Report of the Examiners in the Final Honour School of History, 2025

A. Examiners' Report

Overall Performance

Detailed statistics on performance are set out at the end of this report.

B. Reports on Individual Papers

History of the British Isles

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

[No report received]

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

This is the last year of the present mode of examining – that is, a 9-day take-home exam conducted at the end of the second year. The observations in this report may be taken as pertaining particularly to this form of examining, but also have some general implications for the future teaching and taking of this paper.

29 students sat the paper. 22 of its questions were attempted by at least one candidate, but of these, 12 questions were attempted by either one or two candidates. Answers therefore clustered markedly. Protection of the Jews was answered by 15 candidates; 10 answered on royal women; 9 on Magna Carta and Norman conquest respectively; 7 on each of Scotland and church reform/Christian life; 4 on peasants and on factional rivalry.

The 9-day paper gives plenty of opportunity to show skills such as additional reading, careful crafting of an argument, use of primary materials, and of course, proper proof-reading. At their best, candidates produced rich and well-constructed essays based on very substantial bibliographies. These understood what was being asked, showed a good knowledge of historiography and debates, were able to use primary sources effectively and fully as supporting evidence – or even in sophisticated ways as the basis for their argument. Many answers did not do these things particularly well. It was particularly striking that many of the essays depended on very narrow and extraordinarily dated

bibliographies and that candidates had in many cases failed to read much written since 2000, apparently unaware of a great deal of interesting and challenging work that has reframed many established topics. Gender/women essays were often limited in their arguments due to focusing on 'exceptional women' in a rather old-fashioned way. Candidates sometimes failed to think about issues such as constructions of masculinity and limitations on men; how dynastic power actually works (that is, intermarried families where everyone plays a role, including the women who connect the families, advise men, engaging in politics and diplomacy, and of course bear and raise the legitimate children, the only ones eligible to inherit); how societies function when men are absent for protracted periods at court or war, and women must have the capability, trust and authority to run households, estates and even kingdoms in their absence. Answers on the Jews likewise generally overlooked recent work on community relationships, violence, conversion and nearly all used an article written in 1937 without considering what was going on in 1937. Answers on Magna Carta generally ignored the word 'intended' – missing the question's requirement to think about the *intentions* of those who produced the document, particularly the senior clergy. Langton was oddly absent. Essays on 'the kingdom of the Scots' mostly took the realm as essentially identical with modern Scotland, and unified, more or less through the whole period. The Lords of the Isles would have been surprised.

More generally, the vast majority of candidates used their introductions to tell you what their essays were going to argue, not to focus on the question and explain what it meant, what issues it referred to and raised, and what needed to be done to tackle it - not to mention explaining anything problematic in it. A bit of thought about the question might have avoided that ignoring of 'intended' in Magna Carta; and in the Norman Conquest question the failure to address directly what the two terms 'royal government' and 'the politics of land' - implicitly contrasted in the question - meant caused numerous problems for those essays. Finally, the examiners also noted instances of poor academic practice. This was generally failing to place quotation marks around otherwise properly cited quotations, but mis-representing cited material was problem on some of the papers.

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

21 candidates sat the paper on its last outing, and the markers gave 5 firsts (one of which was exceptionally good) and 16 2.1s (including 3 69s). The general standard of answers was high, with candidates showing good levels of understanding and range: most people answered on a mix of political, cultural, social and even economic topics, and quite a few candidates took the trouble to comment on social and cultural phenomena in countries other than England, which was good to see. The later medieval British Isles is now the scene of a lively historiography, and the examiners felt that students had responded very positively. There were 30 questions on the paper, and all but four of them attracted at least one answer (the missing ones were upland areas, life-cycle, overseas trade and the king's court and council). The most popular questions were the ones on Lollardy (8), equality within marriage (6), the strengths and weaknesses of monarchy in particular reigns (7) and the notion of a

domestic sphere (5), but there was much less of the kind of bunching we saw last year, and answers to these questions varied in style and position. As usual, the best answers were incisive and well-informed; weaker answers did not do enough to establish what the question was getting at, and/or failed to answer it, and/or lacked clarity of organisation and expression. This paper won't be sat again in this format, but one piece of advice that will apply just as well to a three-hour paper is to use the first paragraph of the essay to explain why the question arises and how the candidate intends to tackle it. A surprising number of answers miss this basic task, ignoring the question, or throwing up clouds of opinion and information that are only loosely related to the point at issue. Also, candidates for this paper who want to answer on Henry VIII's Reformation need to make sure they are aware of the very sophisticated literature produced by early modernists: they can bring real strengths to answers on this topic through their understanding of late medieval religion, but calling that reformation 'Protestant' is not one of them.

BIF 4: Reformations and Revolutions, 1500-1700

The overall quality of answers was fairly heartening. We awarded ten First Class marks (two of which were 75s), and thirty-nine 2:1s (with nineteen of these achieving a mark of 65-69). We awarded four 2:2s - these were either for scripts which read more like reheated tutorial essays than bespoke answers to the question asked, and which were based on very limited bibliographies, or which stretched inappropriate knowledge. Three scripts were sent to the external for adjudication.

The very best scripts balanced precise, in-depth case study examples with a sound awareness of the broader context, and paid careful attention to differences across social status, geography and chronology. Some candidates exhibited extraordinary range and control of their material. The strongest scripts also demonstrated a marked creativity and playfulness in interrogating the terms of the questions - e.g. 'wealth' being interpreted not only in economic but cultural terms.

There was a tendency amongst some candidates to rely too heavily on older historiography, in a manner that was often detrimental to a response to the question. Conversely, other candidates would zero in on a handful of more recent articles, and often write about them very intelligently, but then fail to locate them in a wider historiographical landscape. The students must be encouraged to read texts in relation to each other, and show an understanding of the ways in which the field has developed.

Clumping of answers wasn't too egregious. Witchcraft was by far the most popular topic attracting 29 answers (more than double the number of the next most popular question, on political and religious divisions either in the 1630s or 1660s, which attracted 16 answers. Other popular questions included assessing the monarchical achievement (14 answers), women and gender (12 answers) the circulation of news and popular protest (10 answers apiece). However, there was a noticeable chronological clumping on the period 1530-1640, with relatively sparse references

to events and developments outside this period. The post-1650 period suffered most in this respect: while six students answered the question on the Glorious Revolution, no-one answered the question on the 1690s.

Seven questions received no answers: the specific questions on Wales and Scotland, the question on the 1690s, and the questions relating to law, education, and London.

Far and away the most popular question was the one on witchcraft. This was answered with varying degrees of success, but overall the quality was disappointing. The better answers tended to adopt comparative frameworks, exploring the question in relation to England, Scotland and Ireland. The weaker scripts failed to pay due attention to the specific terms of the question, either by ignoring the term 'accusations' and focusing on persecution of witchcraft more generally, or by focusing on the intersection of religion and witchcraft without due attention to religious '*tensions*'. The students' lack of engagement with recent historiography was perhaps most noticeable in answers to this question: Thomas-Macfarlane still feature as a the most important frame of reference for many students. Question 26 was a very popular question, but nearly all answers elected to focus on the 1630s rather than 1660s. A few of these answers were very good, but there was a noticeable weakness in understanding of the religious significance of Laudianism, and a tendency to ignore the extensive historiographical debates surrounding it.

More broadly – and unusually - religion was not a subject that most students felt confident enough to tackle: there were only four answers on 'further reformation', four on the 'beneficiaries of religious change' and one on 'Catholic reformation'. Examiners found students' understandings of religious issues across many of the answers were rather unsophisticated: there was a tendency to homogenise and caricature religious positions and an unwillingness to discuss any of the theological ideas upon which they were based. Students should be encouraged to attend the relevant lectures in the Theology Faculty on the history of the European Reformations, which would really supplement existing lectures in the History Faculty.

Students seemed to appreciate the flexibility of question 23, which allowed for a focus on any monarch. The worst essays were some rather clichéd answers about Elizabeth I, which focussed on her 'triumph' and were unaware of the academic scholarship on the political and religious history of her reign. Overall, though, There was a good spread of different monarchs considered here (although no Edward VI or James II).

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

Forty candidates sat the BIF 5 paper. Overall, there were eight First Class marks and one 2.2 mark, with the rest 2.1s.

Pleasingly candidates tackled a wide range of questions overall. Only Questions 9 ('Why were governments in London so dependent on Scottish

political managers?') and 29 ('How useful is the term 'liberal' in defining political outlooks and objectives?') received no attention from candidates. Questions 15 ('How and by whom were ideas of nationhood articulated?'), 4 ('Was the Church of England ever 'in danger'?') and 16 ('How significant were James VII and II's family to shaping the events of 1688-89?') proved the most popular.

Stronger answers were able to demonstrate conceptual control, appropriate chronological and geographical breadth, and a nicely independent minded approach. These candidates also conveyed a good sense of their weighing relevant evidence and thinking about the different ways in which it might be interpreted. Weaker answers were overly reliant on unsupported assertion, simply rehearsing conclusions and views of historians, lacked any real analytical focus - for example, failing to define or interrogate key terms - showed weak and limited understanding, and were unduly Anglo-centric. Very few who answered, for example, Q. 16 strayed from events in London, or if they did so, failed to look at other parts of the British Isles. Thinking about events in Edinburgh offered a real opportunity to enrich and add complexity to answers to this question.

At times candidates showed a tendency to move away from what the question was asking pretty quickly, or simply to dismiss its relevance. Examples of this would be some answers to questions 15 and 19 ('Can the trajectories that Enlightenment took in England and Scotland be satisfactorily explained by their churches?'), both of which attracted a significant number of takers. Q. 15 was often read simply as an invitation to rehearse debates about Colley's *Britons*, with the 'how' part being read in terms of the content of ideas about nationhood as opposed to the means by which such notions were articulated. Very few answers to this question examined in any depth the 'by whom' part of the question. A fairly typical answer to Q. 19, having dismissed the proposition in the question, simply went on to sketch differences between Enlightenment in England and Enlightenment in Scotland. Almost no candidates thought about churches as potentially meaning more than the established churches in both countries. Perhaps more puzzlingly, almost no candidate dwelt at any length on the rise of the Moderate Ascendancy in the Church of Scotland as at least a crucial enabling factor for the flourishing of a certain kind of Enlightenment in Edinburgh especially. In the case of Q. 27 ('Why did it take so long to abolish slavery?'), several candidates read this as a question about the prohibition of the slave trade in 1807, although the end of the slave trade and slavery were different things and explaining them demands different analytical frameworks. Q. 4 proved popular with candidates although a surprising number made no reference to Henry Sacheverell and the politics of religion in Queen Anne's reign. Q.16 was likewise popular but it was notable that some candidates did not engage in any depth with the involvement of Mary II, Anne and Mary of Modena when discussing the significance of James VII and II's family to the Revolution, and instead rehearsed a standard tutorial essay approach.

It was encouraging to see a significant number of candidates prepared to tackle social and cultural topics - e.g. travel, consumption, ideas of manhood and the arts. Such questions were tackled in some interesting, lively ways, although still with limited ambition to extend the coverage to all parts of the British Isles (where potentially relevant). Weaker answers to these questions were too content to offer sweeping commentary

without much by way of examples or evidence to support this or were insufficiently discriminating and precise in their conceptual vocabulary.

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

Twenty-three candidates sat this paper, four of them in the joint schools. Four were awarded first class marks, fourteen received upper second class marks, and five were in the lower second class category. There were several outstanding performances and a large majority were solid, competent scripts. Yet both examiners felt the standard overall was lower than we expected, and there were several ways in which candidates might have improved and strengthened their responses.

Only four questions (the 'constitutional' nature of politics; sex; monarchy; and the gendering of the electoral franchise) went entirely unanswered. In addition, the opportunities to write on childhood or disability afforded by Q1, or Scotland in Q27 were also not taken up. Several questions attracted a sole response, while those attracting two or three included: sport; education; landed elites; the union; conservatism; free trade; race and ethnicity; 'doctrinaire' government; industrial decline; New Imperialism; Welsh national identity; the impact of the Great War; and popular piety. The most popular topics (four takers or more) were: philanthropy; the arts; men and masculinities; Gladstonian liberalism; and (far in the lead) Chartism, which was answered by no less than eleven candidates, or almost half the cohort. In general, Ireland and Wales fared better than Scotland and many of the most impressive candidates displayed a willingness to sharpen the precision of their arguments through adopting a comparative regional perspective, both within and between nations. Strong candidates were careful to justify their choice of period or geographical focus when choosing asterisked questions that can be answered with reference to any part of the period/geography under examination. One or two candidates attempted to narrow down non-asterisked questions, which is not advised since it tends to result in limited responses.

The examiners were delighted to see some exceptionally sophisticated and detailed responses, rooted in critical engagement with the historiography of their topic and driven by judicious and imaginative use of primary evidence. These candidates had taken advantage of the extra time to build on their previous preparation: defining key terms, setting out clear arguments, and developing their analysis with nuanced reasoning, being careful to consider alternative interpretations. Weaker candidates, however, failed to respond precisely to the demands of the question and often simply re-used material from tutorial essays in unconvincing and one-sided ways. For example, some candidates answering the question on culture and the arts tended to lose focus and offer instead a more generalised discussion of imperialism. More limited responses also failed to engage with up to date historiography – many of the answers on Chartism, for example, seemed to be stuck in the mid-1980s. In revising for exams, candidates might find it useful to look up recent 'state of the field' surveys, and use these to identify recent scholarship.

Candidates should also be reminded to familiarise themselves with the instructions regarding the presentation of their scripts and/or footnotes and bibliographies in coursework essays. The number who failed to do so in this case was alarmingly high and led to a large number of marks lost through penalties. All of the 2:2 marks, for instance, received penalties for formatting and presentation errors, in three cases causing them to miss out on making it into the upper second band.

BIF 7: Changing Identities, 1900 to the present

(marking was split)

49 candidates presented portfolios in this last 'take home' examination for the British Isles paper. Of these, almost a third secured an overall mark of 70 or over. A sixth were awarded a mark of less than 60. Most of the remaining portfolios received marks in the upper 60s.

