



Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages  
Preliminary Examination for  
Modern Languages and Associated Joint Schools 2024

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS

TRINITY TERM 2024

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## MODERN LANGUAGES PRELIMS STATISTICS

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

### Combinations offered in the Main School

Prelim Language	2023/24		2022/23		2021/22		2020/21		2019/20	
	Main School	Joint Schools	Main School	Joint Schools	Main School	Joint Schools	Main School	Joint Schools	Main School	Joint Schools
Czech (with Slovak)								2		
French	29	38	26	39	28	40	20	45	25	45
German	19	11	14	16	14	18	17	20	12	11
Italian	1	9	2	6	1	6		3		5
Modern Greek		2								
Portuguese		1		1				1		1
Russian	4	2	6	2	1	5	6	3	3	5
Spanish	8	18	5	16	12	15	6	16	5	12
French and Czech w/ Slovak	2		1							
French and German	6		14		9		13		22	
French and German ab initio	4		4		7		11		3	
French and Greek			1		1				1	
French and Italian	1		5		3		5		2	
French and Italian ab initio	11		6		11		14		13	
French and Lings	10		11		10		12		14	
French and Portuguese					1					
French and Portuguese ab initio	2		6		1		4		3	
French and Russian	2		2		4		2		3	
French and Russian ab initio	8		7		7		4		5	
French and Spanish	16		18		18		29		21	
French w/ Polish							1			
German and Czech w/ Slovak			1				1			
German and Czech w/ Slovak ab ini...	1				3				1	
German and Greek			1							
German and Italian					1					
German and Italian ab initio	3		2		4		8		3	
German and Lings	10		10		5		5		6	
German and Portuguese	4		3				1		1	
German and Russian			1		1		1		4	
German and Russian ab initio	1		3		8		3		6	
German and Spanish			4		2		1		2	
Greek and Lings	1						1		2	
Italian ab initio and Lings	5		2		4		1		2	
Italian and Spanish	9		12		7		6		8	
Portuguese and Lings	1		1				1		1	
Russian and Czech w/ Slovak	1		1		1		1			
Russian and Italian ab initio	1									
Russian and Lings			1		1					
Russian w/ Polish									1	
Spanish and Czech w/ Slovak							1		1	
Spanish and German ab initio	3		1		6		1		1	
Spanish and Greek			1				1			
Spanish and Italian ab initio			1							
Spanish and Lings	12		7		9		7		6	
Spanish and Portuguese							2		1	
Spanish and Portuguese ab initio	7		5		6		7		6	
Spanish and Russian	1				1				1	
Spanish and Russian ab initio	4		1		1		5		2	
Spanish w/ Polish					1					
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>79</b>

## 2. MODERN LANGUAGES PRELIMS STATISTICS

### PRELIMS OUTCOMES

Year	Language	Total Cands	Main School				Joint Schools					
			Distinctions	% Dist.	Fails	% Fail	Candidates	Distinctions	% Dist.	Fails	% Fail	Candidates
2023/24	Czech	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	French	129	32	35.2%	0	0.0%	91	11	28.9%	0	0.0%	38
	German	62	18	35.3%	2	3.9%	51	4	36.4%	0	0.0%	11
	Italian	43	5	14.7%	0	0.0%	34	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	9
	Latin and Ancient Greek	8	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8					
	Linguistics	10	10	100.0%	0	0.0%	10					
	Modern Greek	3	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2
	Portuguese	16	2	13.3%	1	6.7%	15	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Russian	26	8	33.3%	0	0.0%	24	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2
	Spanish	78	13	21.7%	3	5.0%	60	2	11.1%	0	0.0%	18
	Total		90		4		*	18		0		*
	2022/23	Czech	3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3				
French		140	25	24.8%	0	0.0%	101	7	17.9%	0	0.0%	39
German		74	17	29.3%	0	0.0%	58	8	50.0%	0	0.0%	16
Italian		38	5	15.6%	0	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6
Latin and Ancient Greek		12	2	16.7%	0	0.0%	12					
Linguistics		7	7	100.0%	0	0.0%	7					
Modern Greek		3	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	3					
Portuguese		16	2	13.3%	0	0.0%	15	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
Russian		25	7	30.4%	0	0.0%	23	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2
Spanish		71	10	18.2%	0	0.0%	55	1	6.3%	0	0.0%	16
Total			77		0		*	17		0		*
2021/22		Czech	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4				
	French	140	31	31.0%	2	2.0%	100	7	17.5%	1	2.5%	40
	German	77	20	33.9%	0	0.0%	59	7	38.9%	0	0.0%	18
	Italian	41	8	22.9%	0	0.0%	35	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	6
	Latin and Ancient Greek	4	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	Linguistics	31	7	22.6%	1	3.2%	31					
	Modern Greek	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1					
	Portuguese	9	4	44.4%	0	0.0%	9					
	Russian	32	10	37.0%	0	0.0%	27	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	5
	Spanish	78	14	22.2%	0	0.0%	63	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15
	Hebrew	2						1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2
	Total		97		2		*	17		1		*
2020/21	Czech	5	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2
	French	160	33	28.7%	0	0.0%	115	18	40.0%	0	0.0%	45
	German	82	15	24.2%	0	0.0%	62	6	30.0%	0	0.0%	20
	Italian	38	12	34.3%	0	0.0%	35	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3
	Latin and Ancient Greek	4	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	4					
	Linguistics	28	5	17.9%	0	0.0%	28					
	Modern Greek	2	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2					
	Portuguese	16	5	33.3%	0	0.0%	15	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1
	Russian	26	9	39.1%	0	0.0%	23	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	3
	Spanish	82	12	18.2%	0	0.0%	66	1	6.3%	0	0.0%	16
	Total		93		0		*	28		0		*
	2019/20	Czech	2	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2				
French		157	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	112	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	45
German		72	0	0.0%	1	1.6%	61	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11
Italian		37	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5
Latin and Ancient Greek		3	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3					
Linguistics		32	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	32					
Modern Greek		4	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4					
Portuguese		15	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
Russian		29	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	24	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5
Spanish		66	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	54	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12
Total			0		1		*	0		0		*

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

Prelim Title	Language 2	2023/24		2022/23		2021/22		2020/21		2019/20
		Distinction	Total Cands	Distinction	Total Cands	Distinction	Total Cands	Distinction	Total Cands	Total Cands
Preliminary Examination in English and Modern Languages	French	6	21	2	14	4	19	9	23	13
	German	3	6	2	2	2	4	1	3	4
	Italian		1		1		3			4
	Modern Greek		1							
	Portuguese		1							
	Russian				1	1	1			1
	Spanish		3		11		5	1	3	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>24</b>
Preliminary Examination in European and Middle Eastern Languages	Arabic	7	11	4	12	3	8	8	13	14
	French		4	1	9		6	3	6	10
	German				1	1	3		4	1
	Hebrew					1	2			
	Russian		1				2		1	3
	Spanish		6		2		2		3	2
	Turkish						2			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	
Preliminary Examination in History and Modern Languages	Czech								2	
	French		7	1	10	2	8	5	9	12
	German			2	6	3	7	4	7	1
	Italian		1		2	1	1			
	Portuguese				1					
	Russian						1	1	1	1
	Spanish	2	7		1		7		6	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	
Preliminary Examination in Philosophy and Modern Languages	French	5	6	3	6	1	7	1	7	10
	German	1	5	4	7	1	4	1	6	5
	Italian	1	7		3		2		3	1
	Modern Greek		1							
	Russian			1	1		1	1	1	
	Spanish		2	1	2		1		4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	

## 4. CANDIDATES BY GENDER

Year	Language	Main School		Distinction			Total Candidates
		Female	Male	Total Distinctions	Female	Male	
2023/24	Czech		1	1			4
	French	18	10	28	8	3	129
	German	10	7	17	2	2	62
	Italian	3	2	5		1	43
	Latin and Ancient Greek						8
	Linguistics	4	6	10			10
	Modern Greek		1	1			3
	Portuguese	1	1	2			16
	Russian	5	2	7			26
	Spanish	7	5	12	2		78
Total	40	29	69	12	6	18	274
2022/23	Czech						3
	French	18	4	22	5	2	140
	German	8	6	14	3	5	74
	Italian	3	2	5			38
	Latin and Ancient Greek	1	1	2			12
	Linguistics	5	2	7			7
	Modern Greek	1	1	2			3
	Portuguese		2	2			16
	Russian	3	2	5	1		25
	Spanish	5	5	10		1	71
Total	39	20	59	9	8	17	271
2021/22	Czech		1	1			4
	French	19	8	27	5	2	140
	German	13	7	20	4	3	77
	Italian	5	3	8		1	41
	Latin and Ancient Greek	2		2			4
	Linguistics	3	4	7			31
	Modern Greek						1
	Portuguese	3	1	4			9
	Russian	6	3	9		1	32
	Spanish	10	3	13			78
Total	49	25	74	9	7	16	276
2020/21	Czech						5
	French	22	7	29	9	9	160
	German	10	3	13	4	2	82
	Italian	6	6	12			38
	Latin and Ancient Greek	1		1			4
	Linguistics	3	2	5			28
	Modern Greek		1	1			2
	Portuguese	4	1	5			15
	Russian	3	5	8	1	1	26
	Spanish	9	2	11	1		82
Total	50	22	72	15	12	27	289
2019/20	Czech						2
	French						157
	German						72
	Italian						37
	Latin and Ancient Greek						3
	Linguistics						32
	Modern Greek						4
	Portuguese						14
	Russian						29
	Spanish						66
Total							270

## **CHAIR'S REPORT AND STATISTICS**

The examinations for Prelims proceeded largely to plan without a major challenge of the kind experienced in 2023 with the Marking and Assessment Boycott. However, protests involving an incursion in the Exam Schools on 13 June (am) impacted on the examinations, and inefficiencies in the central services supporting examinations and assessment put considerable pressure on the Faculty's Exams Office. Without the provision from Hilary Term of a designated assistant for the Exams Officer, the unprecedented deficiencies in the central servicing of examinations in addition to the already very high and continually increasing annual workload during the exam season would have made it impossible for the Exams Office to provide the necessary support for the examiners and exam boards in Modern Languages and Joint Schools.

Immense thanks are due to Catherine Pillonel for her outstanding commitment, forward-thinking, tireless efforts and admirable patience in making sure that the process ran as smoothly as possible. The Chair and examiners were expertly advised on the basis of her long-standing experience, and questions were answered immediately despite the burden of extraordinary amounts of email traffic at critical junctures. In addition to the many other benefits, this meant that the ultimate impact of the chaotic central handling of exam scripts by the Examination Schools was limited to only one main-school Prelim exam script still remaining lost at the time of the Exam Board's Final Meeting. Thanks are also due to the Assistant Exams Officer Ed Roffe for his valuable work. The Vice-Chair Kate Tunstall provided wise advice and very helpful and effective support throughout the process, and we are most grateful to our fellow examiners for their collegial approach, attention to detail, and manifold contributions to ensuring that assessment could proceed in accordance with the established schedule.

The report below focuses on the key issues that impacted on the exam process this year and on matters that merit consideration for future years.

