

History
Prelims 2016

Examiners' Report

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2015

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS

Along with the FHS Examiners' Report, this is a new style Report which concentrates on candidates' performance in the exam, with administrative matters reported separately to the Faculty's Examinations Sub-Committee.

I: Statistical overview

Table 1: Performance of candidates by gender

Year	All HIST cand	No + % of Ds, all	No + % of Ps, all	F	No + % of Ds, F	No + % of Ps, F	M	No + % of Ds, M	No + % of Ps, M
2016	234	87 37.18%	147 62.82%	133	38 28.57%	95 71.43%	101	49 48.51%	52 51.49%
2015	225	71 31.60%	154 38.44%	107	31 29.0%	76 71.0%	118	40 33.90%	78 66.10%
2014	240	74 30.83%	166 69.17%	128	35 27.34%	93 72.66%	112	39 34.82%	73 65.18%
2013	230	64 27.8%	166 72.17%	115	23 20.0%	92 80.0%	115	41 35.66%	74 64.34%

Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2016

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles I - c.300-1087	23	6	29
History of the British Isles II – 1042-1330	44	6	50
History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550	35	1	36
History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700	47	7	54

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles V – 1685-1830	34	8	42
History of the British Isles VI – 1815-1924	27	4	31
History of the British Isles VII – since 1900	24	3	27
General History I – 370-900	74	26	100
General History II – 1000-1300	59	5	64
General History III – 1400-1650	55	26	81
General History IV – 1815-1914	44	10	54
OS 1 – Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx)	29	20	49
OS 2 – The Age of Bede, c.660-c.740	3	-	3
OS 3 – Early Gothic France c.1100-c.1150	4	-	4
OS 4 – Conquest & Frontiers: England & the Celtic Peoples 1150-1220	2	-	2
OS 5 – English Chivalry & the French War c.1330-c.1400	9	2	11
OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450	4	3	7
OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance	10	5	15
OS 8– Witch-craft & Witch-hunting in early modern Europe	25	5	30
OS 9 – Making England Protestant 1558-1642	7	2	9
OS 10 – Conquest & Colonization: Spain & America in the 16 th Century	30	5	35
OS 11 – Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815	26	9	35
OS 12 – Women, gender and the nation: Britain, 1789-1825 (<i>suspended in 2015-16</i>)	-	-	-
OS 13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914	7	-	7
OS 14 – Haiti and Louisiana: The problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery	28	3	31

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
OS 15. The New Women in Britain & Ireland, c.1880-1920 (new)	6	3	9
OS 16 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921	5	7	12
OS 17. 1919: Remaking the World (new)	13	2	15
OS 18 – Radicalism in Britain 1965-75	17	2	19
OS 19 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH)	3	1	4
OS 20 – Augustan Rome (AMH)	5	3	8
OS [21] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870	-	7	7
Approaches to History	118	33	151
Historiography: Tacitus to Weber	75	13	88
Herodotus	-	1	1
Einhard and Asser	6	-	6
Tocqueville	20	9	29
Meinecke and Kehr	3	5	8
Machiavelli	2	1	3
Díaz del Moral	5	-	5
Quantification	5	1	6

History of the British Isles (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	74	27.51	39	32.77	35	23.33	47.30
Pass	195	72.49	80	67.23	115	76.67	58.98
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	269	100	119	100	150	100	-

General History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	82	27.33	46	32.85	36	22.50	43.90
Pass	218	72.67	94	67.15	124	77.50	56.88
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	300	100	140	100	160	100	-

Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	95	30.44	49	34.50	46	27.05	48.42
Pass	217	69.56	93	65.50	124	72.95	57.15
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	312	100	142	100	170	100	-

Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	44	29.14	23	37.70	21	23.33	47.72
Pass	107	70.86	38	62.30	69	76.67	64.49
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	151	100	61	100	100	100	-

Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	35	39.78	19	40.42	16	39.03	45.72
Pass	53	60.22	28	59.58	25	60.97	47.12
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	88	100	47	100	41	100	-

II Marking & Classification

III Comments on Papers: General

History of the British Isles I: c. 300-1087

There were 29 takers of History of the British Isles I this year, 23 in the Main School, 1 in History and Politics, and 5 in History and English. The best answers showed real quality and ranged across the period with confidence. Although answers did not cluster too much around predictable topics, England was nevertheless – as usual – the main focus, although some candidates did stray with profit into other parts of the British Isles. Also as usual, the weaker answers suffered from a lack of attention to the question and offered an excess of information without explaining why it mattered: it was sometimes possible to detect candidates' tutorial questions, as tutorial essays were unthinkingly rehashed. However, those who avoided this bad habit showed a pleasing engagement with the themes and issues of the period, and there were some very accomplished answers.

History of the British Isles II: 1042-1330

A total of 50 candidates sat this examination. The distribution of marks was as follows:

Mark	Number	% of total
70+	11	22%
65-69	13	26%
60-64	21	42%
Below 60	5	10%
Total	50	100%

The paper elicited a pleasing distribution of answers, with every question attracting at least one answer. The most popular questions were questions 2 (on Norman Conquest, 28 answers), 3 (on aristocratic rebels, 15 answers), 4 (on tension between secular and religious authority, 18 answers), 5 (on Magna Carta, 13 answers), and 19 (legal innovation and change, 11 answers). Only 15 candidates answered a question which demanded knowledge of the British Isles beyond England, and most of these answered the question about English overlordship in Britain. The handful of answers on Scotland, Ireland Wales tended to be well done and were refreshing to read. The quality of answers tended to be evenly distributed, except that questions 11 (on women's agency) and 19 (on legal change) were answered particularly well by several candidates. In general, the best answers were written by candidates who were able consistently to focus on and challenge the terms of questions; to display chronological, thematic and geographical breadth; to engage with controversy, representing different historians' views accurately and independently; and deploy relevant evidence and example frequently and accurately. Weaker scripts showed a general reluctance to name, and reflect upon, people other than kings and archbishops – it is refreshing to hear about anyone else. Other matters of technique were apparent. Some candidates appear to have spent so much time planning they left themselves insufficient

time to develop their arguments substantively. Some wrote introductions which stated at some length what the shape of their essays would be, and then summarized what they had said at the end. Although signaling structure can be helpful, this tended to be wasteful of time and words, for examiners are able to recognize a well-structured essay without it being spelt out to them at length. The best endings were those which attempted to conclude rather than summarise, containing fresh reflection and deduction, and a clear answer to the question.

History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550

There were 36 candidates for this paper; there were 11 first-class performances; other candidates' marks ranged between 58 and 69. The overall standard on this paper was very encouraging. There was pleasing engagement with the precise terms of questions (i.e. most candidates took care not to 'download' too much material without thinking about the question first). Most candidates ranged widely across the period; many grappled effectively with historiographical debates; many exploited precise evidence, both written and material. The most popular questions were those on rebellion, women, kingship, Lollardy and usurpation. In these areas of the paper, the candidates conveyed a sense of the subtleties of developments in this transitional period of British history. The lecture series has surely played an important role in producing such convincing performances from first-year undergraduates. The picture beyond the history of England was bleaker: there were only 13 answers on Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the comparative British Isles questions taken together. It is possible that the low number of answers on Scotland was because candidates were unsure about how to fit in or challenge revisionist thinking on the 'stability' of medieval Scotland. There was relatively little take-up of Tudor-only questions, although the Tudors did feature as part of wide-ranging answers to other questions. The questions on guilds (for which there is important new historiography), crime, reading and (perhaps most surprising) chivalry received no responses.