Of the 25 scripts we marked, a little over a fifth secured an overall mark of 70 or over, and a little under a fifth was awarded a mark of under 60. Almost all of the rest received marks in the upper 60s. While a good range of questions were attempted, with only 7 of the 30 not answered at all, a small number of questions proved particularly popular. Question 23, which asked, 'Did EITHER Thatcherism OR New Labour fail?' was answered by almost half the candidates, with the vast majority electing to write about Thatcher. The two other questions which was disproportionately favoured were questions 15 (on sexual liberation) and question 8 (on the relationship between racism and the Empire). Each of these questions tempted almost a third of the candidates. Four questions also each attracted a fifth of the cohort; these addressed female employment, the welfare state, the Northern Irish peace process and, finally, the relationship between consumerism and 1960s permissive culture. The other questions only attracted between one and three answers. This indicates the ongoing popularity of Thatcherism as a topic, alongside issues of identity concerning gender, race and sexuality. Very pleasing was the interest in Northern Ireland reflected in this year's responses, which might be considered alongside the fact that the question on Scottish and Welsh devolution was also attempted by a couple of candidates. Many questions which were tried by only one or two candidates were answered very well, reflecting the strength of the portfolio in encouraging candidates to write on a wider range of topics. Very good answers rested on an impressive range of knowledge reflecting depth as well as breadth of research and used this to produce clear and substantiated arguments. The best essays went further, achieving a high level of conceptual sophistication not only in framing their responses with self-conscious clarity and focus, but also through unpacking concepts and evidence in ways that demonstrated original and acute thinking. These essays engaged critically with a wide range of secondary and primary evidence, to develop subtle analysis and arguments. Features which characterised the weakest responses included failure to answer the question directly, or to develop a cogent and consistent argument. Some of the weaker essays also suffered from reliance on too small a bibliography. Many otherwise good answers were compromised by weak structure or uneven handling of the question, or a tendency to be descriptive rather

than analytical. Overall, the portfolios allowed candidates to display skill in crafting polished essays, and were effective in revealing those who worked hardest to achieve high level responses as well as their quality of thinking.

Other pair of markers report

19 out of the 30 questions set were attempted by candidates. The most popular questions were on Thatcherism (13 answers), and on the relationship between empire and racism (9 answers). There were no answers attempted on the relationship between social class and homeownership, the City of London's place in the British/global economy, modernism in British art, refugees, the 1945 general election, the politics of post-war affluence, Keynesianism, European integration, sexual liberation, the growth of the prison population since the 1930s, or the 'comprehensivisation' of secondary schools. Of the 24 scripts marked, 10 were awarded a first class mark, 12 were awarded an upper second class mark, and 2 were awarded a lower second class mark. Stronger answers were characterised by precise engagement with the question, detailed knowledge, and sophisticated argumentative control. Weaker answers, on the other hand, tended to engage less centrally with the questions posed on the examination paper, as well as to show vaguer knowledge and/or overly schematic arguments.

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

Twenty-three candidates completed the take-home paper in June 2024. Five questions were answered by more than one-quarter of candidates, relating to: sex education; dress and lesbian history; disability; sexual conduct in colonies and metropole; and prostitution. The eight unanswered questions asked about: war; emotions and femininity; motherhood; infertility; race and reproduction; degeneration and classification; obesity; and female ageing.

The strongest candidates produced outstanding essays that showed an exceptional understanding of the paper. They drew on as many as 35 readings per essay, deploying evidence critically and imaginatively to reveal genuinely new insights into continuity and change over 500 years and across the British Isles. Many of these most sophisticated answers made the candidate's own analysis of primary sources central to their essay. Candidates also reflected intelligently and concisely on the shape of the archive and placed their arguments in conversation with the scholarship.

The weakest answers were undermined by limited reading and muddled interpretations of the books and articles they had read. For instance, many candidates cited the arguments of Michel Foucault or queer approaches without sufficient knowledge. Some candidates engaged with questions simplistically and vaguely. Key concepts offered in the question, such as 'truly private', 'particularly illuminating', or 'personal and political experience', were treated unreflectively by presenting a patchwork of examples in the general area, without articulating their precise

relevance to this specific question.

All candidates showed that they had engaged seriously with the paper and had taken care when completing the take-home essays. Even the weakest candidates demonstrated an ability to structure work effectively, to develop argument, and to write fluently.

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

(no candidates)

European and World History

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

There were twelve candidates. The performance of candidates was on the whole strong, with four marks in the 70+ range and eight in 60-69. However no candidate achieved an agreed average of over 71. The spread of questions attempted was very good. Only questions 5 (urban crowds), 9 (Mediterranean economy), 10 (education), 11 (environment), 15 (pandemic), and 20 (diplomacy/trade) were not attempted. Of these the lack of answers on environment and pandemic was especially striking, given the current prominence of these themes in the historiography. Of the other questions only 12 (fall of the Western Roman Empire), 18 (wealth in the Merovingian world), and 25 (Roman identity) attracted more than two answers, with 12 in particular attempted seven times.

Most candidates showed off an impressive chronological and geographical range within the paper, with answers embracing not only western Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, but also the Iranian and early Islamic worlds and, in a small number of cases, China. Good candidates were not afraid to use the open-ended questions to craft comparative answers, drawing on a range of regions, source bases, and historiographies. Problems tended to arise when candidates focused unapologetically on a single region and example, or where the historiographical drive or weight of a particular question was missed. But on the whole the cohort evidently understood the marking criteria, and the need to engage questions in a multifaceted way and with a consistent deployment of evidence and relevant scholarship. It was especially gratifying that some many different questions were attempted, reflecting a broad base of teaching and student interest.

EWF 2: The Early Medieval World, 600-1000

Eight students, across three schools, sat this paper in 2025, a healthy increase on the previous year. Two scripts were awarded a first-class mark, one a lower second and the remaining five upper seconds (of which three were above 65 and two below 65). In general, the scripts displayed much solid and little spectacular work. Candidates ranged widely over the full expanse of Eurasia, often doing cross-cultural comparisons. T'ang China was as likely to be discussed as the Carolingian Empire, if not more likely. However, in practice this may have resulted in candidates spreading themselves a bit thin, without the time to really analyse their case studies and the specific evidence that underpins them.

The most popular question (Q. 11 on elite women) revealed these strengths and weaknesses very clearly: all essays chose to compare Byzantine, Islamic and Chinese women regents, but in practice answers rarely had the opportunity to do more than present a positivist reading of the facts of each woman's regency. The examiners would like to see more evidence analysed, not just cited. In total 12 questions were answered. The second most popular questions were Q. 5 on Scandinavia entering the 'European mainstream' (a concept that was insufficiently explored in most

essays) and Q. 7 on whether contemporaries had a clear understanding of what it meant to be a man or a woman. The general trend where interest in gender is high and interest in socio-economic status almost non-existent continues; religion was reasonably well represented.

The examiners would highlight the ongoing importance of good command of detailed evidence and remind students of the need to be intellectually alert and analytical about both that evidence and the questions being asked of them.

EWF 3: The Central Middle Ages, 500-1500

There were eleven candidates for this paper: 3 firsts, 7 2:1s and 1 2:2(s). Of the 30 questions on the paper, 16 attracted answers. Political legitimation, heresy and the relationship between clerical authorities and secular rulers were particularly popular topics. Most candidates approached the paper through a principally European lens, although there were several global scripts. Regardless of whether they adopted a European or global approach, most candidates rose well to the challenges presented by the chronological, geographical and thematic breadth of this paper. Stronger scripts demonstrated sustained engagement with relevant primary source evidence (written, visual or material) and with specialist modern scholarship. Some candidates appeared to have benefited from ideas encountered in the EWF lecture series. There was some particularly strong work on ritual, Iberia, women and the post-Abbasid Islamic world. The strongest performances came from candidates who worked constructively with the precise wording of questions. Candidates who avoided reference to modern scholarship altogether or who offered only passing references to very old publications wrote less convincing analyses.

EWF 4: The Global Middle Ages, 500-1500

Eleven candidates sat this paper. Between them, they answered thirteen of the paper's thirty questions. Six answered q. 23, all answering on nomadic and sedentary societies, not barbarian/civilised; five answered q. 29 on trade and culture; and four answered each of q. 27 (cosmological thinking) and q. 30 (the idea of the 'global middle ages'). Other questions attracted fewer answers. At the top end, candidates showed an impressive command of recent work, which they were able to use to frame their responses and evaluate the arguments. These answers also engaged in detailed and knowledgeable primary source analysis, with well-chosen examples that supported their analysis. Even the weaker candidates had got to grips with the themes and issues of the paper. Candidates generally showed that they were thinking about the methodological issues of the paper. The geographical range of answers was evident, with more on Cahokia and the Americas than in previous years. Where improvement was needed, it tended to be in standard exam technique. Some candidates needed more supporting detail; some wrote in rather generalising terms and needed to integrate more examples. Others needed to link material to the question more overtly in the

body of the essay, or include a fuller summarising conclusion to draw the threads of the argument together. If there were two parts to question, candidates needed to take care to answer both (e.g. 27 'Who thought in cosmological terms, and why?').

EWF 5: The Late Medieval World, 1300-1525

Eighteen candidates sat the paper, earning 5 agreed 1st-class marks, 12 2.1s and one 2.2. All but 6 questions were answered: no-one wrote about communication, popular uprisings ('wave of democracy'), the papacy, the military revolution, the cooling climate, or changes in trade networks. It was good to see answers on transoceanic exploration for the first time this year, as well as on diplomacy, saints and art (among less commonly frequented topics). Some of the most popular questions were those on race [10 answers], gender [5], Islam [5] and slavery [4], confirming the alertness of students taking this paper to some of the most topical themes in the literature, though the best answers went beyond the important work of Heng (on race) and Barker (on slavery) to cite other materials. Several students wrote about the role of the plague in the cultural preoccupation with death, but relatively few of them knew about the fifteenth-century evidence for cadaver tombs, *danse macabre*, *memento mori* etc. There were plenty of good answers on extra-European material, including the Mamluks and Ottomans, China, Africa, and the Indian Ocean. The most striking feature of this year's scripts was the dearth of answers on Europe, especially European politics and religion, which would once have been mainstays of the paper, and on which there are huge and good literatures.

EWF 6: Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700

Twenty-six candidates took this paper, three obtained marks of 70 or higher, and five gained marks of 68/69. None was marked below 60.

10 topics out of 30 attracted no answers, and these included questions on the Mediterranean, Poland-Lithuania, the Baltic, Muscovy, criminality and punishment, royal favourites, scientific discovery, memoirs/letters. The most popular topics were the Catholic Reformation (14 answers), witch persecution (9), artistic/cultural patronage (7), marriage (6), women (6), Protestantism (5), colonial expansion (5, and worth mentioning that the quality of these answers was high, with lively engagement and serious comparative analysis), Spanish monarchy (5).

Though the three first-class scripts demonstrated an impressive range of knowledge and close, often very distinctive, focus on the question, it was disappointing that so many other scripts, while showing evidence of considerable knowledge, nonetheless failed to engage fully with the actual question, or while engaging with the question in the introduction/conclusion, then wandered away from this tight focus in the material of the essay. It was notable that no script was marked at 2ii or below, and very few were marked at the lowest (60-62) level of 2i. Yet many

candidates, while not ignoring the question at the broadest level, nonetheless appeared to find it difficult to shape an abundance of material into sharply-focused engagement, and/or to reflect attentively at the outset on what the question was actually asking. The question on the Catholic Reformation was indicative: far too many answers simply lapsed into generalized descriptions of the Tridentine Reforms, the work of the Orders, and the role of mission, without asking why this should have been effective against a Protestant movement which had seemingly gathered such support in the earlier sixteenth century, and seemingly had much to offer to both elites and masses. Notable, but familiar from previous years, was the tendency to consider the Catholic Reformation entirely in terms of the role of the clergy, with the laity either absent from discussion or entirely lacking in agency. Similar comments could be made about answers to the witch persecution topic, where the issue of "uneven distribution" took second place to extensive accounts of the reasons (mostly local versus central) for persecution, while essays on the Spanish monarchy ignored the injunction to think about the *European* territories in favour of typical, broad 'Decline of Spain' narratives. Similarly, the question of 'innovation' in cultural/artistic patronage was frequently lost in generalized accounts of the role of patrons versus artists in the production of Renaissance and Baroque art, while the issue of 'marriage' was given too little attention in essays which contrasted the respective agency of men and women in early modern society. The examiners had the sense that an often well-informed and well-prepared group of candidates could have achieved considerably higher marks had they been prepared to reflect more rigorously on what the questions were actually asking, and shaped their answers more confidently towards this.

EWF 7: Eurasian Empires, 1450-1800

This is the tenth year in which this paper has been examined (in its earliest years, it appeared under the title General History XVIII). The number of candidates is down slightly: a total of 25 students took this paper in 2025 as compared with 34 in 2024. Of the 25 candidates who sat the paper: six achieved distinctions of 70 or higher, and three candidates received a mark lower than 59. The rest all received marks in the 2.1 band. Candidates' interests seemed to cluster around a number of topics: the most popular questions were those on the Mughals (12 responses); the Portuguese (8 responses); Islam and Christianity (8 responses); cross-cultural exchange (7 responses); Safavids (5 responses); and the questions on the Ottoman Empire, early modernity, and imperial legitimacy (each of which received 4 responses). A few candidates ventured answers on Mongol and Timurid traditions, the Qing, and military technology. Nine questions did not receive a single response (Qs 2, 12, 13, 17, 23, 24, 25, 27, 30). This weighting to certain questions across the paper seems a relatively new development, certainly when compared to last year when all but three questions received answers. On the one hand, it reflects the huge range of the paper stretching across four centuries and the entire globe. On the other hand, it suggests that perhaps the Faculty may wish to consider whether introducing changes to the lecture circus could produce a fuller engagement across the whole paper. Notwithstanding the requirement of the rubric to answer one Part B question, responses

this year tended to be focused on the individual case study questions in Part A (with 41 questions answered in Part A and only 33 in Part B). Overall, the examiners were encouraged by signs that candidates were engaging with very recent literature, for example in the responses to the questions on the Little Ice Age, millenarianism, Mughals, and the Portuguese empire. Some of the finest answers presented conceptually rich and sophisticated reflections on the place of religion, gender, and empire in the paper. At the same time, there was a general impression of candidates being more comfortable in engaging with questions based around specific case studies rather than the realising the full connective potential of the paper. Candidates should remember this is a paper that encourages them to develop a distinctive sense of how to model, and evidence, connections and comparisons between empires across the early modern world.

EWF 8: Enlightenments and Revolutions: Europe 1680-1815

Twenty-three candidates completed the paper this year. 3 secured a first-class overall, closely followed by higher 2.1s which formed the majority of the upper second class, including impressive individual essays but with a less consistent performance overall. 4 received a lower second. The examiners rewarded answers that demonstrated analytical sophistication, were well-grounded empirically, and tackled the question directly. By contrast, essays that failed to pay attention to the specifics of the question or to support arguments with sufficient range and depth of evidence fared less well.