- **Proof-reading of exam papers**

A late change in the team of examiners in French, and dispersion of responsibility for establishing the finalised exam papers by the deadline, led to the need for the Vice-Chair to contribute to proof-reading these papers as an examiner rather than focusing on checking them in her role as Vice-Chair.

- **Examination formats**

The language papers I and II were sat in person.

One of the two literature papers for each language (Paper III in Spanish, and Paper IV in other languages) was examined in a three-hour online format completed in Inspira while the other paper was certified. Very few candidates submitted MCEs arising from technical difficulties.

Sole candidates in French, German, Russian and Spanish completed only one of their further papers as an online exam, while the other two papers were certified.

- **Adjustment of marks and scaling**

The examiners in French decided just prior to the Exam Board's Pre-Final Meeting that scaling was necessary for Papers I and II. This was carried out in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair in advance of the Final Meeting. The necessary final checking by the Exams Officer that changes had been entered correctly resulted in the need for a short delay to the start of the Final Meeting.

- **Delivery of scripts**

A sharp drop in standards by comparison with previous years in the processing of scripts was anticipated following the departure of the long-standing Head of the Examination Schools and significant failures experienced in the administration of the FHS oral exams at the start of Hilary Term. Consequently, the Exams Officer decided to discourage collection of scripts by markers in

order to retain a systematic and comprehensive overview, and to follow up on any lapses immediately and directly. This approach went a long way towards mitigating the unprecedented number and range of crass inefficiencies in the processing of scripts by the Exam Schools. The lapses included loss of scripts, long delays in tracing lost scripts, loss of a script that has not resurfaced to date, batches of scripts being mislabelled, scripts being delivered to the wrong address, and individual scripts being attached randomly to other scripts. Modern Languages examiners who have been involved in University assessment for some 35 to 40 years are not aware of precedents for the loss of an exam script, or of inefficiencies anywhere near the scale of those experienced this year. The service delivered by the Exam Schools this year was in no way commensurate with the status of a world-class university, and it caused intolerable pressure on the Faculty's Exams Office at a critical time in the examinations cycle.

The above concerns have been communicated to the Junior Proctor.

- **Mitigating Circumstances Notices to Examiners (MCEs)**

The Board of Examiners received 21 individual MCEs in the main school (2 in CELA, 3 in CEUM, and 5 in PML), some of which concerned disruptions that were considered under the group MCE process in accordance with instructions from the Proctors.

The group MCEs related to disruptions of in-person exams caused by protestors entering the Exam Schools, which particularly affected candidates sitting Paper I in Italian and Paper I in Czech (with Slovak) on the morning of 13 June, and candidates sitting Paper I in Portuguese in the afternoon of the same day. Further impact of the protests consisted primarily of precautionary measures that delayed the start of exams sat on 14 and 17 June owing to enhanced security checks.

Notification from the Proctors concerning the disruption on 13 June including instructions to the Chair was received only on Friday 28 June. The impact on the groups of candidates affected by the disruptions was assessed in accordance with the rules set out in Annex E of the Examinations and Assessment Framework. The Board of Examiners accepted the stressful impact of the disruptions on 13 June on the groups of candidates affected, and agreed that it would in principle be appropriate to mitigate the impact if this proved justified on the basis of a review of the overall mark profile for the relevant papers. However, on the basis of careful scrutiny of the marks profiles and comparison with the profiles in previous years, the Board concluded that there were no grounds for mitigating action. Delays to the start of exams on 14 and 17 June were similarly considered under the group MCE process, and no mitigating action was taken. As instructed by the Proctors, individual submissions by candidates who considered themselves to have been unduly impacted beyond the rest of the relevant cohort were assessed under the individual MCE process.

The Proctors' Office was slow in processing notifications of the above disruptions and other MCEs, which meant that many MCEs had to be considered after the meeting scheduled for this purpose.

- **Absence from exams**

Several candidates were absent from papers with the permission of the Proctors. The Board's general recommendation was that they should take the missing papers as at a first sitting in September, with marks reported as incomplete in the interim and the opportunity to re-sit if necessary.

## **Recommendations for the 2024-25 examination cycle:**

### **1. Team of examiners**

Each Sub-faculty should ensure that its team of examiners is complete at the start of the exam cycle with a single Senior Examiner. If it is unavoidable for an examiner to step down in the course of the year, this should be agreed with the Faculty Chair and a replacement immediately identified by the Sub-faculty. There should be no circumstances in which the number of examiners for the relevant language or subject is reduced, or responsibility for the role of Senior Examiner shared.



## **2. Further consideration of the use of certification for one literature paper**

Certification for Paper III (Spanish) and Paper IV (all other languages) once again proved a light-touch but effective means of ascertaining – as reported by the Chair in 2023 – that ‘candidates were working to an appropriate standard’. As outlined by the Chair in 2023, a key reason for nonetheless returning to a formal examination in 2025 is that it restores the balance between language papers (2) and literature papers (1) and thereby avoids discriminating, with respect to the awarding of Distinctions, against candidates who are good at literature but lack the benefit of good language teaching in school.

With respect to the burden placed on examiners and the Exams Office, however, it would be highly advantageous to return to using certification for one of the literature papers. The disadvantage of creating an imbalance of the kind outlined above could be avoided by establishing an average across papers that are grouped as Part I (Papers I and II, taking forward the average between the marks) and Part II (Papers III and IV, taking forward the mark for the examined paper).

In reaching a decision, it should be borne in mind that even given the continued use of certification for one of the two main literature papers this year, the burden on examiners and the Exams Office was very high indeed, and the necessarily short time available for marking, processing marks and establishing final outcomes including consideration of the now high number of MCEs increased the pressure. This became intolerable for the Exams Office when faced with additional pressure from failures in the central exam administration. Overload puts the robustness of the exam process at risk and is consequently counter-productive. Conversely, it is not a given that a second literature exam is pedagogically advantageous by comparison with certification of one paper.

## **3. Marking and Statistics as agenda item for the first Examiners’ meeting**

This should be supported by a paper setting out the profiles, percentages, quartiles, means and medians for the preceding two or three years in the four or five languages with the highest (and therefore statistically most informative) number of candidates. This would help to facilitate an informed discussion of marking practices and challenges at the start of the cycle and serve to establish common ground for the team of examiners, thereby also helping to establish continuity of practice and sharing of experience with more recent appointees. It would help to avoid the need for scaling and wholesale adjustments of marks after the Pre-Final Meeting and consequent risk to robust assessment outcomes.

## **4. Guidance on essay length for open-book literature exams**

The Conventions for open-book literature exams should include guidance on the number of words below which an essay is likely to be deemed short-weight, and on the other hand guidance on a maximum number of words. The latter should be generous and designed primarily to discourage inclusion of cut-and-paste material from tutorial essays or online sources. It should be ascertained that Inspira indicates the number of words in a user-friendly way during the writing process.

## **5. Use of an open-book format for literature exams in the Preliminary Examination**

No formal concerns about plagiarism or inappropriate use of external resources were brought to the attention of the Board of Examiners. Use of the open-book format for literature exams in Prelims did however generate discussion and the voicing of concerns. It is therefore recommended that open-book assessment for literature exams in Prelims should be kept under close review and revisited, for the following reasons:

a) It is difficult if not impossible to provide robust guidance on the appropriate use of an open-book format that can readily and confidently be put into practice by first-year students, and used confidently by tutors in distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate use of online sources and tools.

- b) The relevant digital technology has already become highly sophisticated, offering tools that can easily be used in such a way as to circumvent detection, which means that any accusation of plagiarism risks unfairness and potentially litigation.
- c) Some students are now arriving at Oxford so used to availing themselves of online tools that they have little confidence in their own ability to perform well without such aids.
- d) The online format of the exam not only offers the ready opportunity to produce answers that rely on external processing of questions but also discourages systematic exclusion of such tools in the college teaching, learning and collections process.
- e) There is a significant danger that candidates who avoid inappropriate use of digital tools during the exams perceive themselves to be – or actually are – disadvantaged by comparison with candidates who draw extensively on such tools.

## **6. Consideration of the criteria for a Distinction, in light of the criteria for Distinctions within the Joint Schools with Modern Languages**

Candidates in the main school of Modern Languages may reasonably be considered disadvantaged by comparison with their peers in some Joint Schools with Modern Languages with respect to the award of Distinctions, and the knock-on effects of this for College awards. In Modern Languages, a candidate must achieve an overall average of 70 to achieve a Distinction, and the same consequently applies to candidates in **CML** and **MLL** since they are assessed within the main school. In the following Joint Schools the criteria are as follows:

**EMEL:** an average of 70 across both papers; AND no mark below 60

**EML:** one mark of 70 and above; AND no mark below 60; AND an average of at least 67

**HML:** one mark above 70; AND no mark below 64

**PML:** an average of 70 across both papers.

It is recommended that the criteria for the award of Distinctions in the main school should be reviewed with reference to the criteria in the various Joint Schools with Modern Languages and the associated other main schools.

### **JOINT SCHOOLS**

Except for the disruptions in the Exam Schools on 13, 14 and 17 June outlined above, the exams in all Joint Schools ran smoothly, thanks to the efficient communication and collaboration of the academic and administrative staff. CML and MLL candidates were considered in the main schools' meetings. The other Joint Schools were considered in separate final meetings chaired either by the Chair or the Vice-Chair in Modern Languages. In some cases, there was initially lack of full clarity concerning aspects of the Conventions, and in one case a discrepancy between the Conventions and the relevant Handbook, which had to be clarified. The results were confirmed.

In **CML** there were 8 candidates in Classics and Modern Languages (5 x 4-year course, and 3 x 5-year course)

In **CMLL** there were 44 candidates

In **EMEL** there were 11 candidates, all taking Arabic on the AMES side.

In **EML** there were 33 candidates.

In **HML** there were 16 candidates.

In **PML** there were 21 candidates.

### **Recommendation for the 2024-25 examination cycle:**

It is recommended that the Exams Officer contacts their counterparts in Joint School (including Classics and Linguistics) subjects prior to the First Examiners' Meeting each year to confirm the

Conventions for the Joint School and record any changes while also asking them to establish that there is consistency between Conventions and Handbooks.

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

Resits were timetabled for the first week in September, the Final meetings being held on Tuesday 10 September.

There were 16 candidates in total (including 3 candidates who sat one or more Papers as a first attempt): 13 candidates in Modern Languages, 2 candidates in English & Modern Languages, and 1 candidate in Philosophy and Modern Languages. The meetings were attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Senior Examiner or nominated Examiner in the languages where there were re-sits.

All candidates' performances were duly reviewed, and 2 MCEs were received (including 1 after the final exam board).

At the Final meeting of the Board, the members expressed their gratitude to Examination Schools for meeting their request for arranging the resits during the first two weeks of September.

