was overleaf on the final page. This meant that no candidate commented on the similarity between the surveyor portrayed here and that working for the *Pereselencheskoe Upravlenie* in *Aziatskaya Rossiya*, as I had been hoping. Overall though the examiners were well-pleased with the performance, and in all cases their raw marks were very close, and there was no difficulty in reaching agreement.

SS 25 gobbets: From Gandhi to the Green Revolution: India, Independence and Modernity

17 candidates took the paper (15 from History and 2 from History and Politics). 3 candidates achieved first class marks of 70 and above, 13 candidates achieved a 2.1 with marks between 60 and 69 (2.1) and 1 candidate received a mark of 58. All extended essay questions attracted answers, though there was some clustering around questions on women as a political group, and on Dalit politics. Most candidates wrote well-structured and thoughtful answers that made references to the relevant historiographical debates and deployed the source material adequately. Stronger essays brought more critical and analytical acumen to the historiographical debates, and were, in some cases, able to develop fresh perspectives that linked different themes in the paper and drew on a range of set sources in a creative and original way. The gobbet paper generally attracted very solid answers that demonstrated the ability to situate extracts accurately, and to establish their relevant context and significance. Very strong answers demonstrated greater ability to make connections and linkages between sources, and to discuss the significance of an extract in the context of important historiographical debates. The best scripts were very precise, sharply focused, and crisply written. Weaker answers tended to rely on very general knowledge of the sources from whence the extracts were taken and made few connections to other sources or to relevant historiographical themes. The weakest scripts often wasted time repeating lengthy phrases from the extract in their answers.

SS 26 gobbets: Nazi Germany, a Racial Order, 1933-1945

(suspended in 2022-23)

SS 27 gobbets: France from the Popular Front to the Liberation, 1936-1944

Not needed as fewer than five candidates

SS 28 gobbets: War and Reconstruction: Ideas, Politics and Social Change, 1939-1945

8 candidates took this exam. The standard of answers was generally very high, with five candidates achieving marks of 70+ and no 2.2 marks awarded. The candidates are to be congratulated on such a strong performance: the best answers showed a detailed and precise knowledge of the assigned texts while also being able to place the gobbets in their wider context.

SS 29 gobbets: Britain from the Bomb to the Beatles: Gender, Class and Social Change, 1945-1967

'Seventeen candidates took this paper, including one HML and one HPOL student, along with fifteen from the main school. Fifteen of the seventeen, in the MT 2022 class, had had their teaching affected by a mid-term change of tutor, but their eventual outcomes suggested no obvious lasting disadvantage. The seventeen agreed marks awarded ranged from 63 to 78, with the median mark 67 and the mean just over 68. No candidate short-weighted and none was in serious danger of a 2:2 on this paper, while seven secured first-class marks. The top two candidates scored highly impressive marks of 76 and 78.

Take-up of the twenty-four passages set was spread reasonably evenly. Every passage attracted at least two takers, with only one scoring fewer than four. The least popular passage was the admittedly wordy extract from the Newsom Report of 1963; by contrast almost everybody (15/17) attempted the extract from the 1945 Labour manifesto on education and that from Richard Hoggart on class, though several candidates attributed the 1944 Education Act to a Conservative rather than a Coalition government and few seemed to rise to the challenge posed by Hoggart's view of the decline of deference. More generally, candidates sometimes appeared uncomfortable with the political background to the social topics that they were discussing, and knowledge of the recent history of race and immigration necessary to attempt the relevant gobbet from Labour's 1964 manifesto was often lacking. Against that, the extracts from the autobiographical works by Forster, Sage and Steedman were generally very well handled, as were the social observation texts by Young and Willmott and Hannah Gavron.

Taking the paper as a whole, candidates who chose to answer on similar types of gobbets (e.g. the three extracts from election manifestos) often struggled to avoid repeating their comments on genre and style, demonstrating that it is often advantageous for candidates to pick as wide a range of gobbets as possible. Successful commentaries creatively connected gobbets to other set texts, with the most impressive among them also bringing in relevant secondary scholarship in a thoughtful and judicious way. Overall performance suggested a widespread commitment to and enthusiasm for this paper.'