Most questions were attempted, but not equally, as the bread-and-butter topics retain their appeal. Three topics attracted ten or more answers: Enlightened rulership (most popular, in part perhaps reflecting the fact that there was no straightforward question on Habsburg monarchs), the Ancien Régime in France, and Frederick II. The question on women and the public sphere closely followed, and there was also interest in Russia and the religious Enlightenment. Students seem to have found the global aspect of the French Revolution question less appealing.

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

Sixteen candidates took this paper, with 3 achieving first-class marks. Candidates, in almost all cases, demonstrate sound understanding of the period, deployed good evidence, and demonstrated good knowledge. Those that at the lower end of the 2:1 band were mostly descriptive, so deployed knowledge but approach the exam as a test of recall meaning the essays lacked direction and di not build progressively toward an argument in response to the question. Students answered a good spread of the questions – though it is notably that none attempted questions 16-18 on the Gilded Age United States, perhaps indicating that students prefer to knit the paper together around the coherent narrative of slavery to freedom between the Revolution and Reconstruction. Quite a few scripts hovered on the 2:1-First-class boundary and this was often

because they often did not engage the core arguments of historians effectively – sometimes approaching the historiography as a garnish to the essay rather than thinking in terms of the categories of evidence, methods, and concepts deployed by historians. Responses to Section C showed characteristic brio and ambition – sometimes working more effectively than others, and they continue to push students to make interesting lateral connections between topics, which were often very impressive.

EWF 10: The European Century, 1820-1925

16 students undertook this paper: there were three 1sts, eight 2.i's, four 2.ii's, and one 3rd. Between them they attempted all but six questions out of the thirty, so the coverage of the period and topics was good. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the questions that focused on the twentieth century were noticeably less popular compared with those on the nineteenth. The most popular questions dealt with the 1848 revolutions, religious revivals and temporalities. The last prompted some of the best answers, and one of the obvious reasons for this display of quality is that students engaged directly with the historiography – which was not only cited but sometimes quoted. However, this was not a consistent practice in relation to other questions: many answers made no mention of historians at all. Given that the questions were often set up to address particular historical debates, this was, at best, an oversight. A number of good, but not outstanding answers, provided detail but without responding precisely to the question asked. However, the explanation for long tail of results is a series of answers that displayed only vague outlines of knowledge of the period, without detail, without precision, without analysis. When this vagueness was combined with a refusal to address the question asked (and in some cases, even to acknowledge it had been asked) but to wander without purpose through some general knowledge, the resultant marks were necessarily on the low side.

EWF 11: Imperial & Global History 1750-1930

There were 20 candidates this year. The marks converged in the mid-2.1 to the upper 2.1 range. There were very few 2.2 scripts or 1st class scripts. The overall quality was therefore good but slightly disappointing at the very top end.

A very good spread of questions were answered in both sections of the exam paper. There were very few questions which no candidate attempted to answer.

There was no obvious sign of some of the questions producing higher quality answers than others, or of any of the questions being misunderstood or misinterpreted by more than a single candidate.

As regards Section A of the paper, the spread of answers suggests that, both historiographically and conceptually speaking, candidates were willing to engage with a range of topics.

As regards Section B of the paper, the spread of answers suggests that candidates ranged widely geographically too.

It would nevertheless be fair to say that, to some degree, answers tended to focus on the post-1800 period, and hence that there was less slightly coverage across the scripts as a whole of the C18th (1750-1800).

As was the case last year, the level of engagement with the lectures remains disappointing, and it would appear from the lecture attendance and the exam scripts that quite a large number of candidates who take this option do not attend the lectures or (if they do) that they draw effectively upon them in their exam preparation

EWF 12: The Making of Modern America since 1863

38 candidates sat the paper this year. On the whole this cohort seems to have done very well, with the majority of candidates scoring marks somewhere between the 60-69 region. More precisely, 9 students achieved a first, 23 an upper second, and 6 a lower second.

Many candidates tackled the asterisk questions and did so in a successful manner, ably making broader points about the nature of American history in this period. Moreover, they did so in reference to an array of topics and themes that perhaps speaks to the strength of the breadth of the EWF12 teaching and to students' ability to use this to their advantage in the exam. Overwhelmingly, the best answers of this group reflected upon the premise of the questions and what they were trying to get the students to do. This often led to critical engagement with the historiography and confidently placing the answer into wider historical contexts.

Of the 31 questions set this year (two of the 29 questions had the option of answering 2 questions), 9 went unanswered, two of which were asterisk questions. Broadly, these questions pointed to the themes or topics of technology, environmental history, 19th century labour history, mass communications, queer historiography, the Global Cold War, the Culture Wars of the 1990s, War on Terror, and the Presidential elections of the 21st century. Some aspects of these topics were mentioned in answers to other questions, but it is notable that students avoided addressing more recent topics.

A handful of questions were very popular with candidates, with the most being the question concerning Reconstruction (18 responses). This was followed by questions related to McCarthyism (14 responses) ,the Gilded Age and the Civil Rights Movement (10 responses each), the New Deal (9), the Jim Crow era (8), religion in American history (7), grassroots social movements (6), and the role of sports and literature in US history (5).

The strongest answers tended to place the specific question in a longer or broader context, and conversely the weaker answers were often mostly narrative accounts, repetitive in nature and sometimes misconstrued key details about that historical moment.

EWF 13: Europe Divided, 1914-1989: Crises, Conflicts, Identities

1. Popular questions.
    a. The clustering of questions was very extreme on this paper, with 80% of the students answering the same 4-6 questions.
    b. 60% answered the question 'To what extent was the Holocaust a European project?' And just about every single student scored a 2:1 for their answer. The answers were very straightforward and lacked creativity.
    c. 60% answered the question 'Is the history of gender in twentieth-century Europe a history of progress?' The answers here were more successful with a few students earning Firsts. The best answers compared gender across the East/West divide.
    d. Other popular questions were:
        i. 28% (5 students) answered 'Did organised religion lose its hold over Europeans in this period?'
        ii. 24% (4 students) answered 'To what degree did fascist AND/OR communist regimes rely on popular support?'
        iii. 24% answered 'To what extent does 1989 mark a decisive break in European history?'
        iv. 18% (3 students) answered 'What were the main drivers of economic growth in the postwar era?'
2. There were fewer First Class scripts (22%) than in recent years [*NB one of the four 1st class scripts counted here is being adjudicated] and just over half the 2.1 marks were 65% or below. It was striking how few candidates were able to make conceptually and analytically integrated arguments in their answers, even when they marshalled the evidence they needed in order to do so. The examiners did wonder if this absence reflected a growing reliance on AI to help with structuring arguments in non-examined work.

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

This report for EWF14 covers 28 scripts drawn from a combination of the History main school and joint schools. Overall, candidates preferred section A to section B and were reluctant to choose questions on the 1990s. Popular questions included those focusing on the Cold War,

ideology, global institutions, decolonisation, and postcolonial governance, as well as human rights and, in particular, ethnic violence (from section C). A number of questions went unanswered, such as on developmentalism, migration, postmaterialist world. It is surprising that no students were interests in questions 29 or 30, which invited a reflection on the C20 as a whole; perhaps this is symptomatic of students' lack of familiarity with the frameworks provided by Hobsbawm or Maier.

In general, candidates showed good range in terms of the examples they deployed and did attempt to engage with scholarship. Some candidates showed a tendency to build a case before problematising it directly before the conclusion, which served to muddy their line of argument. In general, greater problematisation of the question earlier in candidates' responses would be welcome. Some candidates struggled with questions framed in terms of 'assess the effects', which invited them to manufacture their own argument. In particular, the ethnic violence question was popular, but responses tended to deal with disconnected factors that were discussed rather superficially without much analytical depth. Discussion was rather abstract or descriptive.

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

Overall this was an impressive group of 25 scripts. Ten candidates gained first class marks on this paper, 14 gained 2.1 and one candidate received a 2.2. This was a strong cohort performance.

All areas of the course drew student interest. Only three questions were not answered by any candidate, and there was little 'bunching' on particular questions; the two most popular were question 13 on imperial governance and masculinity (9); and question 3 on religious power and male authority (8). It was pleasing to see the interest in concepts and theory: six candidates answered the question on whether gender has been binary.

Candidates showed an impressive ability to construct thoughtful and often original arguments, supported by wide-ranging evidence from different periods and places. The best answers demonstrated subtle interpretation, theoretical sophistication, critical ability, close reading skills, and a real commitment to thinking through the issues which the paper raises. Occasionally, poorer answers adopted a straitjacketed approach, discussing only two or three case studies and comparing them mechanically, as if this paper were a Disciplines: Comparative History paper and not a thematic paper. But most answers showed a breadth of reference and of reading across all three periods and in relation to the history of Europe and global history. Nearly all candidates had prepared their answers and empirical evidence very carefully. It is clear that students are very engaged by the paper, and their interest and investment in answering the questions thoughtfully was evident throughout.

EWT (B) Global Networks of Innovation: China, Islam and the West, 1100-1700

(less than five candidates)

EWT (C) Waging War-in Eurasia

Fourteen finalists sat the paper this year (AMH 1, Main School 9, HPOL 3; HML 1), five more than last year, with a fairly concentrated spread of marks. One candidate received a middling 2:2 mark of 56, while five candidates received first-class marks, the highest at 75. There was also one low 2:1 mark of 62. With two exceptions all candidates chose to answer two 'case study' questions and just one thematic one, which is in line with previous years. Question 1 on the Mongols proved popular, a reversion to the usual pattern after last year when it attracted only two candidates. As usual the most popular question was no.15, on operation Barbarossa, which was attempted by five candidates. Three candidates answered question 3 on the Ottomans, and three question 9 on Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Of the thematic questions the most popular was no.18 on the military divergence, though there was also one excellent answer to Q.27 on 'war writing'. Marks for 'case study' and 'thematic' essays were broadly in line

At no point did the examiners differed by more than two marks in their evaluation, with raw marks being confirmed or moved up or down just one point. Overall the standard was high, with one very high, two solid and two borderline firsts, and just three 2:2 essay marks awarded (though two of these were on the same paper). The paper continues to recruit well and provides a steady trickle of candidates for the History of War strand on the M.St.

Further Subjects

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

(No candidates in 2024-25)

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

Sixteen candidates sat the paper this year. Six candidates were awarded a First, and the other ten a 2.1. Pleasingly, of the fifteen questions set, thirteen received at least one answer. While there was some clustering, with the questions on the writing of history, Procopius, and the plague especially popular, there was a very good spread across topics and time periods. As a cohort this group of scripts had a high floor, but relatively

low ceiling: the clear majority were within the 66-71 range. The best answers demonstrated a very good grasp on multiple sources, and weaved cogent answers to the actual question set. The weaker answers either had a shakier idea of the source base, or ignored an important aspect of the question in favour of a different topic. Occasionally a candidate was also let down slightly by an underweight final answer, due to mismanaged time.

FS 3: The Carolingian Renaissance

Seven **c**andidates (5 female, 2 male) sat this paper; including one from AMH, one from HPOL and one from HOA. The overall standard was good with one first class mark, two 69s and the others in the mid 60s range. Candidates tackled nine of the fourteen questions on offer and it was clear that all of them had enjoyed engaging with the set primary sources and had interesting things to say about them; many had also looked at a number of other allied sources and illuminated manuscripts to good effect. The stronger scripts showed a commendable grasp of relevant detail and a real ability to contextualise it and use it to address questions incisively and effectively; some of the answers on Carolingian letters and the role of Carolingian queens went well beyond the standard parameters as they explored issues of manuscript transmission and the way rituals could be weaponised. At the weaker end answers tended to fall back on generalisations at the expense of precise evidence or failed to address the actual terms of the question (eg answering the question on letters as if it asked what we can learn from them rather than the more specific issue of why authors wrote them). But it was clear that all the candidates had begun to think seriously about the dynamics of this early medieval society and the challenges – and joys – of interpreting the evidence that allowed them to do so.

FS 4: The Crusades, c. 1095-1291

11 candidates sat this paper. A revision session was offered in the first half of Trinity Term by the convenor, and there were also some meetings with individual tutors. Unsurprisingly, most of the performances in the examination were clustered in the mid-to-high 2:1 range. Only one candidate secured a First-class mark, although two others came close. In much the same way, only one candidate received a 2:2. Out of the 14 questions on the paper, a wide range of them received at least one response. Whilst the answers were fairly spread out across Section A, they were more tightly focused in Section B. In that section, several favourites received a high proportion of the answers, including Byzantium and the Fourth Crusade (question 9) and Egyptian crusades (question 10). Responses to the source-based questions continue to vary a great deal. Students are often reluctant to actually quote from and really engage with the set texts themselves, and they should be encouraged to do this

much more. Similarly, in the answers on the Fourth Crusade, there was a great tendency to reach towards narrative, which meant that opportunities for deeper exploration went untaken. It is also worth noting that the examiners had some problems with question 5, which does not quite spell out what is meant by 'crusader chronicles'. It is worth making sure questions are a bit more watertight next year. In short: this remains an excellent FS that is greatly enjoyed by students. However, there is still scope for debate about how much tutors want to revise it.

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

This was an exceptionally strong run of scripts (of the 5 candidates, 2 were awarded 1st class marks, the remainder 2:1s, but the latter were placed at the top of the band). Both examiners were impressed by the range and depth of the material cited in support of the arguments put forward. As ever, the best answers displayed a detailed and nuanced understanding of the complexities of the set-texts (including the visual sources), but also a willingness to draw out the broader historical themes within which these texts need to be contextualized.

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

Six candidates sat for the exam, to answer three of the fourteen questions. They were required to answer at least one question from each of two sections, the first – questions 1-4 – addressing specific examples, and the second – questions 5-14 – addressing socio-historical contexts. Perhaps as a result of this requirement, candidates answered questions from the first section nine times and questions from the section nine times. Moreover, three candidates selected their third questions from the first section and the three other candidates selected their third questions from the second section. Though five additional questions are in the second section, the resulting balance in candidate selections may indicate that they were well prepared for both kinds of analyses. Indeed the average agreed mark is 69 (a high II.1), and the overall average for each marker differs by only two points: 68 and 70.