**Professor Katrin Kohl  
Chair of Prelims 2024**

## PRELIMS PRIZES 2024

Prizes were awarded to the following candidates:

PRIZE	NAME
<p><b>ANDREW COLIN PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Russian</i></p>	<p><b><u>Post A'Level:</u></b> Dylan RADFORD / St Edmund Hall (Russian sole)</p> <p><b><u>Beginners' Russian:</u></b> James ANDERSON / Lady Margaret Hall (German &amp; Beginners' Russian)</p>
<p><b>CLAUDE MASSART PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in French literature</i></p>	<p>Poppy LITTLER-JENNINGS / St Hugh's (French sole)</p>
<p><b>CYRIL JONES MEMORIAL PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Spanish</i></p>	<p>Thomas HILDITCH / Christ Church (French &amp; Spanish)</p>
<p><b>DAVID CRAM PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Prelims Linguistics by a ML student</i></p>	<p>Samuel FIELD-GIBSON / Jesus College (German &amp; Linguistics)</p>
<p><b>MARJORIE COUNTESS OF WARWICK PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in French by a female candidate</i></p>	<p>Camille SIMON / St Anne's (English &amp; French)</p>
<p><b>MRS CLAUDE BEDDINGTON MODERN LANGUAGES PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in German</i></p>	<p>Theo MAMA-KAHN / Wadham (French &amp; German)</p>
<p><b>T.F. EARLE PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Portuguese Prelims content papers</i></p>	<p>Emily DICKER / Queen's (German &amp; Portuguese)</p>
<p><b>STEPHEN PARKINSON PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in Portuguese Prelims language papers</i></p>	<p>Emily DICKER / Queen's (German &amp; Portuguese)</p>
<p><b>LIDL PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in German papers on the post-A-level course (any combination except sole)</i></p>	<p>Theo MAMA-KAHN / Wadham (French &amp; German)</p>
<p><b>LIDL PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance in German sole (across all papers)</i></p>	<p>Isabelle GREGORY / Lincoln (German sole)</p>
<p><b>LIDL PRIZE</b> <i>Best performance on the German beginners' course</i></p>	<p>Charlotte SILBER / Jesus (French &amp; Beginners' German)</p>

## CZECH (WITH SLOVAK)

### Czech I: Prose Composition and Grammar Sentences

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
1	3
25.00%	75.00%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
79 - 79	66 - 66	59 - 59	46 - 46

There were no problems with this paper from the setting/marking perspective. Marks in for the translation into Czech and grammar exercise were relatively evenly distributed, neither part causing any specific problems. There was even distribution of performance, with no fails, three passes (one low, two high) and one distinction. Overall, grammatical structures were mastered, with more variation in lexical competence.

### Czech IIA & IIB: Unseen Translation from Czech

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
2	2
50.00%	50.00%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
79 - 79	70 - 70	56 - 56	52 - 52

There were no problems with this paper from setting/marking perspective. Both passages produced relatively good marks, with two scripts achieving distinctions in IIB (and in overall marks), two passes (one high, one low) and no fails. The candidates performed consistently in both papers, showing overall good lexical and grammatical knowledge.

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

### Czech IV: Prescribed Texts II

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
1	3	0
25.00%	75.00%	0.00%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
85 - 85	69 - 69	64 - 64	57 - 57

There were no problems with this paper from setting/marking perspective. Overall, very solid performances with one outstanding script achieving a high distinction mark, the others high passes, no fails.

## FRENCH

This year, Paper I and Paper II were examined in person. Papers IV and XIII were done online and the remainder (III, XI and XII) were certificated by assessment of a proportion of the work required for submission by candidates.

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

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
30	99	1
23.08%	76.15%	0.77%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
84 - 68	68 - 61	61 - 57	56 - 0

The paper consisted, as usual, of three exercises: 10 sentences for translation into English (Q1), the translation of a passage of English into French (Q2), and the summary of an article in French (Q3).

The median mark was: 61

In order to remain roughly in line with the distribution of marks from previous years, the markers had to scale their marks up. Once this was done, 30 of the scripts received a distinction, and 99 received a passing mark. 1 of the scripts failed to fulfil the minimum requirement, though a number of scripts that were raised by means of rescaling were noticeably weak.

**It should be noted that this is the second year when rescaling has been necessary and that last year's examiner's report noted that the scale used in 2022 was already more lenient than that used in 2021.**

On Q1, it was a minority that managed 'I wish I had not been so angry' and 'No matter how many times you ask' and that translated 'hard work' as something other than 'travail dur'. A large number of candidates did apparently unthinkingly resort to 'travail dur' and to 'application' for 'application', 'complaintes' for 'complaints'. And 'Whose idea was that?' produced some pretty spectacular contortions.

Q2 was more straightforward in terms of grammar, syntax and vocabulary, and was much better done than Q1. It also enabled some candidates who had not managed to find workarounds in Q1 to reveal their linguistic resourcefulness, and a small number of scripts showed real flair. However, the majority came a cropper with at least one of the following fairly basic phrases, including 'I sat down', 'I've discovered', 'I thought to myself' and 'I thought of you', and more than half were unable to handle a preceding direct object. More attentive re-reading would probably have enabled candidates to eliminate some basic mistakes, including the misgendering of 'chose' and 'lettre'. Q3 was of a level of difficulty comparable to Q2, and the exercise functioned well as a test of both comprehension and expression. Almost all candidates appeared to have understood the article, which contained some sloppy and pretentious journalistic phrasing that required candidates to suspend their critical faculties, and a good number provided engaging summaries. Frequent errors included 'le baptisme' and 'la symptôme', and there were candidates who simply reproduced segments of the original passage, occasionally introducing errors as they did so. Otherwise, candidates had read and observed the rubric, and so this year's examiners were spared the task of counting the number of words in the summaries.

## French II

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
34	96
26.15%	73.85%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
78 - 70	70 - 67	67 - 65	64 - 54

Neither of the passages set should have seemed too complicated to the average student and the examiners were pleased that the vast majority either obtained a distinction or were placed solidly within the second quartile.

34 students (26%) of those who were examined received a distinction. 72% were placed in the second quartile with only two (1.5%) in the third and one (0.8%) in the fourth.

**IIA: Unseen Translation into English** was the beginning of Leïla Slimani's *Chanson douce*. In terms of vocabulary, a few terms were misunderstood by certain candidates including "parquet" (which could have stayed the same), "talons" (heels, here, rather than false nails as some students thought, by analogy with what the French would call "les serres" of a bird of prey) and, more worryingly, "neuve", the feminine of "neuf" which was sometimes translated as "navy" or more curiously, once, as "green". An expression like "aux aurores" also challenged some of the candidates. The last sentence was the most difficult one to handle in terms of construction. The best scripts were fluent and precise.

**IIB: Translation from Prescribed Texts** was one of Cécile Volanges' letters to Sophie from *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. Cécile's vocabulary is simple as are most of her phrases. The main issue for many candidates was deciding what to do with the characters' titles. The answer here was to keep them as they were and refer to "Mme de Merteuil" or "the chevalier". Another possible difficulty was understanding the value of a word like "bien" in the first sentence where it functions adverbially and finding a way of indicating Cécile's emphasis. Overall the scripts were clear and effective. In the weaker ones some of the ordinary vocabulary or sentence structure posed problems but this was very much the exception rather than the norm.

## French III: Short Texts / Examined by Certification

All the candidates whose work was submitted produced analyses of the required standard for French III. The moderators read 20% of scripts from all colleges. The students' textual analyses were of a good quality on the whole, showing both a sound knowledge of the set texts and the satisfactory acquisition of close reading skills and commentary methodology.

## French IV: French Narrative Fiction

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
34	95	1
26.15%	73.08%	0.77%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
80 - 70	70 - 66	65 - 61	61 - 0

The overall performance on this paper was impressive. The great majority of students had clearly prepared carefully for the examination and showed very good knowledge of the primary texts. The best essays answered the question directly and backed up their ideas with close analysis of the primary text. Many also used pertinent critical ideas to enrich their argument and broaden its scope. It is worth noting that the strongest scripts tended to be of average length, 1000-1200 words: these answers stayed focused on the argument and used examples effectively. The longest (over 1500 words) often became too descriptive and the shortest (under 800 words) struggled to cover enough material. With this in mind, the examiners recommend that a word limit be introduced going forward.

The four texts received roughly the same numbers of responses. The essay questions worked well: they could be answered in different ways and catered for different levels of ability. Certain questions were favoured by the candidates: a question on pleasure and curiosity in *La Châtelaine de Vergy*; a question on the complexity of selfhood in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*; a question on the idealist and realist treatment of romantic relationships in *Indiana*; and a question on polyphony and silence in *La Traversée de la mangrove*. The other questions were still answered in good numbers.

Many of the essays on *La Châtelaine* were well contextualised and showed good awareness of generic conventions. Quite a few of the essays on curiosity and pleasure became very focused on the word 'entirely' ('the text itself is entirely driven by curiosity and the pleasure') and then argued that there were other greater drivers of action, such as feudal systems of power. It was a shame to see so many students swerve away from the essay prompt. The best responses to this question interrogated the various kinds of pleasure that curiosity affords the characters of the text but also us as readers.

The quotation from *Les Liaisons dangereuses* on the variability of character prompted very solid responses, which ranged from detailed character studies to an investigation of the destabilisation of the reading process. Unfortunately, the question on moral discourse was very often answered as if it were a straightforward question on morality. It is a shame that more candidates did not interrogate the term 'discourse' and tease out its implications.

Both questions on *Indiana* produced good analysis of plot, character, and structure. In answering the question on realism, idealism, and love, it was important to recognise the literary implications of the terms 'realism' and 'idealism'; the best answers moved fluently between the language of verisimilitude in the novel and Sand's own aesthetic choices as a writer. In answering the question on stereotypes, types, and cliché, many candidates did not define these terms or pinpoint the differences between them. When candidates did do this, they were able to forge more precise arguments about *how* Sand was using these devices. We advise candidates to take advantage of the open book format to consult dictionaries.

Both questions on *Traversée de la mangrove* prompted strong answers. Many of the essays on silence did a great job of exploring the links between the text's formal structures (its multiple silent interior monologues) and societal form of oppression such as racism and misogyny. The more basic answers documented unhappy forms of silence. We advise candidates to think about ways that they can elevate thematic or character-based analysis by reflecting on the text's formal features. The questions on place, writing, and language were often deftly contextualised and showed sensitivity to the shifts occurring between different literary movements in this period in the Caribbean. Sometimes these answers tended towards the general and would have benefitted from more close textual analysis.

One general point: overall, quite a number of essays had extremely short introductions, sometimes of two or three sentences long. We advise students against trying to save time on their introductions. It is a crucial opportunity to figure out the question's particular contention, to analyse the language of the quotation, and to contextualise these ideas. The essays that did this work in the introduction tended to be more specific and more adventurous in the subsequent analysis.

In conclusion, the candidates are to be lauded for their careful, well-informed, and perceptive work.

*La Châtelaine* 117 (a. 92 / b. 25)

*Les Liaisons* 86 (a. 55 / b. 31)

*Indiana* 81 (a. 64 / 17)

*Traversée* (a. 65 / b. 40)



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

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

## **French XIII: Key Texts in French Thought**

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
11	16
40.74%	59.26%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
78 - 71	70 - 67	67 - 65	64 - 57

Most candidates showed a good knowledge of the texts and a capacity to analyse their language and their conceptual framework. The best candidates were able to think about the relation between language and thought, and to draw on their knowledge of the text and its context to answer the question. Candidates who were able to define and reflect on terms (without recourse to dictionary definitions) did well. Weaker answers trotted out a general statement on the text without taking the time to consider how to respond to the question, and they tended to rebuke critics rather than engage with them. The best commentaries dug into the details of the passage but were also able to show how the excerpt fitted with a larger whole; the weakest responded less to the passage than to some remembered generalisations about the text.