History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700

Forty seven candidates sat this paper from the main school and seven from HPOL. The candidates answered a wide range of questions; only q 13 (minorities of Edward VI and/or James VI) had no takers. And they also tended to cover a wide chronological and geographical range. As last year, the most common question was the one on the Reformation (q 7 - 23 takers); this year it was followed by q 17 on Charles's opponents (19 takers), q 6 on rebels (15), q 14 on Elizabeth I (12) and q. 16 on the Union of the Crowns (12). Ireland remains popular (q 9 had 10 takers) as does gender - the question on female agency (q 2) had 9 takers – but this year there were fewer answers on the later 1660s (10 for q19 and 4 for q20), perhaps reflecting patterns of postholder leave.

The Reformation question elicited some very good answers this year; candidate interpreted it in a range of different ways and the best answers covered several aspects, for example explaining the geographical and social limits as well as the theological and ceremonial ones. Weaker answers focused all their attention on the monarchy, or even just Henry VIII; better candidates realised that he was not the whole story. Similarly, when answering q 17 the weaker candidates focused on Charles's policies in England and Scotland and saw opposition as a response to them, stronger answers also considered what those opponents wanted and why this led to division. It was pleasing this year to see very few candidates put all the

blame for the civil war on Charles' personal failings and often this question was answered well. On the other hand, the question on the Union of the Crowns was answered all too often by essays which set out the consequences for England of having James I on the throne, rather than stepping back and considering the wider, structural questions. It was in this question that the weaker candidates fell back on old-fashioned, Whiggish narratives, but it was good to see that they are in retreat elsewhere in the paper.

The question on Ireland tended to be done well, with some very high quality answers. But Ireland made few appearances elsewhere in the scripts, suggesting that students often see it as a self-contained topic rather than part of a wider, three-kingdoms dynamic. Only rarely was it discussed in answers to the Reformation, Charles I or Restoration questions. Scotland was a central part of most answers on Charles's opponents, but hardly considered as part of the Restoration settlement. Meanwhile, continental affairs were mentioned quite often, especially in questions on the 1680s (q20), q 15 (Catholicism/Puritanism) and q 14 (Elizabeth). Students are clearly able to see the importance of thinking beyond England, but they do this better with some topics than others.

Questions on social and cultural themes received some good answers, especially q 3 (on social policies) where the best candidates differentiated moral and economic concerns and tied them together. Q 2 (female agency) received good rather than excellent answers, some of which were quite narrow in focus. Q 10 (print or art, but candidates discussed print) tended to receive weaker answers, with students seeming a little unsure how to tackle the question. On the whole candidates preferred the political questions to those on social and cultural issues – and more could certainly be done to encourage the undergraduates to connect political, religious and cultural themes together. Generally candidates were knowledgeable about the events and developments they described, and made an effort to shape their answer to the specific question in front of them. Some of the better candidates illustrated their answers with anecdotes, quotes and brief case studies.

Time-keeping this year seems to have been less of a problem than last year, when many candidates were let down by their last essay. This year the marks were more uniform across the scripts, and the vast majority of the essays were well informed, analytical and intelligent, with a few standing out for their sophistication and insight.

British History is the first of the prelims exams, and students seemed often to have struggled with timekeeping. What brought many candidates down was their failure to leave enough time for the third question, leading to a noticeable disparity in their marks. Many candidates did much better in one or two questions than their average marks suggest, and this was evidence of the widespread ability to analyse the period in an intelligent and informed way.

History of the British Isles V: 1685-1830

The paper was sat by 42 candidates, and the overall standard of the answers was solid, with many of the more able candidates responding to the questions with brio and real intellectual ambition. Approaches varied. Some scripts favoured more detailed and focussed answers even on questions that required a sense of the wider period, while others offered sweeping answers that did not always supply the detail required by more focussed questions. Some also showed a weak grasp of the historiography, either relying on one

historian or citing none at all. The very best scripts, however, offered thoughtful and imaginative responses to the questions raised, backed up with an excellent grasp of relevant detail.