A favourite question for three candidates, if we consider their average results of 74, was the ninth question: what kinds of connections drove cultural exchange between North and South? As a core question for the course, the significance of this problem and its important examples were understood very well by three candidates. Two additional favourite questions, 3 and 2, that averaged the next highest marks, 71.5 and 70, asked about the contemporary viewership and for a comparison and contrast of images. Six candidates wrote these relatively impressive visual analyses. Another specific example, discussed by two candidates, averaging 69.5 for the group, was the first question: what kind of reading is encouraged by Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ? In this case and in some other essays, candidates appropriately examined primary and secondary prescribed readings. Having a relatively good grasp of artists and patronage, two candidates earned an average of 68 for question 8:

why were particular artists sought after by patrons? Although three candidates addressed the challenging thirteenth question, they were somewhat less successful with their arguments and examples, earning an average of 64.7 in their discussions of the ways in which devotional practices were sustained by the use of colour and light in painting, sculpture, or architecture. Perhaps more challenging were questions 4 and 7, where candidates earned agreed marks of 63 and 64 for discussions of 'self-fashioning' in a portrait and ways in which artistic techniques helped develop new modes of expression.

In general, candidates engaged relatively well with the questions, though with the occasional exception of weak arguments and unclear organization. Sometimes the there was a lack of specific, significant points. In most essays there is a relatively good grasp of the socio-historical contexts, particularly in relation to visual examples, though discussions of them occasionally lack specific, significant examples. On major trends such as important approaches to devotion, piety, painting techniques, emotions, landscapes (and their removal), light, colour and key changes during specific decades, candidates referred to these in general, though sometimes could not discuss, understand or appreciate some of the ways in which particular developments in those areas could have helped with their arguments. Their answers focused better on visual examples that relate to socio-historical developments, thereby earning good marks. Going forward, it might help to include more on other specific innovations and influences in trajectories of development, even if these were already addressed rather well in the previous course.

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

12 candidates took this paper, of whom 2 were awarded agreed marks of 70 and above, 8 between 60 and 69 and 2 between 50 and 59. Between them the candidates answered all the section A questions on the set texts and all but four of the thematic section B questions. It was perhaps more surprising that battles and crown-noble relations attracted no interest than that towns, churchmen and lawyers did so. Among the set text questions chronicles and gentry letter collections predominated but there was some impressive work on buildings and on political ideas, while the favoured themes in section B were female power, parliaments and the relationship between internal peace and external warfare. Those candidates did best who could combine a detailed familiarity with the set texts and a wider understanding of debates about the period with careful attention to answering the precise question set. At the weaker end, together with more generic issues of repetition, unclarity and failure to address the question, there seemed to be some confusion over social and political structures, some implausible characterisation of the views or names of historians who have interpreted the period, and a tendency to answer general questions by focus on very short parts of the period or very few examples.

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

This exam was sat by 6 candidates. Two Firsts were awarded; three 2:1s; and one 2:2. The most popular questions were on the Smelts text (3) and witchcraft (10) which each elicited three responses, followed by questions on brides of Christ (5), death and the emotions (7), and selfhood (11), with two each. Only four questions – on Swetnam (2), female authors (8), sex (9), and masculinity (15) – were not attempted. The overall standard was reasonable, though the average mark awarded this year (64) was a little lower than might be expected.

The stronger responses tended both to establish why the question mattered and identified some problems in achieving a satisfactory resolution, often making perceptive and constructive points around how key terms might be defined, and showing a sophisticated grasp of how concepts functioned in different contexts. Historiography was also often well deployed to help set up and guide the response, even if scholarly interpretations were rarely challenged as explicitly as they might have been. Some candidates were also creative in their chosen combinations of texts, which allowed for distinctive and interesting analysis.

There were a few recurrent problems, though, which tended to drag the overall assessment down. First, the theological element was often poorly handled. In particular, several candidates tended to assume that Protestantism was entirely original in the ideas it presented and the challenges these posed. There was also a surprising lack of awareness of the biblical foundations that were being worked from – language recycled from scriptural texts was too often assumed to be the invention of individual authors. Second, although the texts themselves were generally well-handled, there was often a fuzziness about the specific historical contexts in which they were operating. More awareness should also have been shown of the ways in which Protestantism was a lived religion with its own routines and structures, rather than something that existed on an entirely textual level. Finally, some candidates exhibited a tendency to crowbar in pre-packaged material which was under-adapted to the specific demands of the question. This sometimes led to responses which, while relevant, failed to address specific problems raised by the question, and indeed alternative possibilities to the argument being put forward.

FS 9: Literature and Politics in Early Modern England

Eleven candidates took this exam, of which two achieved marks over 70, and none received a mark below 60. The standard of answers as a whole was high, and there was a good spread of questions answered. Candidates demonstrated very detailed knowledge of the set texts, and responded thoughtfully to the questions. The best scripts were those which achieved a good balance between close reading of the texts and an appraisal of the context in which they were written, and the nature of their reception. Weaker answers were those which sought to replicate term-time essays and therefore gave an incomplete or less focused answer to the question set. The ability to locate the texts within the precise

circumstances of the author's life, and the specific political context of the time, was a feature of the better essays. A lack of precision regarding the political context lessened the effectiveness of some answers.

FS 10: The Iberian Global Century

Five candidates sat the exam paper this year (all for Main School). The standard of work was generally good, with no overall marks above 72 or below 63. The distribution of final marks was as follows:

70-74: 3

65-69: 1

60-64: 1

There was greater engagement with questions focusing specifically on set texts than usual, with 40% of candidates answering two questions from Section A and one question from Section B. However, this did not necessarily result in higher final marks. Overall, answers from both sections showed a good degree of engagement with the set texts. The question about missionary sources (Q.2) received the most responses, with three candidates attempting it. All questions in Section A were attempted by at least one candidate, with the question about Indigenous and mestizo writers (Q.3) receiving two answers. The most popular questions in Section B were about missionary methods (Q.7), petitioners and litigants (Q.8), and the construction of whiteness (Q.9), with two candidates attempting each question. One candidate answered the question on enslaved persons (Q.11), while another attempted the question on artistic creation (Q.13). The questions on the Iberian Union (Q.5), mobility around it (Q.6), the comparison of Colonial Latin America and Iberian Asia (Q.10), alphabetic literacy (Q.12), and consumption (Q.14) went unanswered.

FS 11: Writing in the Early Modern Period

(less than five candidates)

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

Twelve candidates sat the paper. The overall performance on the paper was very assured, with marks ranging from mid 2.1 to several low 1st class marks. All candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the prescribed texts and key themes and preoccupations. Candidates tackled a wide range of questions, with only three questions attracting no responses. The three most popular questions, which attracted six responses each, were Q. 1 on patronage at Louis XIV's court, Q. 2 on ephemeral performances at the Medici and Stuart courts, and Q. 8 on collecting. The strongest responses thought carefully and critically about what the question was asking, developed an independent and clear line of argument, and made detailed reference to relevant prescribed texts. Weaker responses were less selective in their choice of examples and did not engage with the specifics of the question.

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

Nine candidates sat the paper. Candidates tackled all but three questions - Q. 2 (on systems of war by writers), Q. 4 (on public opinion and war), and Q. 9 (on manpower mobilization). The most popular questions were Q. 8 on colonial warfare and Q. 12 on tactics and finance, followed by Q. 6 on the laws of war. One candidate achieved a first-class mark, one was awarded a third, and the remaining seven achieved an upper second. The strongest scripts engaged in a clear and questioning way with the question, provided careful source analysis and criticism – often of a range of sources, analysed the information provided, were conceptually precise, and had an informed understanding of historiographical debates. Weaker scripts paid less attention to the requirements of the question and struggled to structure material or even to complete the essays.

FS 14: The Metropolitan Crucible: London 1685-1815

(less than five candidates)

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

13 candidates sat this examination in TT 2025 which included a student from a previous year.

The exam comprised 16 questions; 8 in Section A and 8 in Section B. As in previous years, certain questions were more popular than others, but the overall spread showed a diversity of interests. There were no serious instances of short weight scripts and there was no significant disagreement between examiners.

The agreed marks ranged from a low of 61 to a high of 72.

Four students received a first-class mark (compared with six last year). The distinctions were low, ranging from 70 to 72 (compared to last year with a range of 70 to 76).

A range of questions were chosen with some clustering on some questions. Three questions went unanswered, but these were topics that have been chosen in past exams. The most popular questions covered topics such as: photography's impact on psychiatry, colonialism and psychiatry, Rosenhan's 'pseudo-patient' study, Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper as memoir, and madness and religion. The strongest answers offered a scholarly analysis, an awareness of the secondary literature, and a clear argument. The weakest answers relied too heavily on descriptions of sources without additional analysis. Overall, there was a bit more interest in modern history topics, which also reflects the design of the course, but some students did engage with early modern or medieval primary sources and historiography. In general, most answers were original in that they did not closely mirror other student answers although in some cases there appeared to be overlap mainly due to the nature of the source or question.

FS 16: Imperial Pathologies: Britain and its Empire, c.1720-c.1850

Five candidates sat the paper. Candidates tackled a range of questions. The most popular question was Q. 3 on the role of patients (four candidates), followed by two candidates each answering Q. 12 on the politics of health, Q. 13 on changes in military and naval medicine, and Q. 14 on theories of contagion. One candidate achieved a first-class mark, with the remaining four achieving an upper second. The strongest scripts engaged clearly with the question, and provided careful source analysis and criticism -- particularly in understanding medicine, health, and disease as historical concepts. Strong answers also analysed the information provided, were conceptually precise, and had an informed understanding of historiographical debates. Weaker scripts paid less attention to the requirements of the question and could struggle to historicize medicine and health.

FS 17: Black Women and British Society c.1750-1865 (new FHS 2025)

Five candidates sat the exam for this paper—one person did not. There was a good distribution of marks across the 2.1 and one 1st. The lowest mark, overall, was 61 and the highest mark, 71.There was also a fair range in the quality of the scripts. There were a couple stand out scripts, that were able to demonstrate a firm understanding and handling of some of the more challenging theoretical concepts. These were often also

the same scripts that were nuanced in their arguments, able to show how larger social-political changes influenced the way women of African ancestry were both represented and lived. However, there were some scripts that show that candidates had only a surface understanding and grasp of both the primary materials and their larger significance within a larger context. Several struggled to properly support their arguments with concrete historical evidence, or engage with historiography, particularly when the question was focused on historiography.

There were a limited number of the questions answered, concentrated on four questions. Three out of five candidates answered questions 6 (representations in caricature), 7 (Mary Seacole's text) and 8 (how class shaped experiences), while two out of three answered question 4 (racial science). In other words, 11 out of 15 exam answers were in response to 4 out of 14 possible questions. In every case, candidates chose to two out of three questions from section A, which focused on specific primary material. Candidates did not answer the following questions:

1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 14. There was not really any correlation between question and mark. For instance, the raw marks for question 8 ranged from 58 to 66, while the marks for question 7 ranged from 62 to 70.

For both students and tutors, it is important keep in mind the larger historical context and where the women and events studied fit. This may help better ground the material historically but also help students better map out the nuances and change over time. It is also important for students to come to grips with the key theoretical concepts, especially around the intersections of race, gender and class, but also make sure they are familiar with the relevant historiography for each topic of the paper.

FS 21: Nationalism in Western Europe, 1799-1890

This was an impressive set of scripts: four out of ten received first class marks overall, and some others contained a first class element. One script was referred to the external, and there were no 2:2 marks. There was, however, a bunching of answers around a few key topics, notably religion and gender. No less than six answered Question 14 (how secular was nationalism?), with a further two writing about Lamartine, Michelet and French Catholicism for Question 5. Gender too attracted significant interest: with three answering the question on separate spheres, and a further three the question on family. In addition, five answered Question 8 (national degeneration and the risorgimento). , while four contemplated the future-oriented qualities of nationalism. By contrast only one candidate each wrote about ideas of empire, the meaning of territory for French nationalists, the relationship between state-building and nation-making and the role of music and the visual arts. Five questions received no takers.

The best answers did more than simply reproduce the obvious points of discussion raised in classes and tutorials, showing a deep engagement with and knowledge of the primary sources. They also displayed an ability to think creatively about the issues at stake. For this reason, those

scripts that strayed beyond the obvious themes tended to do better: their scripts were more thoughtful and less schematic. Consequently they stood out from the crowd.

Over the years this course has produced many serious students who went onto graduate work, and this year's crop seem equally promising, suggesting there is life in the FS yet. The revised version, which will be taught next year, will be less predictable, while drawing on themes like gender and religion which continue to engage students.

FS 22: Intellect and Culture in Victorian Britain

Seven candidates took the Intellect and Culture in Victorian Britain Further Subject in 2025. Candidates covered a good range of questions across the paper. The most popular question was question two, on Victorian historians. Four questions elicited no response: these were question three, on Newman; question seven, on Spencer; question eleven, on physics; and question thirteen, on the social base of Victorian intellectual life. Candidates in future years should think seriously about answering questions on the more complex or out-of-the-way authors, as the interpretative rewards of doing so are often commensurately greater. There was a number of excellent answers this year, characterised by a combination of precise argumentative engagement and detailed knowledge of the set texts, between which the most impressive answers forge persuasive interconnections. Weaker answers, on the other hand, tended not to think carefully about the terms of the question posed; and to pursue a vague or, in places, factually incorrect register of discussion.

FS 23: The Authority of Nature: Race, Heredity and Crime, 1800-1940

Eight candidates sat the examination. Two students were awarded a first-class mark, and the remaining six all achieved marks in the 2.i bracket. The highest agreed mark was 71, and the lowest 62, with the mean mark awarded sitting just under 68. There were no instances of short weight scripts.

The question paper consisted of fourteen questions, split evenly across sections A and B. Candidates had to answer three questions, with at least one from each section. Over half (5) of the eight candidates chose to answer two questions from section A and one from section B. Five of the fourteen questions attracted no answers. These were questions 2 (on scientific critiques of slavery), 6 (on US eugenics and immigration), 7 (on IQ and race), 12 (on comparative legislative success of UK vs US eugenics movements) and 13 (on post-WWII race science). The most popular questions were 5 (on women eugenicists), 1 and 8 (both, broadly speaking, on the monogenism/polygenism debate – an enduringly popular

topic), each of which received 4 responses. The quality of answers was broadly comparable across sections and questions.

Some of the very strongest answers were those in which the author showed impressively detailed knowledge of the context and content of the primary sources, or wherein they made imaginative or unexpected comparisons between sources. Answers scored less well when there was a relative lack of detailed knowledge on display, or where the argumentative thread of the answer was unclear. Overall, this was a strong set of scripts, exhibiting deep knowledge and acute historiographical awareness.