Of the 27 candidates, 17 answered on Descartes, 13 on Rousseau, 9 on Beauvoir, and 15 on Césaire. There were 4 commentaries on Descartes, 4 on Rousseau, 7 on Beauvoir and 12 on Césaire.

## GERMAN

### COURSE A (Post A 'Level)

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

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
14	38	2
25.93%	70.37%	3.70%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
81 - 70	68 - 64	64 - 57	57 - 30

#### 1: Reading Comprehension

Summary: The Reading Comprehension was on the difference of work attitudes between gen Z and previous generations. The summary exercise showed that almost all candidates had understood the relevant points of the article. The best summaries grasped the main idea of the text, showed a good level of abstraction and rendered a concise account of the central argument. The average scripts still grasped the main points but strung together individual points made in the text and were sometimes slightly too long. Many summaries were well written, with linguistic ability and the ability to write a good summary seeming to generally go hand in hand. On the lower end, summaries were not quite clear, focused on side arguments and contained frequent basic mistakes. The fail candidates also failed the summary task.

Questions on the text: The majority of candidates handled the questions well. Sometimes, not all marks for each question could be awarded due to missing detail. Some students, probably to avoid copying too much from the text, tried to give an overly abstract answer. A few students seemed misinterpreted the phrase *wie ein dressierter Dackel* to mean that the interviewee was well dressed. At the lower end, students, while seemingly understanding the text, copied too much of the passage in their answer. Students also occasionally had points deducted for language despite answering the questions largely correctly.

#### 2: Essay

All essay topics were attempted with Sollten wir uns von der Gleichstellung der Geschlechter verabschieden und anderen gesellschaftlichen Fragen zuwenden? Many essays were well structured with an informed argument. However, the content for most of these essays were strikingly similar. Students clearly drew on content from the DGuK courses and lectures but seemed hesitant of developing their own ideas on the topic. In general, the essay showed a higher linguistic standard than the text comprehension part, with students displaying clearly more familiarity with vocabulary and phrases pertaining to the DGuK topics. The language ranged from near native speaker level to scripts that contained many frequent mistakes that, at the very low end, led to a breakdown in communication. Most of the mistakes were case mistakes, plural and adjectival endings, and frequent English phrasing and occasionally English vocabulary. The following points detail some of the language issues in the overall paper.

- the colloquial 'Leute' used very frequently in scripts of different linguistic abilities, with students not aware that the register was not appropriate. Other register problems included expressions like 'total'.
- frequently students used 'viel' instead of 'sehr'
- two candidates used the phrase 'punktlos' for pointless, instead of 'zwecklos', 'sinnlos'.

## German II

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
15	40
27.27%	72.73%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
81 – 71	70 – 64	64 – 57	56 - 40

## IIA: Translation into German

The passage from Nell Zink's *Avalon* (2023) proved suitably challenging, offering ample opportunity for candidates to show their command of both basic German grammar and more advanced constructions, display linguistic creativity, and consider stylistic choices.

While the majority of candidates showed familiarity with (i) the cases governed by prepositions, (ii) the translation of time expressions, (iii) tense distinctions and tense inflection, (iv) the embedding of a direct speech complement, and (v) the gender of common nouns, weaker candidates often produced errors in all these domains. For example, *aus*, *mit* and *zu* were used with the accusative, while *für* was combined with the dative; candidates not infrequently rendered *eight o'clock in the morning* as '*um 8 Uhr im Morgen*' or '*8 Uhr morgen*' and translated *in November* literally as '*in November*' (or indeed '*in Novembre*'). Present tense dialogue was intermittently shifted into the past tense and featured verb forms like '*schlafte*', '*schluf*' and '*laufte*'. Not all candidates knew to invert the subject and verb in a speech verb clause following the direct speech complement, resulting in ungrammatical sentences like '*„Opa Larry –“, ich sagte*'. Finally, candidates did not always know the grammatical gender of basic vocabulary items like *Auto*, *Hand*, *Handy*, *Schlüssel*, and *Tür*.

As concerns more complex grammatical constructions, candidates frequently struggled with infinitival clauses and gerunds. For example, [I] *went to answer it* (where *it* referred to the door made salient in the preceding discourse) gave rise to '*ich ging es um zu antworten*' or '*ich ging zum Antworten*'; and for *I told the taxi driver to leave*, one encountered translations like '*Ich habe dem Taxifahrer zu verlassen erzählt*' (which also uses unsuitable vocabulary items) or '*ich wegzufahren dem Taxifahrer gesagt habe*'. Some candidates translated the gerundive clause *finally selecting some underwear* as a present participle ('*schließlich ... wählend*'), and while most candidates correctly aimed to render *regularly looking at his phone* as a finite subordinate clause, they were sometimes unsure about the subordinating conjunction, choosing *als* or *wie* or sentence-initial *wobei* ('*Wobei er auf seinem Handy schaute, fuhr er...*'). Pleasingly, most candidates were aware that German does not have zero relative clauses and so knew that the sentence *The hotel was unlike any building I had ever been inside before* required a relative pronoun that connects the noun *building* to the relative clause. However, candidates were not always able to produce the correct relative pronoun so that the head noun *ein Gebäude* was variously combined with *das*, *die*, *in das*, *in denen*, *innerhalb von dem*, *wo*, *indem*, and *dass*. Finally, few candidates were familiar with the *was-für* construction, consequently translating *What a jerk!* as '*Was ein arsch!*', '*Was für einen Idioten!*' or '*Wofür einen Dummkopf!*' and permutations thereof.

Various vocabulary items were unknown to all but the best performers, including *Staubsauger*, *fingertips*, *cardboard box*, *valuables*, *passenger side*, and *door handle*. Candidates were given credit for attempts to find suitable equivalents, even if these were ad hoc coinages, such as '*Säuberungsmaschine*', '*Absaugmaschine*', '*Putzgerät*' or '*die kleine Maschine, die putzt*'. More surprising to see was candidates' unfamiliarity with vocabulary items like *front door* ('*Fronttür*', '*Haupttür*', '*Vortür*'), *overcoat* ('*Außenmantel*', '*Übermantel*', '*Oberjacke*', with many candidates settling on the rather outdated '*Überzieher*'), *plane* ('*Flughoff*', '*Fliegen*'), *taxi driver* ('*Taxiführer*', '*Taximann*'), *underwear* ('*Untehosen*', '*Unterkleidung*', '*Unterkittel*', '*Socken*'), *novels* ('*Novellen*', '*Erzählungen*', '*Romanen*'), and *backpack* ('*Rückentasche*', '*Rucksack*', '*Tüte*', '*Pack*'), or the frequent, but here inappropriate, rendering of *talk* as '*diskutieren*'.

Translations that attracted marks at the top end of the marking scale convinced not only with grammatical accuracy and knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary but also by avoiding overly literal translations, understanding, for example, the clause *as though the FBI had finally come for the Hendersons* to have the meaning *'als ob [das] FBI endlich gekommen wäre, um die Hendersons zu verhaften'*.

To conclude, on the basis of this year's range of performances for Paper IIA, some advice for future generations of Prelims students preparing for this paper might include the following: (i) when translating, keep track of the basics of grammar (for example, a lot is gained just by ensuring that the finite verb occurs in the correct syntactic position and agrees with the subject); (ii) always memorise nominal vocabulary items together with the grammatical gender specification and plural form so that you can use the vocabulary items in a sentence; and (iii) do not think that you need to overcomplicate sentences that are not that complicated – for example, *He's sick* is aptly translated as *'Er ist krank'* (rather than the unidiomatic/ungrammatical *'Ihm geht es schlimm'* or *'Er leidet unter Krankheit'*) and the unmotivated addition of adverbs and discourse particles like *aber, dann, ja* and *jetzt* does not make any useful contribution.

### **IIB: Translation from German**

The passage by Monika Maron was generally well understood. All candidates recognized that the subject of the first sentence, *'Martha traf ich im Sommer'*, was *'ich'* rather than *'Martha'*. The potentially challenging final clauses – *'ohne vorher gefragt zu haben, ob es ihr recht sei'* – were rendered in a variety of correct and idiomatic versions, e.g. *'without having asked first whether it would be all right to do so'*. Candidates also generally found a correct and idiomatic translation for *'warum ich mich ihr so verwandt fühlte'* (e.g. *'why I felt so connected to her'*).

The most successful versions attended closely to the nuances of the original while finding idiomatic solutions for phrases and sentences that demanded interpretation. The second clause of the sentence *'Ich hatte nicht gewusst, wohin ich hätte verreisen sollen, und war zu Hause geblieben'* required attention to the context of the town (or city) being deserted in the summer months, leaving the narrator without a social life. Candidates who translated it as *'where I should have travelled to'* or *'where I was supposed to go on holiday'* erroneously implied an obligation, while *'where I might have travelled to'* or, more simply, *'where to go on holiday'* more accurately captured the import of the German sentence in its context.

The passage permitted variations in the choice of register, though some translations seemed excessively formal and the most idiomatic renderings tended to include judicious use of contractions, as in *'I didn't dare'* for *'ich wagte es nicht'*. Many candidates failed to use the continuous tense for continuing actions, as in the narrator's account of their dream: *'Wir saßen in einem Lokal [...] und lächelten uns zu'*, *'We were sitting in a restaurant' (or 'pub' or 'bar' though not 'a location') [...]* and *smiling at each other.'* Some candidates used *'We were sat in ...'*, which was penalised as an error of register, though not as a grammatical mistake since it has come into general usage for *'were sitting'*. Habitual actions, such as that of the young woman who was always sitting in the café when the narrator came in, were most successfully conveyed with a *'would'* construction, e.g. for *'Immer, wenn ich ins Café kam, saß an einem der Tische eine junge Frau'*, *'Whenever I entered the café, a young woman would be sitting at one of the tables'..*

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

### **German IV: Literature II: Prescribed Works**

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
14	39	2
25.00%	71.00%	4.00%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
78 – 70	69 – 63	63 – 58	58 - 0

The paper seemed a fair test and all the questions were attempted with a good range of texts on display ( and *M* discussed least by quite a long way). Candidates seemed to know the texts well for the most part and to be able to manipulate material from the texts themselves, from secondary literature and from lectures etc. Having said that, there was significant misquotation and misspelling of characters names and German phrases, which creates a bad impression in an open book examination where resources are available.

The best answers provided responses to the questions asked and maintained a strong line of argument as well as providing and analysing textual examples. Occasionally questions became lists of examples, notably on question 5 on the use of the symbol and question 6 on minor characters or settings, instead of reflecting also on the role of these things in the text discussed. The question on society and the individual (question 2) was often misunderstood (or interpreted) as a question about art, though some candidates managed still to bring the answer back. Some candidates failed to notice the first part of question 7 on anti-realist techniques and simply answered the question by saying how far the authors provided solutions to social questions in their work

One issue was a number of very short answers (below 800 words) which, while not marked as short weight since there are no formal parameters, inevitably did not have scope to illustrate and analyse adequately. At the other end were quite a number of answers around the 2000-word mark, where candidates were evidently pasting blocks of material from previous essays. Very often, however, this material interrupted the argument or was irrelevant. Examiners should think about recommended word ranges for this paper if it is to continue as online open book.