A number of candidates attempted Q1 on 1688, but some relied rather uncritically on Pincus' work, though others drew convincing links between actions and intentions, and demonstrated a fine-grained knowledge of the period. Answers for Q2 sometimes failed to consider other opportunities for social mobility, such as imperial expansion, or how gender, religion, region and occupation affected opportunities. Q3 on popular politics attracted some good answers, which nevertheless tended to focus either on partisan politics and Jacobites c. 1660-1750 or radicals and revolutionaries c. 1750-1830, rather than offering an overview of the entire period. Candidates answering Q5 tended to favour the Union of 1707 over the Union of 1801, reflecting wider student preferences, but the better answers managed to reflect the differing expectations among various groups in Scotland and England.

Q6 attracted a number of takers, who cited Linda Colley but not Kathleen Wilson, and once again often failed to consider other influences on British (as opposed to English) identity, such as their relations with Europe. Q7 did not attract any answers, despite the opportunity to discuss warfare, the politics of the 1690s or 'country whig' thought. Answers for Q8 were mixed, with some setting overseas trade in its wider economic context and drawing confidently on the wider literature, though even the better answers tended to suffer from a lack of statistical detail. A number of candidates attempted Q9, but struggled to pin down what is admittedly a complex topic of 'Patriotism'. Some regarded it as an opportunity to summarise the opposition to Walpole, without necessarily distinguishing between whig and tory opponents, or considering the influence of Bolingbroke and 'country whig' thought. Q10 on class and identity was particularly popular, with a wide range of answers, and the best moved beyond E.P. Thompson to consider how variegated identity could be.

Q11 was also relatively popular, though some answers struggled with the concept of fear being 'disproportionate' and therefore ended up going round in circles, while others focussed too much on Jacobitism in the early part of the eighteenth century and seemed unaware of the later movement for Catholic repeal. By contrast, the better answers made reference to Ireland or even offered extended comparisons, or noted the role that Catholicism played in the formation of British identity. Answers for Q12 tended to be rely heavily on the historiography, but some were commendably ambitious in explaining not just how practices changed but why. Q13 was another question that attracted very few responses, perhaps because candidates were worried by the need to contextualise the quotation, which very few of the answers managed. Q15 had very few takers, but these answers tended to be of a higher quality, albeit marked in some cases by the temptation to draw on A-Level knowledge about the 1840s and 1850s.

Q16 attracted a very large number of responses, with many showing a strong grasp of the historiography and contrasting Douglas Hay with more recent work, though too often this amounted to the mechanical regurgitation of lectures notes. By contrast, many candidates seemed to have shied away from the more detailed political answer required for Q17, perhaps because it required knowledge not only of Pitt the Elder or Pitt the Younger but also their less memorable successors. Candidates clearly felt more at home with Q18 on the

sources of cultural patronage, with some of the best answers offering intelligent thoughts on the purposes of artistic patronage and the growth of the art market. Some of the answers, treating literature as part of this cultural patronage, overlapped with Q19, which drew the obligatory mentions of Habermas but did not always show a knowledge of the more recent literature.

Overall the paper still seems to attract a number of strong candidates. A split between those attracted by high political questions, and those favouring economic, social and cultural questions requiring a broader approach, is noticeable. Both types were able to answer questions effectively however, and the more able candidates responded well to questions that required them to think across themes or periods, and provided answers that showed real grasp of the issues and historiography. On the debit side, although many answers contained an element of comparison with Ireland and Scotland, fewer were prepared to examine these nations in their own right, especially outside well-trodden topics such as the Unions of 1707 and 1801 and the Jacobite rebellions in Scotland. Those who had the confidence to approach these questions, however, tended to do well, perhaps because these were slightly off the beaten track and required candidates to think through the question rather than just reproducing lecture notes or tutorial essays. The same applies for the period after 1800, which received much fewer takers, but tended to produce answers of high quality.