FS 24: The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830-1971

This paper was taken by a total of 27 candidates; 19 History students and 8 AMES students. A total of 19 papers were marked for the History faculty by Kanwal Hameed (1st marker) and James McDougall (2nd marker), and the remaining papers marked sent to Eugene Rogan for marking by AMES.

Marks for History students taking FS22 ranged from 60 (low 2:1) to 75 (High 1st). The distributions of marks across the spectrum is listed below, with a breakdown of seven candidates attaining First Class / Distinction on the marking scale, and the remaining twelve candidates distributed across the Upper Second / Pass band.

- 1 paper 75-79
- 6 papers 70-75 (3 papers 70)
- 9 papers 65-69 (3 papers 65)
- 3 papers 60-64 (1 paper 60)

The overall quality of the scripts was high, reflecting the good health of the paper: the vast majority of candidates (16 out of 19) attained marks in the Upper II:I band (65 or higher). Over one-third (37%) of candidates attained First Class / distinction, and almost one-half (47%) of candidates attained Upper Second / Pass, with the remaining (16%) attaining a Lower Second/ Pass.

The papers showed a reasonably broad question selection, with the exceptions of:

Q.10 “Were peasant insurgents or urban notables more important in contesting colonial rule between 1919 and 1939? You should refer in your answer to AT LEAST TWO countries” and Q.16 “Can we link the Suez war, the Algerian independence struggle, and the revolutionary movements in Palestine and the Gulf in an anti-colonial history of the Middle East?”.

No candidates (zero) attempted to answer these two questions. The latter I believe to be because it covers the final, slightly rushed topic of the course (too much to cover in a short time) - more notes below.

The most popular questions were:

Q.1 “What do we learn from visual and literary sources (including those by travelers,

scholars, bureaucrats) about the relationship between Europe and the Arab world in

the nineteenth century?” and

Q.13 “How has the concept and historiography of the Nakba challenged conventional Zionist accounts of the 1948 war?”

These questions were answered by 8 and 10 candidates, respectively, meaning that almost 50% of History students selected these two questions. Q.13 covers the topic of Palestine, which is notably a critical current affairs issue, which has had the effect of piquing student interest, curiosity and engagement (notable in tutorials too) which may explain its popularity to an extent. Q.1, On Orientalism and primary sources covers the thematic introduction to the course in the first lecture and tutorial, and the topic is reinforced (in practice) through engagement and discussion about primary source material in text classes. This seems to offer students some confidence in approaching the question, which may be reflected in its popularity as an exam question. It is also a topic that is engaged with and seems to resonate among students as part of current issues and contemporary politics in relation to media / decolonisation / anti-racism and bias, which might also contribute to its popularity.

Only two candidates answered Q.2 (“Did imperial ‘pacification’ bring ‘peace’ in the ‘Persian Gulf’?), Q.12 (Did monarchies in the region embody independence from, or dependence upon, imperial power between 1919 and 1958? Support your answer with details from one or more Arab kingdom(s).”), and Q.14 (“What were the consequences of the Arab nationalist political project under Gamal Abdel-Nasser for Egypt, and for the region more broadly?). This may be a reflection on the Gulf states (and less so, Iraq and Jordan) occupying a somewhat peripheral part of historiography on the MENA region at large. It is also an opportunity to bolster teaching on, expand source material from, and deepen engagement with the Gulf as a sub-region and monarchical regime formation during the age of Empire thematically on this paper.

Students generally did not engage in analysing (provenance, context-content-significance) sources for Section A questions: this is already emphasised in text classes but can be reinforced during the revision class.

Some answers showed a lack of clarity or separation between discussion about /perception of / discourse and material events unfolding (something like ‘governance in the British mandate “seemed to” limit development of a native political structure’). This can be discussed both in text classes and tutorials, when exploring source material and historiography. In general, students demonstrated very good knowledge of

empirical detail and of historiography: key texts were almost always cited. On the other hand, the exam scripts showed fewer independent arguments drawing on less well-known sources: this can be developed through encouraging greater engagement with the reading list, and organised the inevitably long reading list in a more accessible format.

The exam scripts included only one instance of lacking or limited empirical knowledge and precision. Across the board, candidates showed strong consistent engagement with questions, and answers given the highest marks showed that the candidate was thinking about what the question offered for consideration.

In some answers, historical detail trumped analysis – it can be re-emphasised in tutorial essay marking that strong knowledge should be employed with analytical skills and judgement.

Notably on questions about Palestine, a number of candidates did not engage with literature on settler colonialism, and specifically on the question about the Nakba, most students did not identify the coining of the term (Constantin Zurayq). Ideally, we would set an extract from Zurayq's *Meaning of the Disaster* as a set text for the primary sources class, which acts as an introduction to the historiography of the Nakba and is bolstered by the texts on the reading list. Some students show skill of fine-grained textual or image analysis, which can be encouraged on our courses by inviting students to also engage text class (primary) material in their essays along with secondary sources.

Those candidates who discussed Gulf experiences / locations in their papers tended to convey an understanding of the Gulf states as monolithic, and indicated less detailed knowledge of differences i.e. Bahrain experience under British rule as opposed to Kuwait, Oman, Yemen. This nuance can be drawn out in teaching for the first and final lectures and tutorials, and bolstered by the reading list – by adding, for example, works such as Khaldun Hassan Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula* (London: Routledge, 1990) and Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman* (Ithaca Press: 1988, 1989, 2002) and works by contemporary scholars Omar Al Shehabi, Nelida Fuccaro, Helen Lackner, Talal Al Rashoud.

□ lessons which students and tutors should particularly note for the future; these may arise from the above or may be specifically highlighted at the end.

Overall, the final course topic might need more time management in course delivery to allow students to feel confident in engaging with the topics of nationalism, revolution and the end of empire. Discussion of primary source material in text class should be highlighted as part of the exam answer: provenance, audience, insights, limits, and in the revision class. Conceptual clarity should be encouraged by mapping out terms and concepts such as Orientalism, Nakba, partition diplomacy, forms of colonialism.

FS 25: L'Année Terrible 1870-71: War, Revolutions and the Rise and Fall of Empires (new for FHS 2025)

Three candidates took this paper, and the performance was solid overall. The best answers were mostly to section A questions. These demonstrated detailed knowledge of a wide range of the primary sources and engaged with them critically to respond to the questions and reflect on the historiography. The stronger answers to section B questions demonstrated a good sense of the parameters of the historiography on both France and Germany, and referred to the primary sources if relevant.

FS 26: Transformations and Transitions in African History since c.1800

In 2025 12 candidates sat the exam for this paper, of whom half were in Joint Schools. Overall this was an improved performance compared to last year, with five candidates achieving a first-class mark and everyone else in firmly in the upper second bracket. The lowest mark was a 65. As ever, there was some clustering around particular questions. As was the case last year, the most popular Section A question was that on Lugard's *Dual Mandate* (eight candidates answered this one). In Section B – again, like last year – the most popular question was that on nineteenth-century 'legitimate commerce' (six candidates), although the question on the nineteenth century as an era of political and military revolution in Africa attracted five answers (nothing to do with the fact that the convenor's book on this came out this year). Although most other questions drew at least one answer, three questions, interestingly, drew none: urbanisation and migration in the colonial period; decolonisation (surprisingly, although two candidates answered the question on African nationalism); and postcolonial challenges and crises. The preference was clearly for questions on early or mid-era colonial rule. Of the 36 essays written for this exam, 14 were from Section A and 22 from Section B – roughly similar proportions to last year. This would seem to suggest that students are drawn to the theme/event-related questions rather than the source-based questions, and of course to the greater choice in Section B.

FS 27: Modern Japan

(less than five candidates)

FS 28: Nationalism, Politics and Culture in Ireland, c.1870-1921

Seven candidates sat the paper 'Nationalism, Politics, and Culture in Ireland, c.1870-1921 (A10731H1)', a number congruent with recent years but about half its longer-run peak. One first class mark was awarded and one short-weight was flagged. All other marks were in the 2.i range. The

most popular questions were on the on the Land War, women, and the Gaelic League. Unionism and the 'Irish revolution' period received relatively little attention. Candidates made effective use of the Set Texts, though more might be made of MacDonald's 'Diary of the Parnell Commission' as a repository of information on the lived experience of the peasantry and gentry during the land struggle. It would also be useful to consider here and there the form and function of particular Set Texts as political interventions in their own time, designed to persuade or inspire particular audiences.

FS 29: A Global War, 1914-1920

Candidates tackled most of the individual questions with only 5 – on war aims and propaganda and 12 on 1917 attracting no takers. The performance on this paper is best described as 'high competence'. Questions on texts by 'outsiders', the claims of generals and moral indignation were the most popular in section A and those on revolution in military affairs and commemoration most popular in section B. Candidates generally showed a good level of knowledge of a range of set texts and a decent grasp of historiography. The result was a lot of 2.1 level marks across the range. What held candidates back was lack of attention to the specifics of the question – for example most candidates really did not grapple with what 'social control' might mean in commemoration but instead simply showed a general knowledge of historiography om the topic, similarly there was little interrogation of revolution in military affairs as opposed to a recitation of technological and tactical change. There wasn't a lot of systematic thought about which authors could properly be defined as outsiders (and not a lot of nuance about authors perhaps being outsider/insider in different ways- class/nationality/race/gender etc).The question on generals tended to drift into answering previous years questions rather than the one that was set and the concept of moral indignation also seemed to become an excuse for downloading information on texts that had been prepared without justifying why they were particularly relevant for this question. The overall result was that only one candidate edged into an agreed first class. By no means disastrous- the candidates did show wide reading and some good ideas but there was a sense of candidates playing safe by staying as close as possible to tutorial essays rather than trying to reconfigure knowledge to answer the questions asked.

FS 30: China since 1900

There were 23 candidates for this paper, making this one of the largest FS cohorts for one paper. The standard of answers was very high this year, and this was reflected in the breakdown of marks: 9 achieved a first-class mark, 14 scripts a 2.1 (10 high, and 4 low). Among the most popular questions in Section A were those on Japan's role in late Qing China, Republican-era cultural production, and ideology and class in the

Cultural Revolution. Very few candidates engaged with the questions on internationalism and Mao Zedong Thought. At best, Section A answers were replete with excellent and creative engagement with set texts, evidencing remarkable close readings. Weaker answers in this section engaged with only a limited number of set texts, usually two, and did not think beyond the most obvious examples (e.g. Lu Xun and Ding Ling in Q3). A recurring issue was the absence of clear periodisation, specific contextualisation, or conceptual framing in discussions of the Republican era, whether concerning its cultural production or the role of governmental actors and institutions. For Section B, the majority of candidates tackled the questions on the May Fourth Movement, women, and social change in the early Cultural Revolution. Again, the best answers dealt creatively with the questions, carefully analysed key terms, and covered a variety of historiography. Of those who answered Q13, hardly any engaged with the perspective of non-Han ethnic groups, which was often a missed opportunity. Similarly, the question on the Cultural Revolution was often answered through the framework of political change, somewhat bypassing the original question. Overall, weaker answers tended to describe rather than analyse, did not formulate clear arguments, or put forward strong arguments that were not supported by the thin evidence provided. Meanwhile, strong answers – of which there many throughout the scripts – carefully engaged with the question and formulated incisive and focused responses which often lent surprisingly fresh light on familiar sources.

FS 31: The Soviet Union, 1924-1941

Eleven candidates set the examination for 'The Soviet Union' Further Subject in Trinity Term 2025. The marks were 64, 64, 64, 66, 67, 67, 67, 68, 70, 70, 71, 72. The mean mark was 68 and the median mark was 67. Candidates attempted all questions in section B (question 8 proved the most popular). There was less variety in section A – questions 2 and 4 were not tackled by any candidates, and many students gravitated towards questions 1 and 5.

In section A, strong answers were distinguished by close engagement with the set texts and strong historiographical framing. Common problems included insufficient contextualisation of the primary sources and/or little historiographical discussion (e.g. the difference between low 2:1 and First-class marks in answers to question 5). Most candidates tackling question 5 adopted a narrow chronological focus on 1937-38, though much emphasis was placed on examining longer-term trends in Stalinist terror in classes and tutorials. There was a lot of potential in question 4, but only one candidate tackled it (showing excellent understanding of key issues and potential for originality, but this essay was let down by lack of argumentative rigour) – the sources relevant to this question will be foregrounded more in future iterations of the paper. I was surprised that question 3 did not attract more students, especially as the issues relevant to this question evoked much discussion in classes and tutorials. I phrased question 1 in a way that would allow candidates to move beyond the focus which similar questions required in the past. This allowed some students to move beyond the rather well-trodden paths. Still, some candidates answered this question in ways suggesting they had

prepared to tackle the same kinds of questions asked in previous years. This resulted in some middling answers. The sources candidates engage with in question 1 are difficult to interpret in interesting, independent ways. In future iterations of the paper, we will dwell more on how to place these sources in new contexts.

In Section B, students engaged with a wide range of social, political, and cultural history topics covered in the paper. Most answers were of good and very quality, though there were not truly outstanding answers this year. Question 8 resulted in some of the most formulaic answers. More attention will be paid to how to move beyond binary accounts of women's liberation in the 1920s/1930s in future iterations of the paper. Beyond that, no single theme/issue proved more or less problematic than others – questions attempted by multiple candidates resulted in answers of varying quality.

Overall, the paper produced a good range of responses. The paper is in need of redevelopment or replacement to reflect more recent historiographical approaches.

SECTION A

1.Which of the prescribed sources reveal the most about internal Bolshevik Party conflicts?

2.Do sources from state archives reinforce elite-centric accounts of Soviet history?

3.Do memoirs written by Soviet citizens reveal more about society than those by foreign visitors to the USSR?

4.Is it more difficult to study the Soviet village than the Soviet city?

5.How far do the set texts allow historians to reconstruct the origins of Stalinist terror?

6.Did talent matter in Soviet culture?

7.How far do diaries reveal resistance to the regime?

SECTION B

8. Did women's lives improve under Soviet rule?

9. How important was Communist ideology in the expansion of the Gulag?

10. Between 1924 and 1941, was the USSR ever a dictatorship of the proletariat?

11. Was Soviet nationalities policy anti-colonial?

12. How responsive was Stalin to pressures from below?
13. Did religion undermine the New Soviet Person project?
14. Why did famines kill millions of people in the early 1930s?
15. How successful was Soviet foreign policy before 1941?