Several candidates discussed the same text twice which is permitted under a generous reading of the existing rubric (examiners disagreed about whether this was permitted so no one was penalised). The Sub-faculty should consider what it means with its rubric in future. The Kafka text 'In der Strafkolonie' provided some of the most sophisticated answers, which treated it as a metacommentary on the business of writing prose, but was also very widely misunderstood.

Overall, the papers gave the sense that candidates were getting to grips with the techniques of literary criticism but the very best answers managed already to say something also about genre, technique or language too.

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

## **German XII: Introduction to German Medieval Studies**

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
5	14
26.00%	74.00%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
75 – 73	67 – 64	63 – 60	59 - 52

Most candidates were well-prepared for the paper. In the commentary (qu.1), weaker answers offered a plot paraphrase and some general knowledge, but often did not spot the ironic twist at the end of the passage and therefore missed the contrast between the hypothetical expectations of the messengers sent out to find a future pope and the realities. Weaker scripts tended to over-interpret individual features of sound or rhyme. The best answers noted the use of subjunctives to convey the difference between hypothesis and reality, and commented on narrative voice and dramatic irony, especially in the use of the phrase 'der lebende martaere'. The guided commentary exercise (qu. 2) proved most challenging, because it required detailed engagement with the passage set; weaker candidates relied on general knowledge. All three essay questions were attempted; most candidates showed awareness of the central issues, but some of the weaker answers suggested the use of tutorial notes without due attention to the question set. Inappropriately recycled material tended to attract marks in the II.2 range, whereas the best answers gave evidence of nuanced

argument, especially in the questions on the use of material objects and gender roles in Hartmann's narrative.

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

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### GERMAN COURSE B (Beginners')

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

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
4	4	0
50.00%	50.00%	0.00%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
81 - 76	73 - 71	68 - 56	52 - 46

#### Section A: Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension passage discussed the views on *geschlechtergerechte Sprache* in German schools. Most candidates showed good understanding of the text with three candidates gaining a first-class mark for the task. At the lower end, answers were very short with few details and less effort to answer the questions in the candidates' own words. Some candidates who clearly understood the text were marked down for language. At the other side of the spectrum, students answered questions in detail using their own language with few mistakes.

#### Section B: Essay

Three topics out of four were attempted: *Haben es Frauen heute leichter als Männer?*, *Wie sieht für Sie der ideale Beruf aus?* and *Ein Haus im Grünen mit der Partnerin/dem Partner: Traum oder Horror?* with the majority of students writing on the work place topic. Four out of the eight essays were very good. These showed a good range of vocabulary on the topic and used a variety of structures correctly with only few mistakes. Students elaborated on their career choices and also discussed issues such as work-life balance. The weaker scripts were more basic in terms of syntactical structures. They contained basic mistakes such as cases, verb agreement and verb position. In two cases understanding was hampered to some extent by language and poor vocabulary mistakes.

#### Section C: Grammar

Most candidates excelled in the grammar part. Even those students who struggled with the other tasks achieved good results in this part of the exam.

### German B II

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
3	4	1
37.5%	50.00%	12.5%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
78 - 74	70 - 67	62 - 58	47 - 35

### **BIIA: Translation into German**

The passage, taken from a short story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ('Imitation', 2009), was handled well by most candidates. Generally, candidates displayed good command of all foundational grammatical structures, suggesting solid knowledge of the principles of word order (including passive and infinitival clauses) and morphological marking. Scripts that attracted marks at the top end of the marking scale had wide lexical range and were able to convey nuance in translation (e.g., by translating *You sound strange* as '*Deine Stimme klingt fremd*' or *Darling, I have to go* as '*Schatz, ich muss weg*'). Other candidates were hampered by gaps in vocabulary, unsure about the German equivalents of (amongst others) *phone, darling, capital, meeting, sound, flight, personal assistant, and curly*. Even where candidates knew the relevant German nouns, they often did not know the grammatical gender of these nouns. For many candidates, the sentence *But her tongue feels too heavy to let the words out* proved particularly difficult, both because of unfamiliarity with *Zunge* and because they used either *sich fühlen* or *anföhlen* but not *sich anfühlen*. Pleasingly, all candidates attempted to translate the passage in whole; that is, they left no gaps and sought to find an appropriate interpretation for words unknown to them (e.g., translating *personal assistant* as *Hilfe* or *Kollege*).

### **BIIB: Translation from German**

The passage from Daniel Kehlmann's *Ruhm* (2009) was well understood by nearly all candidates. Problems of understanding arose largely only when translating (i) *Bücherlesen ist kein Beruf, hatte mein Vater gesagt, und so wütend ich früher darüber war, werde ich, wenn meine Kinder in das Alter kommen, ihnen nichts anderes sagen*; and (ii) *Ich akzeptierte, dass das Leben ist, was es ist, und dass man sich einiges aussuchen kann, das meiste aber nicht*. In both sentences, candidates' partial understanding, together with their discourse expectations and biases, resulted in mistranslations, such as '*...so I vowed to myself that when my children were growing up, I would never tell them that reading books was not a job*' and '*...while one can seek something out for oneself, it's not worth the hassle*' or '*...that you can look out for yourself but that most people don't*'. Some candidates found nicely idiomatic solutions for the German text, translating, for example, *Bücherlesen ist kein Beruf* as '*Reading books doesn't pay the bills*'. All in all, the performances suggested that the Beginners' cohort is able to read effectively in German, having acquired the linguistic skills to track the constituent relations in a sentence and attribute meaning to lexical choices.

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

#### **German B IV: German Prose: 1890-1933**

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
2	6
25.00%	75.00%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
74 – 72	67 – 64	64 – 64	58 - 40

The paper seemed a fair test and all the questions were attempted with all the texts discussed. Candidates seemed to know the texts well for the most part and to be able to manipulate material from the texts themselves, from secondary literature and from lectures etc. To their credit candidates quoted in German, but there was significant misquotation and misspelling of characters' names and German terms, which creates a bad impression in an open book examination where resources are available.

The best answers provided responses to the questions asked and maintained a strong line of argument as well as providing textual examples. Occasionally questions became lists of examples:

notably on question 2 on the use of the symbol and question 3 on minor characters or settings instead of reflecting also on the role of these things in the text discussed. The question on society and the individual (question 4) was often misunderstood (or interpreted) as a question about art, though some candidates managed still to bring the answer back. A good showing on this paper. See post A-level report from comments on word length.



## ITALIAN

### Italian I: Comprehension and Essay

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
9	32	2
20.93%	74.42%	4.65%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
82 - 68	68 - 62	62 - 50	49 - 27

43 candidates sat this Paper (38 last year), no candidate was absent. Overall, the standard of this paper was good, with distinctions being awarded to 9 candidates. 15 candidates received marks between 60 and 69; 9 candidates between 50 and 59, and 8 between 40 and 49. Two candidates fell below the pass mark.

The passage set for Reading Comprehension, entitled *La nuova popolarità dell'astrologia* was an adapted extract from an article published originally in the online newspaper *Il Post*. It dealt with the popularity of astrology and the reasons why many people, despite not believing in their scientific basis, read horoscopes.

The majority of candidates understood the passage clearly and a good proportion understood it in detail. Most of the answers produced showed an ability to rephrase the content of the passage, despite some grammatical errors. Some of them showed a more limited ability to elaborate on the content, but overall demonstrated the ability to understand the passage. Personal opinions in response to the sixth reading comprehension question were expressed in a different degree of clarity and coherence, with some shortcomings in the use of grammar and vocabulary.

There was also a good standard of work produced for the Guided Essay (a choice of two narratives, an essay on the importance of free time, and an informal letter to friends). The results varied greatly within the cohort, ranging from 85 to 27, reflecting the significant disparities of candidates' knowledge of vocabulary and mastery of Italian grammar and syntax. Nonetheless, the overall standard was good, with most students showing the ability to produce intelligible and coherent written texts, despite some weaknesses in terms of accuracy and vocabulary. The secure command of complex syntax, the use of a variety of subjunctive structures, knowledge of Italian idioms, and wide-ranging vocabulary, have led to distinction marks being awarded to some exceptional candidates.

### Italian II

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
2	41
4.65%	95.35%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
75 - 64	64 - 60	60 - 56	55 - 45

### IIA: Translation into Italian

Candidates did well in the translation of an adapted passage by Truman Capote. At the same time, the marking profile showed a substantial number of low II.2 and III class marks. This was to a good extent the result of the increasing number of students from a Beginner's background. Nine of out forty-three candidates received a mark between 42 and 49. At the higher end of the spectrum, only one student received a First Class mark. There is no doubt that the chosen text presented a number of grammatical and lexical challenges which candidates seemed to struggle with. For

example, a fairly common expression – to be found in notices in all public buildings, “Fire Exit” (‘uscita antincendio’), was mistranslated by just about the entire cohort of candidates. Amongst the most creative attempts were “escapada di fiore” and “scappo da brucio”.

### **IIB: Translation from Italian**

The text for Italian IIb this year was an interesting and challenging translation from Elena Ferrante, which has produced a good range of mark, with some strong first class marks and many II.1s. The difficulties were mostly located in the lexicon (see for instance 'tombini', manholes, often taken for tombs, and 'panni', clothes, washing, for 'pani', breads), and some idiomatic or complex turns of phrase. Overall, the cohort has performed well in IIb, showing good command of translation, attention to detail, curiosity for the language, and creativity in the face of difficulty. In the most successful exam, as well as precision, fluid rendering, sound knowledge of the Italian language and great command of English, a passion and pleasure for translation has emerged.

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

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

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
11	32
25.58%	74.42%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
75 - 70	69 - 66	66 - 63	63 - 57

Overall, candidates showed a good grasp of the texts and film studied, as reflected by the range of marks almost never falling into the II.2 band (apart from three cases). The most popular text was Calvino's *Il cavaliere inesistente*, with candidates tackling both questions on the text in almost equal measure. By far the most popular question amongst the comparative final Section, was the one asking to discuss the treatment of history in two or more texts. Books such as Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* and Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare* lent themselves to a parallel analysis. At the same time, the most original answers tackled other texts, often including Giordan's film, *I cento passi*.

About twenty-five per cent of the candidates managed to achieve a first-class mark and this is a slight improvement on the previous year. At the same time, the range of marks was more compressed within the low-First band, probably as a result of the fact that, in the previous year, it was paper III, the poetry paper, which was examined, whose reliance on two poetry commentaries allowed students to express different skills and show more originality.

## LATIN AND ANCIENT GREEK

### Statistics:

Full statistics are omitted because of the small number of candidates. There were 5 candidates for the main Preliminary Examination this year (Course I year 1/Course II year 2). All 5 achieved a Pass.

There were 3 candidates for the Qualifying Examination (Course II year 1). All passed.