History of the British Isles VI: 1815-1924

This was a satisfactory year, occasionally better than that, very rarely worse. There was much bunching around gender, radicalism, the rise of the Labour party, and empire; a good number of candidates attempted the question on religion, and most who did so wrote well on the subject. Candidates tended to think unhelpfully in categories, rarely incorporating gender and politics, other than when addressing the issue of women's suffrage and the experience of employment in the First World War, and only slightly more often when relating it to religion. People do not lead their lives in boxes, and the best candidates were alert to this, seeing the impact of class and gender, for example, in explaining their support of or opposition to imperialism. Triumphant narratives of progress continued to be made, sometimes in traditional Whig style, more often in terms of what one might call the Labour Interpretation of History, all roads leading to some form of more or less mitigated socialism. Indeed, issues of class needed to be considerably more subtle and discriminating than they tended to be; on the whole, gender was better treated. Candidates concentrated on the second half of the period covered by the paper, Chartism being one of the few issues widely written about in the period before 1860. The best candidates challenged, or at least explored, the prevailing interpretative orthodoxies; too many merely accepted them, and weaker candidates listed historians and what they thought about issues by rote rather than engaging with those interpretations in any systematic way. Cultural history predominated in the answers given, with only a few candidates considering economic history in any depth, and even fewer thinking about intellectual or artistic history. In the question on Radicalism, most candidates took the opportunity to think effectively across the period, but this was an opportunity for reflection otherwise missed all too often. The best candidates understood and responded to the 'otherness' of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, others all too comfortably assuming it be more like our own times than it was. Nearness to the past does not necessarily make it more akin to successor generations than earlier periods; the

best candidates understood this especially in their responses to religious issues. Occasionally one detected the odour of a warmed-up tutorial essay, but the majority of candidates offered altogether fresher answers than that; examination papers are designed to stimulate thinking, and not to encourage repetition of previous discussions of the issues under analysis. Candidates rarely digressed, and most wrote with economy and precision, albeit to a greater or less degree.

History of the British Isles VII: since 1900

27 candidates sat this paper. The responses to it were in general very positive. Candidates took seriously the rubric about demonstrating breadth, and most scripts ranged both in the choice of questions and in the ways in which they were approached. Every question was answered apart from Q 9 on the decline of British industry, and there was not too much bunching. Questions 5 (on nostalgia) and 20 (on the influence of America) attracted particularly diversely conceived and imaginative answers: candidates had clearly enjoyed reading books - and watching films – which related to these themes, and reflected very thoughtfully on them. The majority of scripts focused squarely on political and/or social history, and showed a good level of understanding of the central issues. The best essays were able to tease out the complexities of the question with reference to sharply focused detail; the weaker ones resorted to generalities and failed to take the opportunities offered to distinguish and differentiate. There were some particularly successful answers to Q 3 on Conservatism, which addressed different understandings of hegemony and related Conservatism to conservatism in critically helpful ways. Similarly, answers to Q 11 on extremism interrogated different ways in which one might define political culture. Answers to Q 1 on the First World War and Q 4 (for which candidates discussed class, gender and religion, but not ethnicity) on the whole showed a good capacity to disaggregate and bring out variables. Some answers to Q 12 on decolonisation were less effective in this respect, not thinking comparatively across different colonial contexts (few referred, for example, to the 'second colonial occupation'), and being less precise in terms of chronology. Whilst the essays on Thatcherism were lively and engaged well with longer-range economic debates, few discussed her mode of political operation (relationship with Cabinet, civil service, use of press office etc) or the significance of her conviction politics in terms both of legacy and of distinctions which one might want to draw between Thatcher and Thatcherism.