SS 30 gobbets: The Northern Ireland Troubles, 1965-1985

Twenty-one candidates sat the exam for this course. The exam scripts were single-marked, but then moderated, as a result of the exam boycott organised by UCU. Four candidates obtained first-class marks, 13 got marks in the 2.1 category and 4 received 2.2s.

As usual, the less impressive gobbet commentaries, those in the high 2.2 or low 2.1 bracket, were simply too general. The key to gobbets is accurate detail. Where these candidates made intelligent points they were unable to show wider knowledge and understanding of the sources or to pursue the themes raised into the historiography. Some lacked detail on the source itself, on the context of the passage set, and on subsequent academic discussion of the issues involved. The better answers were precise on context, detailed and considered the intended audience of the source.

The most popular questions were 2e (UWC), with 20 takers; 3a (Forum report) with 19; and 1a (Cahir Healy), 1e (O'Neill), and 4b (Barritt and Carter), with 15 takers each. In contrast 2c (McGuire) and 3f (McCusker) and 4e (Dressed to Kill) attracted only 3 candidates.

SS 31 gobbets: Pop and the Art of the Sixties

Not needed fewer than five candidates

SS 32 gobbets: Britain in the Seventies

Not needed as only one candidate

SS 33 gobbets: Neoliberalism and Postmodernism: Ideas, Politics and Culture in Europe and North America, 1970-2000

18 candidates took the paper. 6 candidates were awarded marks of 70 and above, 10 candidates received marks between 60 and 69, and 1 candidate received marks below 60. The stronger answers showed that the candidate had read enough of the secondary literature to establish the context for the extract, while also demonstrating a good understanding of the text itself. Weaker answers often failed to focus on the main points made in the gobbet or included too little context.

SS 34 gobbets: Revolutions of 1989

In 2023-24, 15 candidates took the paper. There were 13 main school candidates; 1 HML; and 1 HPOL student.

Overall, the examiners were satisfied with the quality of the scripts, with nearly half the results (7) at the level of a first. 7 more candidates got marks in the upper or lower 2.1 range, while one candidate received a mark of 58 (2.2). These results seemed to reflect the enthusiasm and hard work of the cohort and the fact that the criteria of assessment had been clearly communicated to students throughout the term, with ample opportunity to practice and receive feedback on their gobbet-writing.

Disciplines of History

An unprecedentedly large number of candidates took the paper this year: a total of 277. The marking was split between eleven marking pairs. Overall, 76 candidates received 1st class results, 178 2.1s, 22 2.2s, and 1 3rd. For markers with long memories, it was interesting and encouraging to see a higher average competence than a decade ago - there were few outright weak scripts. A particular improvement seems to have come in the Making Historical Comparisons section of the paper, with almost all candidates offering at least a basic justification for their choice of case studies, and a significant number offering really thoughtful framing discussions. Making Historical Arguments seemed to many examiners rather less successful on average. Although the best answers displayed detailed and chronologically-specific discussion of particular historians and their work, too many candidates were prone to make statements rather than prove cases, with quite a bit of vague or inaccurate name-dropping, or else disorganised jumping around in chronological terms. Overall, it was striking how long most scripts were. Candidates would be better advised to spend more time thinking and planning, and a bit less time writing voluminous essays that could have been more clearly organised or densely theorised.

Popular questions included: q. 5 (gender nonconformity), q. 7 (religious violence), q. 9 (gender and class), q. 14 (identity and geographical locality), q. 17 (revolutions), q. 44 (global history), and q. 50 (archives and cultural hegemony). Perhaps inevitably in a paper with 52 questions, quite a few attracted little interest, though it was surprising not to see more takers for q. 15 (political ideas and social change), q. 37 (visual culture), q. 41 (intellectual history), q. 42 (religious history and unbelief), q. 45 (Atlantic world), and q. 46 (national histories).