FS 32: Culture, Politics and Identity in Cold War Europe, 1945-1968 (old and new syllabus)

22 students sat this paper in 2025, 4 of these achieved marks of 70 or above, one received a 2:2, all others obtained marks in the 2:1 range.

All questions were tackled at least once, although questions 3,5,7 and 8 were the most popular, and answered by 8,9,8 and 7 candidates respectively.

The examiners were impressed by the range and quality of the answers, and in particular by candidates' ability to analyse the set texts. Indeed, finalists' nuanced source criticism stood out this year. Weaker essays tended to be rather one-dimensional answers to questions in section B. The least successful exam essays were those that failed to answer the essay question, but mentioned related topics instead.

FS 33: America's Hidden Empire: Soft Power & US Influence during the Cold War

[No report received]

FS 34: Jews in Poland in the Twentieth Century: History and Memory

(less than five candidates)

FS 35: Britain at the Movies: Film and National Identity since 1914

This year there were thirteen candidates. Of these, four secured marks of 70 or over, with the majority of the rest securing marks in the upper 60s. All questions on the paper were attempted, except for one asking about *mise-en-scène*. The most popular question by far was 14, which asked about the representation of diversity in Black British experience, in British-made films. This was attempted by over half the candidates and

elicited some especially strong answers. Also popular, and very well-answered, were two questions explicitly addressing gender: number 3, which asked whether romance films were intended to represent or escape women's war-time experience and number 8, which addressed the 'male gaze' in British film-making. This maintains a pattern observable in previous years, where students have been particularly drawn to writing about aspects of identity such as gender and race in this paper. National and regional identity also figured prominently, with questions on the extent to which cinema shaped people's emotional responses to war (question 1) and the significance of regionalism (question 2) both attracting as many responses as questions 3 and 8. Each of these four questions were answered by about a quarter of the cohort. Other questions which were answered by fewer candidates, but which received notably strong responses, were those on Free Cinema (question 5), Empire (question 6), sixties cinema (question 11) and a 'queer reading' of film (question 13). Overall, the highest marks were distributed across a pleasingly wide range of questions. Nor was there a pattern of weaker answers relating to any individual question. As in previous years, the best responses adopted an imaginative and conceptually-sophisticated approach to the question and linked detailed and accurate knowledge of an appropriate selection of films with relevant contextual knowledge and reference to arguments in relevant scholarship, which informed critical and historically-focussed analysis. Generally, less successful essays lacked clarity, precision and depth in their responses. This year some of the weakest answers included multiple factual errors (e.g. the incorrect naming of characters) or other evidence of insecure knowledge, which undermined the overall authority of the essays. Many otherwise good essays were compromised because they failed to define or faithfully address the terms of the question, because they rested on subjective opinion rather than reasoned and evidenced analysis, or because they lacked consistent engagement with the question or a clear argument. However, taken as a whole, the cohort displayed an impressive level of knowledge and understanding and used this to respond to the questions effectively.

FS 36: Scholastic and Humanist Political Thought

(Fewer than five candidates)

FS 37: Political and Social Thought in the Age of Enlightenment

There were 11 candidates for this paper, 5 of whom were awarded 1st class marks, and 6 were awarded a 2:1 mark. Three of the First-Class marks were awarded a mark of 70. The strongest candidates pleasingly integrated their own reading of the primary texts with a considered response to the existing secondary literature. There was encouraging evidence of hard and attentive reading of primary material and thoughtful reflection on current evaluation of those texts in all the First-Class scripts. The usual thinkers attracted the largest number of answers – Hobbes,

Rousseau, Smith, and Wollstonecraft. Mandeville is gradually becoming more attractive to candidates while Spinoza and Montesquieu remain the quarry of the solitary enthusiast. Good work was especially evident in responses to Vico and Herder. The most conventional answers were devoted to the question on Locke. The weaker papers, of which there were very few, were too cautious interpretatively and followed existing secondary authorities too respectfully.

FS 38: Political Theory and Social Science, c. 1780-1820

(less than five candidates)

FS 39: Post-Colonial Historiography: Writing the (Indian) Nation

Nine candidates sat this paper. One candidate achieved a first-class mark (another script was also first-class but lost marks because of a short-weight third essay). Six candidates were awarded a very high 2:1 mark, and there were no scripts below a good 2:1 standard. There was some bunching around questions with one on approaches to writing the history of Partition, and another on the role of patriarchal conservatism in nationalism, proving particularly popular. There were also several answers on colonial environmentalism, women's writing and agency and the contrasting approaches to modernity of Gandhi and Nehru.

The strongest scripts engaged clearly and directly with the question and demonstrated a well-informed and critical understanding of relevant historiography and postcolonial concepts. Needless to say astute understanding and deployment of the relevant set texts was a feature of the best essays in section A. In section B the strongest answers evinced sharp and cogent argument alongside an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between the shifting political context of the era and the forms and substance of nationalist thought. The examiners were especially impressed by answers that made effective links between different kinds of texts – intellectual, literary and political, and showed an appreciation of contrasting viewpoints and historiographical approaches. Less successful answers, though often reasonably knowledgeable, were generally let down by an overly narrow or one-sided argument, and/or perfunctory use of evidence. Unfortunately, two scripts were missing a full third essay and lost marks for being short weight.

FS 40: Women's Liberation: Feminism in Britain, c. 1969-1990

Three candidates sat this paper in 2025. The range of marks was 63%-70%. Questions on lesbian and radical feminism were most popular, but

overall a very wide range of questions was attempted.

The candidates' knowledge of the period and the topics was very good overall and, at times, excellent. They exhibited a very good knowledge of the prescribed authorities and this was a real strength of the best responses. First class responses focused on the question being asked, and offered incisive, analytical arguments. These arguments drew on highly relevant evidence from an impressively wide range of the prescribed texts.

Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of focus on the specific question, and very limited engagement with historiography on the part B questions. Many of the topics on this paper have only limited historiography, but it is essential that candidates demonstrate their awareness of the debates and arguments that historians have put forward, particularly in part B questions. Candidates need to evaluate and engage with these scholarly perspectives, using the prescribed authorities to do so.

Some of the responses were also let down by a tendency to spend far too long – 2 paragraphs or more – explaining what the essay was going to do and why. If the response is tailored to the essay question there is no need for this kind of explanation and justification.

Special Subject (Gobbets Paper)

SS 1: St Augustine and the last days of Rome, 370-430

10 candidates took the paper (8 HHons, 2 J/S); four of these obtained a first class mark, the remaining six a range of 2.1 marks. All of the scripts showed an admirable commitment to engaging with the set texts and their contexts. Where they differed was in their ability to channel energy into precision. The most successful answers were those which started with the passage and worked outwards. Taking the long route round from general context to come back to the passage was a less effective strategy. Generally, the stamina shown was impressive. But, as ever, candidates as would be advised to think about how to pace themselves across the paper, so that each passage gets its due share of attention. Candidates on course to obtain excellent marks were unseated by short weight.

SS 2: Francia in the Age of Clovis and Gregory of Tours

Six candidates (five female, one male) sat this paper, including one from AMH. The overall standard was very high, with three of the six securing first class marks, two securing 68 / 69, and one in the mid 60s. This reflected the extent to which the interest and engagement of all the candidates had clearly been fired up by their close reading of the exceptionally rich and lively primary sources and by the challenge of undertaking forensic analysis of the detailed evidence; the combination allowed them to address the issues raised in each gobbet with real

confidence, expertise and understanding. It was notable that in contrast to some years there was no lessening of quality when candidates turned from Gregory of Tours to other sources. The strongest scripts displayed the hallmarks of serious scholarship alongside a mastery of detail and incisive comment which cut to the heart of the issues under discussion.

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

Eight students sat this paper. After moderation, the grades range from low 2:1 (64) to mid 1st (74). It is a very positive indication that the lowest grade is safely in the lower second, and that no grades fall below this class. Of the eight submissions, four were awarded a first-class mark. This is evidence of the students' engagement with the material. There is a significant increase in the median grade from last year which was 65. The first and second markers awarded mostly similar grades. Overall, a strong performance reflecting a successful paper.

SS 4: Byzantium in the Age of Constantine Porphyrogenitus

(less than five candidates)

SS 5: The Norman Conquest of England

Eight candidates offered this paper. Those who performed well - two achieved first class marks - displayed, as one would expect, mastery of the detail, and an ability to show its significance in a wider context. Scripts which revealed some palaeographical knowledge particularly impressed the examiners. Some scripts had a very imperfect grasp on the material, and did not seem to think it necessary. It is.

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

We marked 13 sets of gobbets, all of which were extremely impressive. Students mostly succeeded in managing their time effectively – all exam scripts were complete, though a few were a little rushed towards the end.

There were 4 first-class marks, and all other scripts were marked at 2.1 level. The average mark was 68; the lowest mark was 61.

Students tackled a range of gobbets, but there were definite favourites! Many students chose to answer passages about the Treaty of Troyes,

about Joan's trial, about her visions, and about the process of Discretio Spiritum. Generally, students were well-versed both in substantive and in conceptual approaches. It was encouraging to see students willing to tackle diplomatic, political and military aspects of the paper, as well as examining questions of religion and spirituality and gender with sensitivity. There were a few surprising errors creeping in – eg. several students misread references to Joan's visions – a little more care needs to be taken with some of the passages. The strongest answers were able to read the source with enormous care, paying attention to each detail, and explaining these by cross-referencing with other sources.

SS 8: Politics, Art and Culture in the Italian Renaissance: Venice and Florence

12 candidates sat this gobbet examination this year – there was one mark below 60 [59], and **X** marks of 70 or above. The overall impression was of well-informed, often highly competent answers, showing a pleasing range in the number of different gobbets answered overall by the cohort. There were fewer truly stand-out performances on this paper, and this was largely because most candidates failed to demonstrate the broader relevance of the gobbet especially in relation to key historiographical questions and debates.

Virtually all candidates had a sound grasp of gobbet technique per se, i.e. using the extract to move from discussion of the passage, text and author, into treatment of wider historical and historiographical issues/debates regarding Renaissance Florence and Venice. Only a very few scripts offered poorly structured answers, in which discussion of the gobbet extract failed to unfold in any logical way. Overall, the level of knowledge about authors, texts, dates, genres and the immediate context in which a source was produced was good. Many candidates too were able to bring in historiographical debates appropriately.

There were some trends which future candidates may however wish to note. The most common failing in these scripts was a failure to talk about the contents of the gobbet extract itself – instead using the gobbet as an invitation discuss its author or the source itself in general, or in the abstract. Gobbet extracts are chosen by examiners for a reason, i.e. because they illuminate some specific problem, and declining to engage with the extract itself is therefore unlikely to produce strong answers. In terms of gobbet examination technique, several candidates scored very high marks (mid 70s) on individual sections of the paper, but could not reproduce this level of quality right across the exam. Being able to demonstrate a consistent level of ideas, knowledge and engagement across all the major themes of the paper (A, B, C and D) is therefore essential for scoring very high marks overall.

In terms of more specific lacunae, detailed awareness of the workings and structure of Florentine and Venetian republican government was somewhat lacking – as epitomised, for example, in the fact that almost no candidates answered gobbet 1e, on Venetian voting procedures. It is also surprising – especially for an exam in which half the candidates were from History of Art -

that in general candidates shied away from the image gobbets. Given there are not all that many set images/objects for this Special Subject, preparing oneself to answer on some or all of them is a good way of giving oneself a fighting chance of performing well in the exam. Finally, it was shame that the two very major London exhibitions of 2025 on Renaissance/Florentine art from this period (King's Gallery on Renaissance Drawings; Royal Academy on Florence 1504) appear to have made no impression on candidates – it was particularly a shame that almost no candidate wrote about the Leonardo Cartoon question, given the new findings about this object which the Royal Academy exhibition brought to light. This is also however a pointer to those teaching the paper, to consider ways of making top art exhibitions in this field accessible and visible to students taking the course, given the increasingly prohibitively cost of entry tickets.

SS 9: The Peasants' War of 1525

Marker did not write a report as this subject won't be running anymore

SS 10: The Trial of the Tudor State, 1540-1560

12 candidates took this paper, of whom 3 were awarded agreed marks of 70 and above, 6 between 60 and 69 and 3 between 50 and 59. Between them the candidates commented on 23 of the 24 set extracts. As ever candidates varied in their ability to identify, characterise and criticise set texts, to recognise detail and read early modern English closely (many thought that the London captain who defected to the rebel side in 1554 was justifying his fighting against Wyatt and his rebels rather than his support for them), and to relate texts to wider historical debates. The best candidates drew insightful connections and contrasts between different set texts and noted the special importance of some types of source material for specific interpretations of the period. Most notable were difficulties with the economic issues covered by the paper. No candidate answered on vagabondage, the few discussing regulation of the cloth industry did not show the detailed grasp of context that the same candidates might show in other areas and those discussing Edward VI's new coinage of 1551 knew far more about the imagery of kingship it carried than about the need for new coins after debasement. In other areas such as theology, politics and social change, and in the ability to identify and contextualise the set texts under discussion, depth of understanding ranged among candidates more normally from impressive precision to less convincing vagueness. As ever, those who knew the set texts well and could set them in the context of contested interpretations of the period were well placed to succeed on this exercise.

SS 11: The Crisis of the Reformation: Political Thought and Religious Ideas 1560–1610

Eight candidates sat the paper: two candidates achieved firsts (both with a mark of 71); the other six achieved 2.1s (four with marks of 65 and above). All gobbet questions were answered with the exception of 2g), an extract from Richer's *Treatise of Ecclesiasticall and Politike Power*. All essays were answered with the exception of 3/4 d), on the significance of coronation ceremonies.

There was much quality in evidence in the scripts, but rather less consistency. The best gobbet answers were intricate readings of the extracts, which displayed a sophisticated grasp of conceptual issues, related efficiently to the wider context; the best short essays drew impressive connections between the set texts. Some candidates who knew a great deal about political context failed to engage with the conceptual concerns of the authors; the weaker answers were general accounts of the set works, rather than detailed readings of the extracts.

SS 12: The Thirty Years War

Number of Candidates**:** 11

Range of Marks**:** 76, 70, 68 (x2), 67, 66, 65, 64 (x2), 63, 60

Spread of Questions (Gobbet Exam)

The spread of responses was very even across the range of gobbets offered, with all those on the paper being tackled by at least one candidate. The rubric compels students to tackle a range of different types of sources (official records, ego-documents, statistical information, literary accounts, visual images).