General History I: The Transformation of the Ancient World, 370-900

100 candidates sat this paper; 74 were from the main school, 11 from HML, 7 from AMH, 6 from HECO and 2 from HPOL. The overall standard was good. Aside from a few outliers at the lower end, the huge majority secured marks over 60, with 70% securing 66 or above and 31% securing marks of 70 and above. The performance of the HECO candidates was particularly impressive: four secured 70 or above and none of them came in under 68.

The paper continues to attract a large number of students and deserves to be recognised as one of the real success stories of the Oxford history syllabus. The prospect of marking 100 scripts on the same paper is one few of us would relish. But in practice the experience was far from dispiriting. The imagination and interest of students had clearly been fired by the grand sweep of big topics which the paper offers: the fall of the Roman empire and rise of the barbarian successor states in the west; the contrasting survival and gradual transformation of the empire in the east; the rise of Islam and the Umayyad and Abbasid

caliphates; the role of holy men; debates over economic collapse, the re-emergence of towns, and the caging of the peasantry; Tang China and its relations with the peoples of the steppe; the interwoven contributions of the Carolingians and Vikings to the making of Europe. With few exceptions candidates rose to the challenges posed by the paper's wide chronological and geographic range and relished the chance to read and think about primary sources for themselves. Although there was some bunching of answers around the questions on assimilating barbarians and the expansion of Islam, every question in the paper attracted at least three answers. First class quality showed itself in many different ways. In some cases it was the breadth and ease of detailed comparison: a discussion of legitimacy might range with ease across the Roman, Sasanian and Arab worlds or the importance of maritime trade might be delineated through a careful comparison of its different roles in the fourth-century Mediterranean and ninth-century Scandinavia. But in other cases it was forensic analysis of sources that attracted commendation, be it coins and their iconography, or the grounding of Carolingian law in the Old Testament. Weaker answers tended towards a standard narrative and this was particularly marked in the question on the expansion of Islam: candidates might make a cursory reference to the problem of the sources but then carry on regardless without attempting to gauge its real implications for the narrative they were rehearsing; the possible distinctions between religious and political expansion were blithely ignored. Although all the candidates had a lot to say, the customary observation that weaker candidates often paid scant regard to the actual questions remained as true as ever.

The paper is clearly taught and studied as a global history paper (comfortably spanning the territories that we now label Europe, the Middle East, and China). Its chronological range also makes it a very different animal from the finals papers (GH1, GH2 and GH3) which collectively cover the same period. The imminent redesign of the finals papers into longer timespans poses an obvious challenge: how best to avoid their becoming pale imitations of this splendid first year paper, with a loss of the distinctiveness which is rightly prized.

General History II: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours 1000-1300

Sixty-four candidates took this paper: there were 13 first-class performances; the remaining candidates' papers were graded between 57% and 69%. As the marks' profile suggests, in general there was a great deal of competence about the scripts this year but relatively little stellar performance (although the strongest script was truly outstanding for a student at this first-year stage). The most popular questions were those on heresy, monarchy, papacy, crusading and (to a slightly lesser extent) Byzantium, Mongols and frontiers. The examiners particularly enjoyed reading some enterprising answers on frontiers where several candidates rose to the challenge of comparing societies they had studied. Those who took a comparative line on monarchy also often fared rather better than those who focused on a single kingdom (although it was still possible to produce a first-class performance on Capetians alone!). Perhaps comparison requires candidates to think more on their feet in the exam itself and therefore engage more precisely and imaginatively with the terms of the question. In contrast, the question on heresy saw many candidates move into an autopilot mode in which obvious historiography (Moore) was often invoked but not closely scrutinised and evidence was only rarely discussed with a firm grip. This paper is challenging: it requires breadth as well as depth. No examiner expects a candidate to cover everything in equal detail. But a critical approach to the relevant scholarship, a willingness

make links across topics/regions, and a more active engagement with a few primary sources are proven ways to meet that challenge.