### Paper III (Greek and Latin Unseen Translation)

On the whole candidates obtained a reasonably high mark on the Latin Unseen Translation paper, with one stellar performance. There was no pattern discernible between the poetry and the prose passages, with some finding one harder than the other and vice versa.

### Paper IV (Greek and Latin Essay Questions)

For the most part, the standard was good but no single paper stood out as exceptional and the mark range was concentrated in the sixties. Numbers were more or less evenly divided between landscape and speech in the choice for the Vergil question. Essays on the former worked better and there was some determined effort to look for a correlation between descriptions of landscape and development in the plot of the poem according to which wild natural scenes or countryside descriptions figured before a more urban and civilized setting emerged, whether in the case of Carthage in book 1 or of Rome in the second half of the poem. Mood and symbolism also featured heavily in the discussion. The question as to how ineffective speech proved to be in the *Aeneid* seemed to stray on to the territory of narration, with an exploration of Aeneas' skill as a narrator being examined rather than his ability to communicate or persuade. Given how many examples of his speeches there are, it seemed strange to invoke narration instead. A majority of candidates tackled the Comedy and romantic love question, with one adventurous soul venturing on to the theme of social mobility. The general question proved more of a challenge for some, though all the questions were attempted and elicited intelligent and thoughtful responses. Candidates were penalised if they focused on a single author. These questions provide an opportunity to explore a topic in more abstract and theoretical terms and to work out what connections can be detected in different texts and relate them together in some way. The theme of death lent itself best to imaginative possibilities.

### Paper V (Greek and Latin Translation and Comment)

The standard was disappointing this year, with most candidates obtaining a mark in the sixties. The commentary mark was directly correlated with the translation mark and ignorance of the content of the passage could not be compensated for in the succeeding commentary. There were no candidates for Greek. 3 candidates chose two Vergil passages to comment on and 2 chose two set texts.

1c (Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.624-649): What should have been the well-known passage Vergil *Aen.* book 2 on the fall of Troy and Anchises proved unexpectedly testing. Some failed to realise that in the simile the city was being compared to a tree being cut down by determined farmers. Guesses ranged from Aeneas himself being harried to a bull or to farmers violently protecting their flocks. *Bipennibus* was often mistranslated. Even knowledge of Aeneas' location on the palace roof could not be assumed. Anchises' reaction to the fall of Troy was intelligently discussed and produced some sensitive interpretations of the language.

1d (Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.642-666): Dido's death-bed speech and suicide in book 4 elicited better responses. What was disappointing was the general lack of interest in intertexts and in Greek Tragedy, with few mentions of Ajax from Sophocles' eponymous play and no reference to Euripides' *Alcestis*. Neither Catullus 64 nor the epitaphs of the Scipios were mentioned. This lack of engagement with other the wider literary framework of this passage accounts for the absence of any mark of distinction on this paper for this cohort.

2c (Propertius 1.2.1-24): On the Propertius passage, not a single candidate could translate line 24 in 1.2. Tutors need to take their students through the Heyworth edition as it contains a unique

reading at this juncture and students are adhering to older readings and translations, but the text does not say what they are claiming. The Marpessa myth was not widely known with Idas sometimes being compared with Mount Ida. There was much confusion on how to construe the *discordia* construction (17). Otherwise, the standard of the translation of Propertius was high and it elicited much insightful discussion on elegy, the nature of art and artifice and the figure of the elegiac *puella*.

2d (Juvenal 5.24-48): The passage from Juvenal's *cena* satire was translated well though the periphrasis about Aeneas was not always recognized. People who recognized the reference and allusion to the *Aeneid* performed much better. There was some discussion of satire as a genre and a synkrisis with Horace and Lucilius which was highly pertinent to the reading of the poem as it was also contextualized within the development of the patron-client relationship from the republic to the empire.

Verg.	Prop.	Juv.	2
Verg.	Verg.	Prop.	2
Verg.	Verg.	Juv.	1

### Qualifying Examination:

#### Greek and Latin Language

There were no takers for Greek. No candidates obtained a mark below sixty and the standard of language work was very encouraging. The only passage that all candidates found congenial was Cicero's *Philippic* 4 while some found the poetry too hard and others the quantity of indirect speech in Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*. They found it hard to detect the subordinate clauses in the Caesar passage and to translate accordingly nor did they realise that *quam* meant 'than' after *praestare* and that *patri* was an infinitive functioning the subject of *praestare*: 'enduring any fortune at all was preferable to being killed'. *Interfici* as a passive infinitive proved puzzling. Ellipse of words or phrases was a problem with the Cicero passage as *rei publicae* had to be understood with *reciperandae*. The comparative form of the adjective was routinely ignored and the dilemma form of the argument was not grasped. *Quirites* was not always recognized to mean 'Roman citizens' and as the normal designation for Romans in a public speech. In the Ovid passage, *viribus* was routinely mistaken for *viris* and translated as 'men', which then meant that the dependent genitive was also misconstrued. Some errors in vocabulary can be pardoned but *viribus* is not such a case. *Postquam* was often treated as an adverb and the subordinate clause was ignored. The standard of the sentences was reasonable and one did feel that one was reading an approximation of a Latin passage. Sample errors were the use of infinitives instead of finite verbs in the protasis of a conditional and an inappropriate use of an ablative absolute.

#### Latin Texts

Candidates achieved excellent marks on this paper, with two getting 70 and over and one candidate narrowly missing a distinction mark. Their achievement bears testimony to their hard work and careful revision of the set texts and their prowess at both aspects of the task set them: translation and commentary. They are to be congratulated on their sterling performance. They all chose the Virgil and Catullus passages rather than Seneca. They barely made a mistake on Catullus and translated the passage idiomatically while commenting on the verbal wit and ambiguity as the poet conducts his power play with Varus' girlfriend. Knowledge of the historical period and the corruption of the political institutions under the so-called first triumvirate was also brought to bear in the analysis of the poem. The passage from *Aen.* 6 on the Sibyl's prophecy was well handled, with perceptive comments on its self-reflexive nature and its important bearing on the second half of the epic, as well as its sign-posting of the Homeric structuring of the poem into Odyssean and Iliadic halves.

## LINGUISTICS

### Paper L1 (Linguistic Analysis)

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
8	29	2
20.51%	74.36%	5.13%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
80 - 69	69 - 64	63 - 59	59 - 0

*Syntax:* The students' performance was satisfactory across the board, although overall a bit weaker than last year. At the same time, there were two exceptional scripts, and the number of distinctions, high passes, and low passes remained stable. A slightly greater number of fails (3 more than last year) does not seem to be cause for concern considering that the overall trends, as we said, remained stable.

*Morphology:* The full range of marks was awarded although the vast majority of candidates scored a high pass within the 60s. All candidates answered question 3a on Isthmus Zapotec which contained two allomorphs (zu/za and ru/ri). Although most analysed the data accurately even if they didn't name or discuss the allomorphy, around half of the candidates clearly identified and named the phenomenon. Those who didn't address the allomorphy omitted to gloss the alternating vowels or included the vowel in the verb stems. There seemed to be some confusion about the term extended exponence which was often incorrectly applied to these allomorphs and several candidates considered the dataset in purely phonological or syntactic terms, completely ignoring any patterns of morphological interest. Overall, there were some good discussions about what can and cannot be inferred from the limited data.

*Semantics & Pragmatics:* The vast majority of candidates scored a high pass within the 60s, with an average overall of 65. Nearly a third of the candidates got a distinction. Students varied whether they answered the pragmatics or the semantics question, with a greater number answering the pragmatics question. The pragmatics questions concerned data analysis, while the semantics question concerned using tools in logic to represent the meaning of a given expression and test predictions of the theory. Most common mistakes on the pragmatics question were concerned with an incorrect use of diagnostics to analyze data, while the common mistake on the semantics questions was a failure to apply the theory in a new domain. Overall, the students showed a very good understanding of the core basics.

*Phonetics & Phonology:* Most candidates excelled in Question 1a (Transcription in IPA, 55 students), achieving a mean score within the high pass range. Approximately 38% of candidates earned a Low Distinction mark. Many students demonstrated a strong grasp of IPA notation; however, common errors were noted in representing segmental properties and stress placement. This indicates a solid understanding of the task, although there are some gaps in precise phonetic transcription, particularly regarding the use of IPA diacritics.

Question 1b (Parametric diagram, 2 students) proved more challenging. These students displayed a general understanding of the articulatory processes involved in the provided phrase. While they successfully identified the major articulatory features, there was less precision in discussing how articulation might vary in casual speech.

Question 2a (Phonetic and phonological relationships, 53 students) was handled well, achieving a mean score within the high pass range, with approximately 34% of students receiving a Low Distinction mark. The majority of students provided accurate analyses of both

phonetic and phonological aspects.

In Question 2b (Phonological rules, 4 students), students accurately identified the alternations in the data but struggled with the correct ordering of phonological rules.

Overall, the distribution of marks indicates a strong understanding across the board, particularly in transcription and English phonological relationships. The greatest challenges arose in more complex theoretical areas, especially concerning rule ordering in unfamiliar languages and articulatory analysis in different speech styles.

## **Paper L2 (Linguistic Theory)**

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
14	41	2
24.56%	71.93%	3.51%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
81 - 69	68 - 64	64 - 59	59 - 15

The vast majority of scripts for this paper were at least adequate, often good and in a pleasing proportion of cases excellent. With very few exceptions, even the less good answers showed a solid knowledge base and an understanding of the important issues in the various aspects of linguistics addressed. The better answers showed both a broader range of knowledge and a greater ability to apply that knowledge to the precise question asked, while those that attracted distinction marks showed a mastery of all or most of the material they had been given and an ability to use it to give thorough and perceptive answers.

## **MODERN GREEK**

There were three candidates in Modern Greek who sat all four papers for the Preliminary Examination.

### **Paper I: Prose Composition and Linguistic Tests (in-person examination)**

Class Profile

Distinction / 1

Pass / 2

Most candidates performed fairly well in this paper with one exception who showed a limited grasp of grammar.

### **Paper II**

Class Profile

Distinction / 2

Pass / 1

### **IIA: Translation from Modern Greek**

### **IIB: Reading Comprehension**

Most candidates performed well in this paper, with some demonstrating an excellent ability in understanding Greek texts.

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

### **Paper IV: Literature II: Twentieth-Century Greek Prose in Context (online open-book examination)**

Class Profile

Pass / 3

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

## PORTUGUESE

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

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
3	13
18.75%	81.25%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
79 - 67	66 - 62	61 - 58	56 - 44

The scripts achieved a wide range of marks between 44 and 79, with the majority above 60. This suggests that most students have made good progress over the academic year, but one in particular has struggled. At the top end, students were able to use complex structures confidently, or with minor errors. At the bottom, errors of grammar, especially adjectival and verbal agreements, and lack of vocabulary hindered basic communication.

Students performed less well in the Translation section, where basic grammar mistakes and the interference from other languages were more evident, even though the text displayed common Portuguese words and expressions. In their essays, students were more able to demonstrate ability to convey ideas in Portuguese convincingly, although there were issues with verbs tenses and more complex structures. They also performed well in the Linguistic test (with the exception of two students, who performed poorly) where the majority managed to complete all sections of the Paper, and where several students achieved marks above 70 (6 students).