Performance

Performance was spread fairly evenly across the 2.1/1st bands, with 5 candidates scoring 67% of better, including one very strong 1st. This pattern was broadly in line with the performance on the Extended Essays. Six candidates scored marginally higher on the Gobbet paper than the extended essay, but overall results were broadly even, both for candidates individually and the cohort as a whole. It was good to see that each student's achievement was broadly even across the four sections of the paper, with usually only a few marks difference between their highest and lowest scores. This reflects a good consistency of engagement across the full range of material on the course.

The most common shortcoming was poor contextualisation of the gobbet and/or not commenting fully on the language (or visual image) in the source. By contrast, the stronger answers not only addressed these aspects, but were also articulate in identifying each gobbet's significance as

well as identifying ambiguities and issues surrounding interpretation.

SS 13: The Scientific Movement in the Seventeenth Century

Six candidates took the examination. The overall mark range was 67-74, reflecting the considerable work that candidates put into their revision for this paper. There was one First overall, and two very-near misses (69). No gobbet went unanswered. The most popular gobbets were (5 answers each) the extracts from Harvey's *De motu* (1f), Galileo's *Starry Messenger* (2a), Webster's *Academiarum Examen* (3b) and Sprat's *History* (3f). The least popular gobbets (1 answer each) were extracts on Case's *Ancilla* (1a), Hobbes's *De corpore* (2f), Wallis's *Autobiography* (3a), Hartlib's *Petition* (3d) and Ashmole's *Statutes* (4c). Other gobbets received a fairly even distribution of answers. The best gobbet answers showed close attention to the detail of the textual extracts, and an awareness of what the author of the extract might be 'up to' in writing as they did. The better answers avoided turning into a general essay on the topic indicated, and displayed some detailed knowledge of context and the broader significance of the extracts discussed.

SS 14: Revolution and Republic, 1647-1658

(fewer than 5 candidates)

SS 15: English Architecture, 1660-1720

Twelve students took this paper. Four candidates secured a clear first-class mark, and a further six finished with a 2.1 (one borderline first, 3 upper seconds, and 2 lower seconds). Two other candidates did not complete the required number of answers, although they averaged 2.1 scores for the gobbets they did address. Overall, the examiners were pleased with the performance of the field, which reflected lively engagement with architectural development and a range of sources. The best candidates were very good in identifying key channels of enquiry, and their curiosity helped to render their commentaries both productive and disciplined. The weaker scripts were less precise in their analysis, and did not take opportunities to broaden discussion, even when cross-referencing between set texts was possible. The examiners also detected a general tentativeness to address design issues in detail, even in the case of the visual source questions. Nonetheless, the overall strength of the cohort should be commended, and the breadth of their interest in the paper ensured that every gobbet was attempted.

SS 16: Imperial Crisis and Reform, 1774-84

Five candidates sat this paper, four of whom achieved a 2:1 grade; the other candidate was awarded a first-class mark. In general, candidates showed a good knowledge of key themes and topics, and offered some interesting commentary on matters raised by the extracts. As in previous years, weaker answers tended to stray too quickly from the content, form and nature of the extracts, instead either describing general background or offering mini commentaries on topics. The best answers kept the focus firmly on the gobbets and elucidating how their meaning might best be understood. They were precise in the analysis which they offered, and able to identify key contexts which help us better comprehend the meaning and significance of the gobbets. It is worth pointing out that few answers had much to say at all about issues such as language or tone used by authors or speakers. Indeed, quite a lot which might have been said in relation to this was missed by nearly all the answers. The only gobbet to be misinterpreted completely was 3e; Thomas Powys was being sarcastic, and he was an opponent of parliamentary reform. In some ways, it is disappointing to be reporting again that flawed gobbet technique continues to be evident in too many answers. This was the burden of last year's report.

SS 17: Becoming a Citizen, c. 1860-1902

Fifteen candidates took this paper. Five were awarded a first-class mark overall and the other ten a 2:1 mark. All of the answers showed a good overall understanding of the paper and some detailed knowledge of the set texts. The weaker scripts were undermined by problems with timing, which suggests the importance of practising writing twelve gobbets under exam conditions. The gobbets with lower marks were also characterised by the frequency of factual errors, by engaging only in general terms with the precise text provided, or by the brevity of answers. The strongest scripts deployed a great deal of detailed and precise knowledge, remaining consistently focused on the precise sentences given. When candidates have this excellent knowledge of the set texts, they should be encouraged to be more ambitious in deploying this understanding to also articulate the significance of each gobbet for the wider themes of the paper and/ or for historians' understanding of this period.

SS 18: Race, Sex & Medicine in the Early Atlantic World

Thirteen candidates sat the exam in Trinity term 2025. The average mark was 67 and marks ranged from 61 to 73. There were five firsts, four high 2.1s (65-69), and four low 2.1s (60-64). There was a good spread of questions answered. Every question was attempted at least once. The most popular question on the exam was 1.a—students may have found this question especially compelling, or its popularity may simply have

been because it was the first question on a time-pressured exam. Four questions on the exam received fewer than five answers—1d, 1e, 3f, and 4c. It is noteworthy that 1d, 1e, and 3f all related to the experiences of white Britons at home or in the colonies, and may therefore have seemed less richly connected to a reading list that was focused primarily of the history of race and of diasporic Africans in the Atlantic world. Certainly, the course sought to make connections between these things, but it may be useful to add some reading on whiteness to the reading list in order to give the students more fodder for making stronger conceptual connections between white Britons and the ideology of race. In general, the best answers were able to provide rich, detailed context, a sense of authorial perspective, and creative connections between the gobbets and other set texts, while weaker answers tended to speak in general terms about context and authorial perspective, spent too much time summarizing the gobbet, made few if any cross-references to other set texts, and/or made factual errors.

SS 19: Art and its Public in France, 1815-1867

(Suspended in 2024-25)

SS 20: Slavery, Emancipation and the Crisis of the Union, 1848-1865

This batch of exam scripts was somewhat disappointing. Too often, the candidates fell short on basic technique. Some, for example, simply reproduced the meaning of a gobbet without displaying any awareness of its provenance. Others referred to historiography which was entirely irrelevant to the extract in question. Particularly egregious were the all-too-frequent references to Adam Smith's argument that conservatism in antebellum America was a "language of legitimation." Unfortunately, none of the extracts on the exam mentioned the term "conservatism" making this observation entirely irrelevant. Oddly, more candidates than usual made the sort of simplistic mistakes that should have been ironed out well before admission to Oxford University. At times, these were stylistic errors: it is unacceptable that candidates can reach their third year without learning to write in paragraphs. Other students lazily noted down the incorrect titles for various newspapers, or mistook a Democratic President from the 1850s for a paleoconservative of the 1990s. It seems that students this year grasped the fact that they had to mention historiography, but often did so without being specific, and – most crucially – did so at the expense of a sophisticated analysis of context and provenance. For this examiner, it is more impressive to detail exactly what is going on in the gobbet before moving on to an analysis of reproduction, audience, biases etc while bringing in specific historiography where relevant, rather than endlessly reproducing hazy debates about "conservatism," or fundamentalism v. revisionism. Reassuringly, the majority of candidates displayed a fairly strong grasp of the political, legal and cultural history of the period, but – to improve – almost all scripts needed to also know a great deal more about the specifics of

individual sources.

SS 21: Race, Religion and Resistance in the United States, from Jim Crow to Civil Rights

(Suspended in 2024-25)

SS 22: Terror and Forced Labour in Stalin's Russia

(Suspended in 2024-25)

SS 23: Empire and Nation in Russia and the USSR

(Suspended in 2024-25)

SS 24: The End of Empire: The Collapse of Soviet Order in Eurasia

The paper was taught and examined for the second time in 2024-25. Seven students took the paper and sat the examinations. For both the extended essay and the gobbet exam, the mean mark was 69, the median mark was 70. This accurately reflects the strengths of the group which included very talented and ambitious students.

Gobbet exam

Marks for the gobbet exam consisted of four First-class marks (74, 71, 70, 70) and three Upper Second Class marks (69, 66, 63). It was encouraging to see students engage with material from across the syllabus. All questions were tackled with the exception of 2e (this is perhaps surprising because at least a couple of students used this source in their extended essays).

The paper requires a reading knowledge of Russian. In my assessment, the language requirement did not have a significant impact on candidates' performance. Most students (with one exception) engaged with English and Russian-language material in almost equal measure. This is particularly impressive given that the group did not contain any heritage speakers.

Excellent commentaries were characterised by concise discussion of the context in which the sources were produced, explicit reflection on the usefulness of the source at hand, a clear exposition of argument developed, and an attempt to situate the discussion in a historiographical context. Weaker commentaries contained errors of fact and interpretation. Some were overly generic/schematic. Time keeping was an issue this year (in contrast to 2024) and the answers were more or less even. However, 12 gobbets in 3 hours does not allow students to show their full potential and to advance the kinds of original ideas I saw in weekly gobbet commentaries and class discussion during term time.

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

5 candidates were awarded a 1st class mark and 7 more achieved a strong 2:1. However there were several low 2:1 scripts. Most candidates were able to show reasonable knowledge of the sources – though sometimes this was quite basic and superficial. The best answers, while demonstrating deep familiarity with the extract and source text, were also able to make compelling and illuminating connections with other set texts and/or place the extract in the context of relevant historiographical debates. Weaker answers often only focused on elucidating the meaning of the extract in a narrow and straightforward way, showing little appreciation of how they might inform broader historical issues or debates.

SS 26: The Spanish Civil War in Context (new for FHS 2025)

This is the first time that this special subject has been taught and assessed. It has a language requirement as approximately 50% of the sources are in Spanish. Seven students took the paper and submitted extended essays. One student suspended ahead of the final exam.

The gobbet exam featured three questions featuring extracts from texts while the final question assessed images. Students tended to examine the images more effectively – with discussion of aspects like composition, colour and audience. Comprehension of the extracts was generally good. In terms of those drawn from the pre-war Republic, students showed a preference for those illuminating gender and generally answered them well. There was decent range shown in responses to question two, though students didn't quite do as well with *The Red Domination in Spain*: it was a challenge to balance its purpose as a Francoist justification for the war and the crude reality of anticlerical violence. In question three was a clear preference for discussing the unification of FET-JONS, the *Fuero* and the Laureate Cross Acceptance speech, which allowed for further exploration of gender. Overall, performances were very solid and there appeared to be no time management issues.

Setting the extended essay questions before the classes and tutorials have begun is a challenge and this is perhaps reflected in the fact that

students clustered around particular questions: violence, resistance, and the nature of the Francoist regime. Weaker essays were less clear on detail, else did not show sufficient argumentation or did not integrate primary sources with enough of a critical eye. More could be done to problematise the questions, or engage more deeply in the conceptual issues they raise. In general, however, performance in the extended essays was very competent.

SS 27: Nazi Germany, a Racial Order, 1933-1945

(less than five candidates)

SS 28: France from the Popular Front to the Liberation, 1936-1944

(Suspended in 2024-25)

SS 29: War and Reconstruction: Ideas, Politics and Social Change, 1939-1945

The best description for gobbet answers this year is probably high competence with a clustering of both individual and overall marks in the high 2.1/ borderline first bracket. There was very little work of low second class standard and very few gobbet answers in the high first class. Both markers were generally quite close in the assessment of scripts. All the gobbets were attempted by at least one candidate and the spread was generally quite good (with perhaps a slight under representation of the visual gobbets.) The marks profile was definitely a bit lower than the Extended Essay marks. Difficult to know how to advise future students to improve on this- probably by cultivating a level of detailed familiarity with the sources and historiography that enables more personal judgement in the answers. That is of course a high bar- as it should be for a first on this paper.

SS 30: Britain from the Bomb to the Beatles: Gender, Class and Social Change, 1945-1967

Seventeen candidates sat this paper in 2025. The marks ranged from 61% to 69%. This is the last time that the paper will run.

The weakest responses lacked engagement with the historiography and demonstrated only a general understanding of the wider context. These

responses did not evaluate whether the extracts under discussion reflected the source as a whole or the tenor of debate or opinion more widely.

Stronger responses were characterised by a greater understanding of the historiography, but were often let down by a lack of critical engagement with this. There was a tendency to cite historians without evaluating their contribution. Strong responses sought to compare the extract with the wider source and with perspectives and experiences that other prescribed texts illuminated. This depth of engagement earned a few responses a First, although no candidate was able to sustain that level of analysis across the entire paper.

SS 31: Society, Culture, and Politics in Socialist China (new for FHS 2025)

7 candidates sat this paper. Three candidates achieved a first-class, four a high 2.1. The four sections of the paper stretched the candidates to think broadly about different kinds of sources, contexts, and historiographies, and candidates responded very well to the challenge. The best responses moved from careful analysis of the gobbet to the wider context of the source, and then connected to other related sources and historiographical debate. Many candidates showed great sensitivity to questions of language and historical context, including being able to relate sources about local developments to broader, (inter)national contexts, and vice versa. There were some especially good commentaries on visual sources. Weaker answers tended to overlook historiographical debate, got lost in description rather than analysis of detail, or – conversely – moved immediately to context, forgetting to spend some time discussing the actual gobbet. These answers often missed opportunities to unpack crucial terms, such as “the people”. Overall, however, the standard of commentaries was high.

SS 32: The Northern Ireland Troubles, 1965-1985

Seventeen candidates sat the exam for this course. Three were awarded Firsts; 12 were given 2.1 marks, and there were three 2.2s. By comparison, in last year’s exam, 4 candidates obtained first-class marks, 13 got marks in the 2.1 category and 4 received 2.2s.

The spread of answers was quite even, although Callaghan and *Dressed to Kill* didn’t get many takers.

As usual, the less impressive gobbet commentaries, those in the high 2.2 or low 2.1 bracket, were simply too general. To take some examples. It was striking that answers to 1b. made little reference to the RUC, although the statistics for Catholic membership over time are provided in Whyte’s classic article. Answers to 1c. should really have explained what the Nationalist Party was, said something about the significance of 5 October, and explored McCann’s understanding of the sectarian divide. Candidates who attempted 1f were generally equipped to discuss discrimination in general but too few went on to focus on the issue of east/west disparities. Many who attempted 2f. (Collins) failed to

understand the significance of Hanna's inattention to security: he did not check his car because he was no longer a member of the security forces and therefore not a 'legitimate target'. Very few of those students who chose 3f. were able to list the five demands.