In the Making Historical Comparisons section, the very best answers situated their comparison within a discussion of comparative models and approaches, often allowing candidates to set-up and sustain a comparative analysis throughout their answers. These essays were organised according to themes, and some candidates were able to comment insightfully on reasons for the differences or similarities between their chosen case studies. They justified putting their case studies in conversation and used detailed and precise evidence. Answers which just fell short of first-class marks failed to consider comparative approaches or models. Candidates who received low marks on this section of the paper often failed to maintain a comparative analysis, simply describing their first case study followed by their second in a descriptive fashion. The types of case studies chosen sometimes led to lower 2:1 answers, either because they were too broad and thus led to overly generalised answers, or because the cases

were drawn from the same time period and the same geographical location, thereby failing to offer a truly comparative analysis. Most candidates chose to compare two case studies and this appeared a more effective approach which produced more detailed answers than those which tried to compare too many examples or introduced additional case studies towards the end of answers.

The Making Historical Arguments section of the paper produced some strong answers, with the best candidates able to demonstrate their awareness of the development of particular methodologies and forms of history and to use detailed and specific evidence of such works. Those candidates who achieved first-class marks in this section showed sensitivity to the strengths and weaknesses of some of these methods of history writing, their contexts and methodologies, whilst also maintaining their own arguments which engaged directly with the wording and implications of the questions. Answers which fell short of the higher bands produced generalised narratives of certain types of history which sometimes failed fully to engage with the precise examination questions, or which relied on some quite standard examples of historical works (e.g. Geertz and 'thick description') but which did not include or consider a wider range of examples. For example, answers on oral history did not always engage fully with, or unpack, the concept of 'social forgetting', and those on global history did not always fully think about how global historians might consider the immobile. Answers which sat in the 2:2 bands were not fully historiographical, showing little awareness of existing historiography and therefore failing critically to engage with the field.

APPENDIX A. REPORT ON FHS RESULTS AND GENDER (Main School only)

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2023

M 106 W 154 Main School Only

Paper	F Avg	M Avg	DIFF	F High	M High	F Low	M Low	F 70 +	M 70 +	F < 60	M < 60
ALL	66.9	67.6	0.7					20 (13)	25 (23.6)	4	2
BH	66.4	66.6	0.2	16	8	29	30	37 (24)	24 (22.6)	10	4
EWH	65.9	67.5	1.6	13	24	36	17	33 (21.4)	36 (34)	12	4
FS	67.1	67	0.1	26	17	24	15	49 (31.8)	33 (31.1)	7	3
SSg	66	67.1	1.1	17	8	27	17	39 (25.3)	33 (31.1)	11	6
SSEE	68.1	69.5	1.4	48	32	11	8	55 (35.7)	53 (50%)	5	6
DH	66.2	66.4	0.2	21	11	33	27	42 (27.3)	29 (27.4)	13	7
TH *	68	68.5	0.5	45	30	17	12	70 (45.5)	46 (43.4)	12	5

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2022

79 M 127 W Main School Only

Paper	F Avg	M Avg	DIFF	F High	M High	F Low	M Low	F 70 +	M 70 +	F < 60	M < 60
ALL	67.31	67.86	0.55					20 (15.9)	13 (16.9)	1 (0.8)	0
BH	67.4	66.9	0.5	25	6	22	17	39 (30.1)	18 (23.4)	4 (3.2)	3 (3.9)
EWH	65.29	67.57	2.28	9	12	42	12	17 (13.5)	27 (35.1)	8 (6.4)	2 (2.6)
FS	67.38	67.86	0.48	23	17	19	11	41 (32.5)	28 (36.4)	6 (4.8)	2 (2.6)
SSg	67.21	68.32	1.11	14	17	14	5	29 (23)	37 (48.1)	1 (0.8)	1 (1.3)
SSEE	68.27	68.47	0.2	31	20	14	13	46 (35.7)	32 (41.6)	3 (2.4)	1 (1.3)
DH	66.23	66.69	0.46	11	13	34	23	29 (23)	19 (24.7)	8 (6.4)	4 (5.2)
TH *	68.83	67.9	0.93	42	19	11	11	60 (47.6)	29 (37.7)	4 (3.2)	4 (5.2)