### Portuguese II

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
3	13
18.75%	81.25%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
73 - 68	67 - 64	64 - 59	58 - 48

### IIA: Translation from Portuguese

The text for translation came from a Brazilian novel in which the protagonist remembered how her family, and that of her partner, engaged (or did not engage) with the presidential elections in 2018 and those held thirty years beforehand. There was very mixed performance, with a couple of excellent translations, showing that the students have a fair grasp of Portuguese at this stage. At the upper end, excellent comprehension combined with elegance and creativity in English (“makeshift” for “improvisado”). At the lower end, there were significant difficulties in understanding the passage as well as rendering it into grammatical English: this often led to literal translation (“it is going to remain all well” for “vai ficar tudo bem”). In several places there was confusion about the subject and object of the verb (who was doing what; who was interacting with whom), which pronouns applied to whom (“their house” and “the brothers” (rather than “your house” and “my siblings”). A surprising number did not recognise the Brazilian indefinite pronoun “a gente” [we/one], translating it literally as “the people”.

### IIB: Translation from Portuguese and Portuguese Reading Comprehension

Half of the candidates did better on Paper IIB than IIA. There were some discrepancies of more than ten marks between the two Papers, which is not, in fact, uncommon in these exams.



At the top end, students answered questions with precision and managed to demonstrate understanding of the passage through idiomatic and creative translations; at the bottom end, colloquial vocabulary and metaphorical language seemed to have deterred students from comprehending the nuances of the passage.

Candidates seemed generally well-prepared for Paper IIB (4 achieved marks of 70 and above), engaging appropriately with the questions set.

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

### **Portuguese IV: Literature II: Prescribed Texts**

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
4	11	1
25.00%	68.75%	6.25%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
76 - 70	69 - 67	65 - 60	53 - 35

Overall, most candidates did very well in this paper, with 25% of the cohort achieving a Distinction mark, and the majority of candidates achieving a high pass i.e. above 60.

Candidates were required to answer three questions, writing one commentary and two essays (one of them comparative). Both commentary passages and all essay questions were attempted & all candidates satisfied the rubric. At the upper end, the best scripts offered imaginative in response to the questions, mounting a coherent and well-judged argument which drew persuasively on the texts themselves. For the commentary, there were some sophisticated pieces of close textual analysis, which took into account the stage directions as well as language. For section 2 the best candidates showed flair and an impressive knowledge of individual plays. In the comparative section of the paper, both questions were attempted with gusto. Although comparatively few candidates tackled the question on the use of poetry in the plays, it produced some compelling answers.

A good answer was not necessarily a long one, but a short answer (less than 750 words) was unlikely to achieve a mark above 60, given lack of detail and/or development. Recycled material was unlikely to answer the question set directly, and accordingly future candidates are urged to avoid 'copy and paste' of previous work. A number of short-weight answers as well as several rushed essays or commentaries indicated, some considerable difficulties with time management in some cases.

## RUSSIAN

### COURSE A (Post A 'Level)

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

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
7	4
63.64%	36.36%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
80 - 79	74 - 71	70 - 62	62 - 54

The best translations were precise and elegant renditions in native-like Russian. There were also several solid translations which demonstrated a strong grasp of grammar and vocabulary and resourceful problem solving. At the weaker end candidates had serious problems with grammar, particularly syntax, and were less able to solve problems in good ways. There were many strong performances on the grammar exercises, but also some relatively weak ones. Candidates struggled the most with the formation and use of passive participles, indirect speech and negation effects.

#### Russian II

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
5	7
41.67%	58.33%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
81 - 77	73 - 69	69 - 66	62 - 57

#### IIA: Translation from Russian A

#### IIB: Comprehension

Translation performances varied markedly: there were a few very fluent and idiomatic translations, almost flawless in their execution, and some very weak translations, where widespread problems with vocabulary left the meaning of the text very unclear. Dialogue was generally better handled than the surrounding narrative where there tended to be much guesswork and occasional nonsense ('the cat died...the next week, it ran away'). Comprehension performance was generally strong, with a good level of understanding; in general, marks were lost more for lack of comprehensive relevant detail than for misunderstanding.

**Russian III: Poetry / The examiner reviewed 50% of the poetry commentary/essay work submitted and was satisfied that it was all of passing, and indeed good, standard.**

#### Russian IV: Prescribed Texts

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
2	9	1
16.67%	75.00%	8.33%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
72 - 68	67 - 63	62 - 57	57 - 25

Answers for commentaries/essays varied markedly in length, and in detail and/or depth, ranging from 400 to over 2000 words. Commentaries quite often failed to give an overarching sense of the passage's significance, and a few failed to recognise one of the protagonists as the narrator's wife; others made rather sweeping generalizations about Soviet life and politics. Most paid attention to narrative form and style, though some of this analysis was rather generic and not well integrated into the overall interpretation of the passage. As for the essays, the vast majority of students chose the Chekhov answer on power, and there were many good answers that considered power from a range of perspectives and engaged confidently and crisply with the question, providing plenty of textual evidence. Pushkin essays were more evenly divided between the two questions, but many answers seemed to draw on revised or recycled material (e.g. about realism/fantastic/supernatural), with few answers really grappling with the specific question at hand. Some answers were expressed rather inelegantly, while some showed real analytical sophistication.

**Russian XI: Introduction to Russian Film Studies / The examiner reviewed 50% of the film essay work submitted, and was satisfied that it (in some cases, far) exceeded the minimum quality threshold.**

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

##### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
1	3
25.00%	75.00%

##### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
76 - 76	65 - 65	64 - 64	61 - 61

The candidates did better on the translation passages than on the linguistic commentaries. The answers on Comparative Slavonic Philology were generally of good standard, some excellent. There was a problem with some candidates misreading the rubric and answering all questions instead of picking three, which naturally affected their performance.

**Russian XIII: Elementary Polish / Certification materials reviewed, approved.**

## **RUSSIAN / COURSE B (Beginners')**

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

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
1	13
7.14%	92.86%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
74 - 69	68 - 65	63 - 54	54 - 50

Translation performances varied considerably: on the stronger end, candidates had a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary and good strategies for getting around gaps. Even the best candidates had some issues with syntax and had difficulty with forming subordinate clauses. On the weaker end, candidates had more serious problems with grammar and especially syntax. Most had a respectable vocabulary, but their ability to come up with resourceful solutions faced with vocabulary gaps varied considerably. Many candidates performed well on the grammar exercises, but there were also some quite weak performances. Candidates struggled the most with the formation and use of passive participles, advanced case usage, numerals and numeral syntax, and negation effects.

### **Paper BII**

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
4	10
28.57%	71.43%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
74 - 73	68 - 64	63 - 55	54 - 53

### **BIIA: Translation from Russian**

#### **BIIB: Comprehension**

Vocabulary gaps were the main problem in the translation passage, rather than handling of syntax: in some sentences, multiple wrongly translated words (including ones that could easily have been guessed from existing vocabulary) led the meaning badly astray and hampered any fluency. Performance on the comprehension was overall much stronger, though in some scripts, several marks were lost on simple exercises (e.g. country names) or on omission of details that could easily have been included (e.g. specific statistics); generally, this passage was well understood and summarised in the answers, though there were some moments of confusion.

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

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

## SPANISH

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

Examiners had been instructed to moderate at least 20% of the total submission in their language. In Spanish, submissions were read from every college. For the sole course, three out of five submissions were moderated for each of Papers XI and XII. In all cases, the proportion of work moderated exceeded the requisite 20%.

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

#### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
18	56	4
23.08%	71.79%	5.13%

#### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
75 - 67	66 - 61	61 - 57	57 - 38

The passage from Joanna Moorhead's *Surreal Spaces: The Life and Art of Leonora Carrington* described the artist's arrival in Mexico by overland route from the USA. Candidates needed to keep an eye on the varied use of past tenses, and in particular the imperfect for the description and its interplay with the preterite and the pluperfect.

The author projects into the future from a moment in the past: she states that 'Leonora would enjoy [papayas] for breakfast to the end of her life'. Here, a simple imperfect would inaccurately convey the meaning of the sentence. Instead, it was necessary to use a verbal periphrasis ('iba a disfrutar para el resto de su vida') or a conditional ('disfrutaría hasta el final de sus días'). Unfortunately, too many candidates struggled to translate simple structures such as 'there were'. 'Gave way' was frequently translated as 'daba lugar' instead of 'cedía el paso' ('dar lugar' usually means 'to give rise to').

'It must have been immediately clear to her' indicates that the writer is making a supposition about Leonora's reaction, rather than discussing an obligation of hers. Strictly speaking, 'deber de + infinitive' should therefore be used. 'Ser vs estar claro' was also an issue. While the latter is the standard expression in peninsular Spanish, 'ser claro' proved more popular, but this was often a sign of a rather weak command of the distinction between 'ser' and 'estar' that hampered some scripts. Moreover, candidates struggled to use the indirect object pronoun, often opting to tag on 'a ella' *tout court*. Strong performances proposed more idiomatic renditions like 'debe de haberse dado cuenta inmediatamente de que su nuevo país era un lugar de contrastes'. The later occurrence of 'might have been reminiscent' was a similar instance of the author putting forward a hypothesis, so needed to be translated accordingly, e.g. 'es posible que el centro de la ciudad evocara Madrid o Santander'.

Many candidates did not handle the superlative and the comparison relating to Mexico City with confidence. Similarly, not all candidates remembered that 'antes de que' is always followed by the subjunctive. Prepositions were often used randomly, 'along' being variously translated as 'arriba', 'delante', 'al lado', 'bajo' and 'llegar en' almost equally as frequent as the correct 'llegar a'. Popular false friends were 'eventualmente' for 'eventually' as well as 'figura' for 'figure' in the context of numbers and 'bancos' for the 'banks' of a river. 'The whole place smelled, looked and

sounded very different' led a small number of candidates to translate simply 'olía mal', not fully absorbing the rest of the sentence. The conjugation of 'oler' and 'sonar' proved tricky for many and confusion between 'parecer' and 'parecerse' persists. In the same vein, too many candidates had issues with the various numbers and got the gender of simple words wrong, such as 'el aroma', 'el sistema', but also, even more surprisingly, 'las flores'. However, it was heartening to see students make the most of the vocabulary acquired during their literature work: 'declive', 'mugre', 'yerma', 'hogueras' and 'sandías' all featured. Less successfully, 'vallejos' was a frequent choice for valleys ('valles'). 'Rincón' also worked less well here, given that it usually refers to an internal corner as opposed to 'una esquina'. In short, while there were some excellent performances on the prose translation, candidates should remember that these are not intended as a vocabulary test and that much can be achieved by falling back on solid grammatical knowledge.