There were a few exceptionally well-informed answers. On 3b., for example, one candidate had heard of McCartney's Campaign for Equal Citizenship. This sort of detail is by no means essential, but to pull an occasional rabbit out of the hat is always impressive. Good answers addressed the realities of clerical power in the South, connected McCartney's view to those of the other Unionists interviewed by O'Malley and pointed out some of the contradictions in their statements. One commented that a liberal and progressive stance could overlap with more sectarian strands of Unionism. Close knowledge of the texts is vital, but so too is the willingness to evaluate the claims being made. Similarly, I was pleased when students discussing 2e. remarked that, any other times, Harold Wilson did consider negotiating with the unelected. Finally, I admired students who brought into the discussion some of the key secondary literature. On 2c. some explored what the British way of life might have meant to Bill Craig, and conveyed the underlying argument of Dillon and Lehane's book, while connecting their analysis with Todd on Unionism and Steve Bruce on loyalism.

It is a pleasure to note that my former student, Rachel Kowalski, continues to be the most cited authority. One candidate named her 3 times.

SS 33: Pop and the Art of the Sixties

There were 11 candidates for the Pop Special Subject this year (5 HoA, 6 History). The spread of marks was fairly typical, with four in the 70s and all others in the mid 60s and higher except for one slightly short-weight paper. The higher marks were, as usual, in the mid-70s. The strongest exams demonstrated excellent knowledge of the prescribed texts and images and were able to offer precise analyses of their meanings, of the significance of the specific extracts, and of their relation to the wider historical context. Exams in the mid60s demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the prescribed texts and images and of the historical context but the gobbets were either slightly less precise in analysis or slightly less clear in organization. Even the weaker answers, though, were competent and thoroughly deserving of a mid or upper second. This was true of the individual gobbets in the short-weight paper also. As in previous years, candidates selected a wide range of extracts and images across the gobbets paper, with a fairly even split between texts and images. Candidates performed equally well when addressing texts and images.

SS 34: Britain in the Seventies

Almost all the candidates demonstrated good knowledge of their set texts and produced effective answers under timed conditions. One candidate got a mark of 72, and four marks of 69. Some answers were more precise than others in contextualising the extracts; the strongest cross-referred to other sources and wider themes.

SS 35: Neoliberalism and Postmodernism: Ideas, Politics and Culture in Europe and North America, 1970-2000

Only 6 candidates took the gobbet paper this year, so this is a small sample. While there were some excellent answers, several candidates devoted too much of their answers to paraphrasing the gobbet passage itself rather than contextualising it, and the examiners were under the impression that some candidates had not read enough of the secondary reading relating to the texts. A minority of candidates, however, had read widely, and used their knowledge and understanding of the issues to produce excellent commentaries on the gobbet and the other sources related to it.

SS 36: Revolutions of 1989

8 students enrolled in the SS Revolutions of 1989 course, but one withdrew, so seven sat the exam. Of these, 5 were History single honours students, whilst 2 were Joint Schools. The spread of marks was more elongated this year, with 3 earning marks of 70 or above, 3 scored between 60-69 and 2 obtained marks between 50-59. This year's students tended to perform less strong on Part 2 (on visual sources) than students had in the past. Overall the quality of the exams was in line with those from previous years, with the exception of the two weakest students who scored unusually low marks.

SS 37: Art and Politics: Class & Power in Chinese Art

Number of Candidates and Distribution of Marks

Eight candidates sat the examination for this Special Subject. Of these, three candidates were awarded First Class marks, four achieved Upper Second Class (2:1), and one received a Lower Second Class (2:2). This represents a fairly strong cohort, with no scripts falling below the 2:2 threshold. The distribution of agreed marks reflects a generally sound engagement with the subject and suggests a healthy level of understanding and preparation across the group. The examiners were broadly impressed with the overall quality of the scripts. Most candidates demonstrated a solid grasp of core concepts, key themes, and historiographical debates within the subject. While not all answers were equally

strong, there was clear evidence that the majority of students had worked closely with the primary and secondary materials introduced throughout the course.

Spread of Questions and Subject-Matter Preferences

There was a fairly even spread of question choices across the paper, with only a couple of questions being significantly underrepresented. While some prompts attracted more candidates—particularly those dealing with class representation in visual culture and the politicization of traditional art forms—most questions were selected by at least one candidate. This even distribution indicates that the students felt confident engaging with a broad range of topics, rather than clustering around a limited set of familiar or "safe" areas. In terms of content preferences, topics relating to revolutionary aesthetics and propaganda art during the Maoist period appeared especially popular and were generally well-handled. Conversely, questions that required engagement with more theoretical debates—particularly those involving global art theory or comparative historiography—were less frequently attempted and, when chosen, tended to produce more uneven results.

Suggestions for Students and Tutors

A couple of students appeared to run out of time, resulting in incomplete or significantly shortened final answers. This not only undermined the coherence of the arguments but also affected the overall performance. Students should practice timed writing and develop strategies to allocate time evenly across questions. Tutors may wish to incorporate more in-class mock exams to help students manage this aspect more effectively.

SS 38: Art and the Invention of Race

(suspended in 2024-25)

Disciplines of History

Appendix A: Report on FHS Results and Gender (Main School Only)

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2025 M 122 W 150 Main School Only

Paper	F Avrg	M Avrg	DIFF	F High	M High	F Low	M Low	F 70 +	M 70 +	F < 60	M < 60
ALL	64.98	64.33	0.65					293 (69.8%)	268 (76%)	99 (29.5%)	75 (25.6%)
BH	65.72	63.74	1.98	19	12	36	27	38 (25.5%)	30 (24.8%)	16 (10.7%)	9 (7.4%)
EWH	63.64	65.18	1.54	13	20	35	24	33 (22.1%)	31 (25.6%)	15 (10.1%)	10 (8.3%)
FS	64.83	65.38	0.55	18	14	19	21	36 (24.2%)	29 (24%)	9 (6%)	7 (5.8%)
SSg	63.9	64.45	0.55	18	21	23	20	34 (22.8%)	45 (35.5%)	14 (9.4%)	12 (9.9%)
SSEE	67.96	64.48	3.48	40	27	21	15	62 (41.6%)	43 (35.5%)	7 (4.7%)	9 (7.4%)
DH	63.72	64.83	1.56	16	26	32	18	31 (20.8%)	37 (30.6%)	20 (13.4%)	14 (11.6%)
TH *	65.55	62.23	3.32	44	30	12	24	59 (39.6%)	42 (34.7%)	15 (10.1%)	13 (10.7%)

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2024 117 M 116W Main School Only

Paper	F Avrg	M Avrg	DIFF	F High	M High	F Low	M Low	F 70 +	M 70 +	F < 60	M < 60
ALL	66.95	67.94	1.0					18 (15.8)	30 (26.3)	3 (2.6)	2 (1.8)
BH	65.64	66.7	1.06	16	9	36	35	25 (21.9)	31 (27.2)	15 (13.2)	4 (3.5)
EWH	66.22	67.46	1.24	12	16	28	18	27 (23.7)	39 (34.2)	5 (4.4)	6 (5.3)
FS	66.66	67.74	1.08	15	18	17	15	28 (24.6)	38 (33.3)	7 (6.1)	2 (1.8)
SSg	67.05	67.75	0.7	9	11	14	21	26 (22.8)	38 (33.3)	2 (1.8)	4 (3.5)
SSEE	67.8	69.14	1.34	20	35	19	10	46 (40.4)	54 (47.4)	4 (3.5)	3 (2.6)
DH	66.82	67.31	0.49	25	9	19	24	34 (29.8)	34 (29.8)	4 (3.5)	4 (3.5)
TH *	69.16	69.09	0.07	44	37	9	12	52 (45.6)	52 (45.6)	3 (2.6)	6 (5.3)

GENDER STATS BY PAPER FHS 2023 M 106 W 154 Main School Only

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

Appendix B: FHS Results and Statistics

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

i. Numbers and percentages in each class

(As of 21 July 2025)

Class	Number			
	2025	**2024**	**2023**	**2022**
I	87	95	95	84
II.1	134	130	162	122
II.2	4	3	2	0
III	1	0	0	0
Pass	0	1	0	0
DDH	0	2	0	0
Incomplete	4	2	(1)	2
Fail	5	2	0	0
PN	0	0	0	
Total	**235**	**233***	**260**	**202**

*The two Incomplete results will not complete their FHS exams till 2025; one of the DDHs was from a previous year.

ii. Numbers and percentages of men and women in each class

(a) 2025 (as of 21 July 2025)

Class	Percentage			
	2025	2024	2023	2022
I	37.03	40.8	36.7	40.8
II.1	57.03	55.8	62.3	59.2
II.2	1.70	1.3	0.8	0
III	0.43	-	0	0
Pass	0	0.4	0	0
DDH	0	0.9	5.38	0
Incomplete	1.70	0.9	0.38	1.0
Fail	2.23	0	0	0
PN	0			

(b) 2025 (as of 22 July 2025)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	87	37.03	38	39.59	49	35.26	56.32
II.1	134	57.03	53	55.20	81	58.27	60.45
II.2	4	1.70	1	1.04	3	2.16	75.0
III	1	0.43	0	0	1	0.71	100.
Pass	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DDH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete	4	1.70	1	1.04	3	2.16	75.0
Fail	5	2.12	3	3.13	2	1.44	40.0
PN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**235**	**100**	**96**	**100**	**139**	**100**	-

(b) 2024

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men 117		Women 116		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	95	40.9	49	41.9	46	39.7	48.4
II.1	130	56	64	54.7	66	56.9	50.8
II.2	3	1.3	1	0.9	2	1.7	66.7
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pass	1	0.4	-	-	1	0.9	100
DDH	2	0.9	1	0.9	1	0.9	50
Incomplete	2	0.9	1	0.9	1	0.9	50
Fail	2	0.9	2	1.7	0	0	0
PN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**233**	**100**	**114**	**100**	**119**	**100**	-

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men 106		Women 154		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I	95	36.7	44	41.5	51	33.1	53.7
II.1	162	63.5	100	53.8	100	64.9	60.6
II.2	2	0.77	-	-	2	1.3	100
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DDH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Incomplete	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail	1	0.38	-	-	1	0.65	100.
Total	**260**	**100**	**106**	**100**	**154**	**100**	-

iii. Performance of candidates by paper

(a) Thesis (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper) at 31 July 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I (70+)	128	38.68	55	37.68	73	39.46	57.04
II.1 (60-69)	174	52.57	82	56.17	92	49.73	52.88
II.2 (50-59)	18	5.43	5	3.42	13	7.02	72.22
III (40-49)	2	0.60	1	0.68	1	0.54	50.0
Pass (30-39)	1	0.30	-	-	1	0.54	100.0
Incomplete	3	0.90	-	-	3	1.62	100.0
Fail (under 30)	5	1.52	3	2.05	2	1.09	40.0
Total	**331**	**100**	**146**	**100**	**185**	**100**	-

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

(b) Special Subject Extended Essay (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper) at 6 August 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I (70+)	114	40.0	44	38.93	70	40.69	61.40
II.1 (60-69)	149	52.28	60	53.10	89	51.74	59.73
II.2 (50-59)	17	5.97	6	5.31	11	6.39	64.70
III (40-49)	2	0.70	1	0.89	1	0.59	50.0
Pass (30-39)	-	-	--	-	-	-	-
Fail (under 30)	3	1.05	2	1.77	1	0.59	33.33
Total	**285**	**100**	**113**	**100**	**172**	**100**	

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

(c) Disciplines of History (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper) at 18 July 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I (70+)	68	26.05	36	30.50	32	22.38	47.05
II.1 (60-69)	107	41.0	52	44.07	55	38.46	51.40
II.2 (50-59)	60	22.98	19	16.10	41	28.68	68.33
III (40-49)	24	9.20	9	7.63	15	10.48	62.50
Pass (30-39)	2	0.77	2	1.70	-	-	-
Fail (under 30)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**261**	**100**	**118**	**100**	**143**	**100**	-

(d) BIF History of the British Isles *Essays* and *Portfolio* (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper) (includes BIF Theme Papers) at 1 August 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
70+	60	23.80	25	26.32	35	22.30	58.33
II.1 (60-69)	170	67.46	64	67.37	106	67.51	62.35
II.2 (50-59)	20	7.94	5	5.26	15	9.55	75.0
III (40-49)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pass (30-39)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail (under 30)	2	0.80	1	1.05	1	0.64	50.0
Total	**252**	**100**	**95**	**100**	**157**	**100**	

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

(e) European and World History (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper)

Includes EWT theme papers (a) (b) (c) at 1 August 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I (70+)	77	22.91	36	23.08	41	22.77	53.24
II.1 (60-69)	234	69.64	112	71.80	122	67.78	52.13
II.2 (50-59)	20	5.95	8	5.12	12	6.67	60.0
III (40-49)	3	0.90	-	-	3	1.67	100.0
Pass (30-39)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail (under 30)	2	0.60	-	-	2	1.11	100.0
Total	**336**	**100**	**156**	**100**	**180**	**100**	-

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

(f) Further Subjects (Sex/Paper showing marks for that paper) at 4 August 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I (70+)	86	28.10	37	27.01	49	29.0	56.98
II.1 (60-69)	213	69.60	97	70.80	116	68.63	54.47
II.2 (50-59)	6	1.97	3	2.19	3	1.78	1.78
III (40-49)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pass (30-39)	-	--	-	-	-	-	-
Fail (under 30)	1	0.33	-	-	1	0.59	0.60
Total	**306**	**100**	**137**	**100**	**169**	**100**	**-**

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

(g) Special Subjects Gobbets (sex paper showing marks for that paper) at 5 August 2025

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
I (70+)	85	30.03	39	35.45	46	26.59	54.11
II.1 (60-69)	177	62.54	65	59.10	112	64.73	63.28
II.2 (50-59)	15	5.31	5	4.54	10	5.79	66.66
III (40-49)	3	1.06	1	0.91	2	1.16	66.66
Pass (30-39)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fail (under 30)	3	1.06	-	-	3	1.73	100.0
Total	**283**	**100**	**110**	**100**	**173**	**100**	-

**Some candidates have their marks disregarded*

Appendix C: Examiners

Internal Examiners	External Examiners
Prof J-P Ghobrial	Prof. C. Griffiths, University of Cardiff
Dr. N. Nowakowska	Prof. J. Hudson, University of St Andrews
Dr. S. Pooley	Prof. J. Slight, Open University
Dr A. Power	Prof. N. Tadmor, University of Lancaster
Dr. H. Smith (Secretary)	
Prof. J. Watts (Chair)	
Dr. Z. Wojnowski	

NB: No report needed for paper if fewer than five candidates, unless it was a new paper.