General History III: Renaissance, Recovery and Reform, 1400-1650

This paper was sat by 81 students this year, representing an increase from numbers in the past three years, and the quality of scripts was broadly in line with previous years, with 18 candidates producing work at the level of a distinction, and the remainder of the scripts clustering in the 60s and high 50s. Joint school candidates tended to do less well on the paper. As in previous years there was also a broad spread of answers, with the requirement to offer essays drawn from three different sections requiring candidates to range beyond familiar territory. A number of the answers demonstrated either an excessive focus on detail at the expense of the broader comparative analysis required by the paper, or relied on making broad statements without much concrete evidence, but the very best answers managed to offer thoughtful responses to the questions that combined analytical rigour with a grasp of relevant detail.

The spread of answers across the four sections was roughly equal, though within these sections some questions attracted more takers than others. In Section A, Q3 on the changing opportunities for women was particularly popular, though many of the weaker answers concentrated on elite women (versus women of middling or lower status), or focussed on a few areas such as religion or the economy at the expense of other types of opportunities open to women. Q4 on economic change also attracted a large number of takers, and the best answers coped with this demanding question by identifying what united the groups who benefited or lost from economic change, rather than simply listing them mechanically. Several candidates attempted Q2 on population growth, but usually without being able to offer figures or historians that would have made their arguments more concrete, while answers in Q5 suffered when candidates failed to define the differences between urban and rural societies. Only a few candidates attempted Q1 on bullion, with mixed results, since the question was an invitation to discuss economic thought as well as price inflation.

In Section B, large numbers of candidates saw Q10 on the New World as an opportunity to recycle material from the lecture and even Conquest and Colonisation paper, despite the rubrics discouraging this practice, and therefore tended to lack close engagement with the question. Q6 on the Northern Renaissance attracted more imaginative answers, with the best either focussing on artwork and drawing direct comparisons with the Italian Renaissance using concrete details, or exploring aspects of the Northern Renaissance such as sculpture, architecture and literature that gave it a distinctive nature. Q8 and Q9 on humanism and the scientific revolution respectively tended to produce more pedestrian answers, and many candidates made the mistake of focussing on the one factor provided (the universities, technology) without making much effort to consider other forces. By contrast, the best answers either discussed the other factors, or considered the other side of the coin and how humanism and the scientific revolution helped to stimulate the development of the universities and technology, offering a much more sophisticated response. Q7 on artistic patronage suffered from the same problem, with many candidates missing either the Church, the courts or private patronage from their discussion of causation, though the best were able to show not just what patrons wanted from artwork but why.

In Section C, some excellent answers were offered for Q14, with a number of candidates clearly enjoying the opportunity to set the Counter-Reformation in its wider historical perspective, as the question demanded. Although some candidates took Q11 at face value, and thought that they had to choose between the late mediaeval church being either unable or unwilling to reform itself, the best answers recognised the close link between these two elements and offered judicious conclusions that weighed up the arguments for both sides. Answers to Q12 and Q13 however rarely rose above the pedestrian, with many candidates limiting themselves to one territory or reformer, without making much effort to place them in context. Answers to Q15 were more varied, with the best taking care to define elite and popular religion, to stress the overlaps between them, and to explain not just how they differed but why, though some simply saw it as a chance to regurgitate what they remembered on witchcraft, heresy or the inquisition.

Finally, in Section D most candidates chose to answer Q18, testifying to the continued popularity of the topic of rebellion. Once again, the better answers challenged the separation of rebellions into elite and popular, explained the importance of leadership, and supported their argument with well-chosen examples, though most of these were still drawn from western Europe. Candidates who offered examples drawn from eastern and southern Europe, which required more thought on their part, tended to produce answers of higher quality. Q17 also proved popular, with many candidates using it as an opportunity to regurgitate material on the military revolution without considering the political limits of either coercion or consent. Q16 was not handled well by most candidates, who provided examples of civic humanism but often did not explain either why the classical world carried such authority, or the other political traditions (biblical, civil law, common law) that contemporaries looked to. Only a few candidates attempted Q20, but most produced good answers, often drawing on their knowledge of rebellions and revolts. Only Q19 on frontiers attracted no takers, despite the opportunity to impress the examiner with an original answer on a topic not covered by the lecture circus.