This was also true for the sentences. Candidates should get into the habit of using written accents consistently. Moreover, the sequence of tenses in conditional sentences might be a grammar point worth revising as well as 'ojalá' + imperfect subjunctive as the key to translating the optative 'I wish it would' (the expression of a wish should take the imperfect instead of the present subjunctive). Most candidates did well to remember the difference between 'could': 'podía' (expressing ability in the past) in contrast to 'podría' (expressing potentiality, and ability in the future). Errors with gender were also frequent: 'column' was often rendered as 'el columna' and 'athlete' as 'el atleta'. The lack of knowledge of basic words like umbrella ('paraguas') was disappointing ('parasol' is the same word in both languages, and it is used to protect oneself from the sun). Other frequent vocabulary gaps were 'doma' for 'dome', instead of 'cúpula', 'ola' por 'marea' and 'dar un anillo' por 'to give him a ring', which in the context clearly referred to 'llamar por teléfono' (here, candidates needed to choose a contextually appropriate translation). There is some confusion between 'para que' (in order to) and 'así que' (so that). However, despite these flaws there were some excellent performances on the translation of sentences, with very idiomatic renderings.

## Spanish II

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
14	64
17.95%	82.05%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
76 - 67.5	67.5 - 65	65 - 60	60 - 50

## IIA: Translation from Spanish

Most candidates dealt rather well with the opening extract from Rosa Chacel's short story 'Balaam'. The author, originally from Spain, spent much time in exile in Argentina, a fact that is reflected in the setting here (e.g. the reference to 'la pampa'). The Spanish word 'rancho' has many different meanings, but, in this context, simply rendering it as 'ranch' turns it into a *false friend*, as the equivalent of a large farm estate would be 'una estancia', whereas 'ranchos' designate more modest dwellings that typically house the labourers or farmhands. Most translations of the simile 'solitarios como boyas' accurately conveyed the comparison between these houses and 'buoys in the sea'. 'Chicos' was mostly translated as 'boys', but candidates are reminded that it can designate 'children' more generally; after all, the text focuses on a small rural school. The idea of lifting the roof off the school to take a peek inside as if it were a toy zoo was accurately captured by most. However, 'en uno especialmente' was not always rendered idiomatically with weaker attempts opting for 'a special one' rather than making it clear that this referred to a given day in particular. 'En el curso que corría' was also not always understood in reference to the school year or term and often translated rather vaguely as 'in the course of it' or 'with the course under way'. The opposition between 'viejos' and 'nuevos' was mostly handled well with many translations finding idiomatic

versions such as 'old hands' and 'newcomers' or 'new arrivals' to refer to the pupils and teachers. As a result, 'puestos' did not allude to official positions as such; in turn, 'no en los bancos ni en las listas', in spite of being well understood by the majority, was best translated as 'not at their desks nor in the registers'. A number of students had issues with the clause 'los que les daba su personalidad', not taking sufficient account of the flexible word order in Spanish. Consequently, they failed to realise that 'su personalidad' was the grammatical subject of 'daba'. The object pronouns also caused problems, given that a few scripts could not figure out which one was the direct and which one was the indirect object and who or what they referred back to, not grasping that 'los' had to refer back to 'los papeles' and 'les' all the way to 'los viejos'. 'Atolladero' proved very tricky and provoked quite imaginative solutions, most of which were not particularly successful at conveying the idea of congestion and accumulation though. In the case of 'encierro forzoso' there was some confusion over which was the noun and which the adjective, leading to translations such as 'the enclosed fortress' rather than 'being forcefully locked up' or 'enforced entrapment'. 'Irrumpir' was likewise mistranslated as 'interrupt'. 'Marchitar' and 'un callejón sin salida', 'imprevisibles' and 'imprevisto' also posed difficulties for a few candidates. 'Una salida hacia la luz' was often translated well as 'an opening' or 'light at the end of the tunnel'. It was also pleasing to see that the majority navigated the shifting perspectives from third- person voice to first person well.

### **IIB: Translation from Spanish (informal register)**

Candidates were asked to translate a passage from a piece by Spanish author Cristina Fallarás, in which she offers a candid portrayal of poverty, from the inability to pay utility bills to having to economise on essentials. The passage offered diverse lexical and grammatical challenges. The section of the piece that tested candidates more acutely was the second half, in which Fallarás recalls an acquaintance's grandmother having an interesting way of distinguishing between different kinds of people scraping by.

Many students captured the broad sense of the passage, and there were some inspired renditions into English. The examiner was especially happy to see how quite a few students captured the familiar tone of the narrative voice, and rendered certain phrases idiomatically (e.g., "los que pelan las patatas descuidadamente" translated as "those who peel potatoes without a care"; "así como así" rendered as "just like that"). The students who performed best were those who made good, steady sense of the passage's progression, all the way into the final sentence – "tan sólo que una no se acostumba así como así a pedir prestado" – which proved to be very tricky across the board. Some students were able to render it quite simply: "(it's) just that one doesn't get used to borrowing money just like that." "Tan sólo" (which we could easily translate as "just") was translated as "so lonely" quite repeatedly, even though the accent over the first "o" should've indicated to students that this was a synonym for "solamente". "Así como así" (mentioned above) proved challenging as well.

It was surprising to see how many students rendered "la luz" as simply "the light", when the more idiomatic version would have been the "electricity" or "electrical" (bill). In the sequence from the passage in which Fallarás lists the different items one economises on – milk, shower gel, sugar, salt – it was also surprising to see that many candidates translated "macarrones" as "macarons", as if these were actual dietary staples ("macaroni" or "pasta" were more accurate). The "monda de patata" (potato peel) was translated in many cases as the "mound" or "pile" of potatoes. The translation of several verbs also proved difficult, especially the verb "apurar", which holds several meanings (the most common one being "to rush"), but here signifies "to use up." Candidates gave us diverse translations, a common one being "to purify". "Rebañar" (to scrape or mop up) took on several meanings across the exams, as well, many of them to do with washing, or rewashing. When speaking of tuna tins ("latas de atún") or the bottoms of pans ("fondos de olla") together, however, verbs related to scraping would make much better sense. In addition to these examples, there were many interpretations of the image of peeling a potato finely as a way of saving. As the summary above shows, this passage required a bit of common sense, particularly when faced with a combination of unfamiliar verbs and more familiar nouns, in a very human narrative about the strains of indigence.

## Spanish III: Literature I: Prescribed Texts

### PROFILES

Distinction	Pass	Fail
17	59	2
21.79%	75.64%	2.56%

### QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
80 - 69	68 - 65	65 - 60	60 - 38

This was the inaugural year for the new Spanish Paper III syllabus. While Cervantes's *Rinconete y Cortadillo* has been a mainstay of the curriculum, we had three new texts: Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho*, Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, and Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*. The examiners were glad to see candidates tackled all of these texts quite equally across the board. For Cervantes, many more candidates tackled the question about exemplarity over the question on *admiratio* (most of the responses on this latter question were excellent, as candidates were successful at situating Cervantes within his period; however, weaker attempts showed very limited understanding of the key term and simply discussed ways in which Monipodio can be considered successful at garnering the admiration of others). There were more responses on Campobello's take on heroism than there were about the unknown; and an overwhelming number of students chose to write on the depiction of childhood in *Primera memoria* than they did on the reading of Matute's text as "el libro de la traición." There was a more even spread between the two questions on Carpentier's novel.

It is clear from the range of work presented that most students worked hard to understand these works. The examiners were very pleased to see many students commenting accurately about the different historical events and periods presented in these texts. It was also encouraging to see how deeply candidates had engaged with the texts themselves, offering informed analysis by presenting solid evidence from each of them. Students were using a good range of secondary literature as well, though some will need to be careful not to overwhelm their writing with the voices of others. Students are reminded to revise the plots and histories of these texts in detail as they prepare for the examinations, as inaccuracies can spoil an examiner's otherwise favourable impression of a script. Candidates are also reminded that an overreliance on lecture notes or recycled material will rarely lead to an outstanding answer, instead blurring the focus of an argument.

There were several elements that made some responses to questions stand out over others. In the case of essays on *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (for questions A and B), some of the best essays dissected the complexities of the text's narrative voice, which allowed them to examine some of the finer subtleties of a text Cervantes tells us harbours "ejemplos provechosos" as well as entertainment. However, at the other end of the spectrum, candidates relied overly on pre-prepared material on exemplarity that often disregarded life's own idea of the text presenting the reader with "working example(s)". For essays on Campobello, it was equally important for students to think critically about the narrative point of view: a child's point of view may reign over these narratives, but it is important to consider the retrospective and necessarily artificial nature of this voice. The best essays paid due attention to literary form (especially for 3a) and took account of how Campobello might challenge preconceived ideas of the heroic (for 3b). In the first question on *El reino de este mundo*, students had to analyse different terms like "history" and "myth", as well the novel's potential "didactic" nature. Many students tried to grapple with the place of fiction in the midst of these different concepts, and some were more successful than others. Weaker attempts were overly binary in their tackling of this question, engaging with the question along the more rigid lines of fact vs fiction. These tended to view the essay question's reference to mythology as purely negative. There were some lovely responses to the suggestion of Carpentier's outlook on history as "reiterative" (González Echevarría), especially those that looked to the baroque, and baroque musical motifs, which showed a lateral understanding of Carpentier's inspirations. For answers on



Matute, it was interesting to see whether and how students captured the idea of “childhood” as separate or linked to adulthood, and whether they considered childhood to be, overwhelmingly, a time of innocence, or whether Matute presents us with a more complicated notion of that life stage. Strong performances on this question included some consideration of the author’s stylistic choices when representing childhood. For this question in particular, many students chose to consider the role of fairy tales in Matute’s novel. When writing about *The Little Mermaid*, candidates are strongly encouraged to read the text by Hans Christian Andersen rather than rely on the Disney retelling.

Students had three hours to answer three questions. We were happy to see that most students were able to offer substantial answers to each. There were very few cases in which candidates omitted a question/essay altogether or provided very rough sketches rather than fully fledged essays. The examiners suspected such incomplete responses may have been the result of issues with time management. In many cases, the examiners felt the candidates could have been much more careful with their spelling in English and in Spanish. Accents were often missing from quotations in Spanish; students should make sure to include these, as Inespera allows for their incorporation.

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

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

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

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

PROFILES

Distinction	Pass
2	4
33.33%	66.67%

QUARTILES

1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
71 - 71	68 - 68	66 - 66	59 - 59

Paper XIII was a three-hour open-book exam, with answers typed directly into Inespera. Six candidates sat the paper this year. Two scripts earned distinction marks, while, unfortunately, one script was short-weighted. In section A, all but one candidate opted to write a commentary on the passage from Merino’s ‘Ensoñaciones’. While not all candidates had a confident grasp of the plot, the best work analysed the blurring between reality and dream by paying attention to the use of the second person, circularity and repetition as well as the effect that this has on the reader. It was great to see that all essay questions were used, with the exception of Q5 (an obvious side effect of the popularity of the Merino passage for commentary). There were excellent answers offering close readings of Rulfo’s stories that were able to bring a discussion of content and form together to illuminate the terms of the question. In addition, there was outstanding work comparing Rulfo’s and Cortázar’s handling of the self and narrative voice. Similarly, the best answers on Cortázar examined his stories in detail and were able to underscore the importance of sight and seeing for ‘La isla a mediodía’ and ‘Las babas del diablo’. Essays on Cervantes and Zayas often made good references to plot but were generally less likely to reflect on the stories’ formal qualities. As in previous years, weaker work tended to be descriptive and was a little too sweeping in its claims.

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