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2021

117 M 107W Main School Only

Paper	F Avg	M Avg	DIFF	F High	M High	F Low	M Low	F 70 +	M 70 +	F < 60	M < 60
ALL	68	68.8	0.8					28 (26.1)	43 (36.8)	1 (0.9)	1 (0.9)
BH	67.1	67.73	0.63	12	17	21	29	25 (23.4)	37 (31.6)	1 (0.9)	3 (2.6)
EWH	66.64	67.17	0.53	16	16	22	22	27 (25.2)	39 (33.3)	7 (6.5)	5 (4.3)
FS	66.96	67.35	0.39	16	16	19	23	34 (31.8)	37 (31.6)	8 (7.5)	5 (4.3)
SSg	67.02	68.59	1.57	11	14	11	9	25 (23.4)	52 (44.4)	8 (7.5)	3 (2.6)
SSEE	68.35	69.23	0.88	35	35	12	8	45 (42.1)	57 (48.7)	2 (1.9)	5 (4.3)
DH	65.74	66.66	0.92	14	12	35	31	24 (22.4)	34 (29.1)	9 (8.4)	8 (6.8)
TH *	68.21	68.85	0.64	27	32	14	13	43 (40.2)	45 (38.5)	3 (2.8)	3 (2.6)

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2020

97 M 113 W Main School Only

Paper	F Avg	M Avg	DIFF	F High	M High	F Low	M Low	F 70 +	M 70 +	F < 60	M < 60
ALL	68.09	68.18	0.09					30 (26.5)	30 (30.9)	1 (0.8)	3 (3.0)
BH	67	68	1	9	11	30	21	26 (23.0)	38 (39.1)	6 (5.3)	2 (2.0)
EWH	66.52	68	1.48	13	18	35	18	31 (27.4)	35 (36.1)	6 (5.3)	5 (0.5)
FS	67.79	67.56	0.23	19	15	16	15	42 (37.2)	37 (38.1)	4 (3.5)	3 (3.0)
SSg											
SSEE	68.95	68.93	0.02	37	25	18	17	49 (43.3)	41 (42.2)	3 (2.6)	3 (3.0)
DH	67.58	66.73	0.85	23	14	24	30	35 (30.9)	33 (34)	3 (2.6)	4 (4.1)
TH *	69.4	68.14	1.26	33	28	13	16	53 (46.9)	44 (45.3)	2 (1.8)	6 (6.2)

APPENDIX B

FHS RESULTS AND STATISTICS

Note: Tables (i) – (ii) relate to the Final Honour School of History only. Statistics for the joint schools are included in tables in (iii), (iv) and (v).

(i) Numbers and percentages in each class

Class	Number			
	2023	2022	2021	2020
I	95	84	113	109
II.1	165	122	19	99
II.2	2	0	2	1
III	0	0	0	1
Pass	0	0	0	0
DDH	(14)	0	0	1
Incomplete	(1)	2	0	0
Fail	0	0	0	0
Total	260	202	224	211

Class	Percentage			
	2023	2022	2021	2020
I	36.7	40.8	50.5	51.7
II.1	58.47	59.2	48.7	46.4
II.2	0.77	0	0.9	0.47
III	0	0	0	0.47
Pass	0	0	0	0
DDH	5.38	0	0	0.47
Incomplete	0.38	1.0	1.33	0.47
Fail	0	0	0	0

(ii) Numbers and percentages of men and women in each class

(a) 2023

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	95	36.7	44	41.5	51	33.1	53.7
II.1	165	63.5	100	53.8	100	64.9	60.6
II.2	2	0.77	-	-	2	1.3	100
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DDH	14	5.38	7	6.6	7	4.5	50.0
Incomplete	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	1	0.38	-	-	1	0.65	100.
Total	260	100	106	100	154	100	-

(b) 2022

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	84	40.7	39	50.7	44	34.9	53%
II.1	121	59.3	39	50.7	82	65.1	67.8%
II.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
III	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pass	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DDH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete	4	1.9	3	3.9	1	0.8	25%
Fail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	208	100	81		127		

(c) 2021

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	113	50.5	66	56.4	47	43.9	41.6
II.1	109	48.7	50	42.7	59	55.1	54.1
II.2	2	0.9	1	0.9	1	0.9	50
III							
Pass							
DDH							
Incomplete	0						
Fail							
Total	225	100	117	100	108	100	

(d) 2020

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	109	51.7	50	51.5	59	52.2	54.1
II.1	98	46.5	45	46.4	53	46.9	54.1
II.2	1	0.47	1	1.02	-	-	-
III	1	0.47	1	1.02	-	-	-
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DDH	1	0.47	1	1.02	-	-	-
Incomplete	1	0.47	-	-	1	0.89	100.
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	211	100	98	100	113	100	-

(iii) Performance of candidates by paper

a) Thesis (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
70+	153	41.9	46	42.9	70	41.2	56.9
60-69	182	49.9	77	50	105	49.8	57.7
50-59	24	6.6	7	4.5	17	8.1	70.8
40-49	3	0.8	3	2			
30-39	1	0.3			1	0.5	100
Incomplete	1	0.3			1	0.5	100
Under 30	1	0.3	1	0.7			
Total	365	100	154	100	211	100	

*Some candidates have their marks disregarded

b) Special Subject Extended Essay (sex paper showing marks for that paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	125	40.83	63	50.42	62	34.11	49.6
II.1	165	54.33	55	43.70	110	61.77	66.7
II.2	12	4.16	6	5.04	6	3.53	50.0
III	1	0.34	-	-	1	0.59	100.
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	1	0.34	1	0.84	-	-	-
Total	303	100	125	100	179	100	-

*Some candidates have their marks disregarded

c) Disciplines of History (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	76	27.43	33	28.45	43	26.70	56.57
II.1	178	64.26	75	64.65	103	63.98	57.87
II.2	22	7.94	8	6.90	14	8.70	63.63
III	1	0.37	-	-	1	0.62	100.
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	277	100	116	100	161	100	-

d) BIF History of the British Isles *Essays and Portfolio* (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper)
(includes BIF Theme Papers)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	78	24.52	31	24.41	47	24.60	60.25
II.1	221	69.50	90	70.87	131	68.59	59.28
II.2	18	5.67	5	3.94	13	6.81	72.22
III	1	0.31	1	0.78	-	-	-
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	318	100	127	100	191	100	

*Some candidates have their marks disregarded

e) **European and World History (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper)**
Includes EWT theme papers (a) (b) (c) & (d)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	95	26.69	51	33.55	44	21.56	46.32
II.1	235	66.01	91	59.87	144	70.59	61.28
II.2	25	7.02	10	6.58	15	7.35	60.0
III	1	0.28	-	-	11	0.50	100.
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	356	100	152	100	204	100	-

*Some candidates have their marks disregarded; three are still missing

f) **Further Subjects (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper)**

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	106	31.93	46	34.07	60	30.45	56.60
II.1	213	64.15	85	62.97	128	64.98	60.09
II.2	12	3.62	4	2.96	8	4.07	66.66
III	1	0.30	-	-	1	0.50	100.
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	332	100	135	100	197	100	-

*Some candidates have their marks disregarded

g) Special Subjects Gobbets (sex paper showing marks for that paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	79	26.09	37	28.60	42	24.52	53.2
II.1	195	68.11	80	66.66	115	69.19	59
II.2	15	5.08	5	4.28	10	5.67	66.7
III	1	0.36	1	0.86	-	-	-
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	1	0.36	-	-	1	0.62	100.
Total	291	100	123	100	168	100	-

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

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