Overall the quality of candidates in this paper seems to have remained steady, with most coping, and a few relishing, the opportunity to answer questions across a wide range of topics. The problems were those of previous years. The very best answers offered elegant and thoughtful responses to the complex issues thrown up by the questions, but the very worst failed to recognise this complexity, to define their terms, or to place events within their wider context, with the vast majority of the answers falling somewhere between these two poles. A common failing was simply to list mechanically the potential factors, then attempt to weigh them up, rather than going beyond this to analyse and explain issues of causation. The paper therefore continues to challenge candidates, but in the best possible way.

General History IV: Society, Nation, and Empire 1815-1914

54 students sat this exam, and the overall standard was high. All questions were answered, though some inevitably proved more popular than others. Questions on urbanisation, industrial and agricultural revolutions, aristocratic elites, the bourgeois century, liberalism and imperialism/ nationalism proved popular, as might have been expected. Questions on religious minorities, anti-clericalism, globalisation, foreign policy, the view from the imperial periphery and artistic and cultural movements attracted very few takers. Some general areas of ignorance did emerge. Less than a handful of those who answered on the

bourgeoisie appeared to realise that Marxist historians connected this class with capitalism (a word which barely figured in these scripts and a concept that may require closer attention than it currently receives). There was widespread confusion about the nature of anti-clericalism, even amongst those who answered the question on this topic. And finally, almost none of those who answered on foreign policy appeared to realise that this might refer to international relations in general, rather than imperialism. In this context, the general level of ignorance about international affairs from the Congress of Vienna to the July crisis was frankly breath-taking – an additional lecture on this topic might be in order. In conclusion, however, it is important to stress that this is a challenging paper, but the high level of performance and the command of material demonstrated by the scripts this year suggests that this is a challenge to which students rise with aplomb.

Optional Subject 1: Theories of State

49 candidates took the paper, 29 for History main school, 10 candidates got marks of 70 or above, the remaining 19 candidates got marks between 61 and 69.

HPOL; 14 candidates took the paper, with 5 candidates with marks of 70 and above, the others 9 HPOL candidates got marks between 60 and 68.

This paper continues to attract undergraduates with a taste for the demands of more abstract enquiry than is usual with History papers, and the best candidates ally this with a strong sense of the historical settings in which the works of political theory under analysis were written; this was most evident in essays on Aristotle, Hobbes, and Marx, with slightly less attention being paid to that which informed Rousseau's *Social Contract*. On the whole, candidates got the proportion between elucidation and analysis exactly right, although weaker papers spent too much offering a résumé of the texts and some students still undertake the wearisome task of learning long passages for recitation, which is a waste of intellectual energy. A few well-chosen and suitably incisive phrases from the texts will more than merely suffice for illustrative purposes. Unusually, some of the strongest answers concentrated on Aristotle, and it is good to see his pivotal role in the shaping of political thought being appreciated in this way. There is still a tendency to simplify Hobbes and to ignore the inherent complexity of his arguments; this is also true, but less frequently, of the approaches to Marx on display. Rousseau continues to attract sharp and incisive responses, the best of which were very good indeed. Fewer candidates than usual chose to write a comparative essay, although this was occasionally a means of getting around an all too evident lack of enthusiasm for the 'third' author chosen. The best papers got the balance between context and historical analysis exactly right, which is to say a balance of around a third to two thirds respectively.

Optional Subject 15: The New Women in Britain and Ireland, c.1880-1920 (new)

Nine candidates took this new paper, [REDACTED]. There were three strong distinctions and six passes. The overall standard was very high and the best of the scripts were really very impressive. Candidates displayed clear preferences for questions 4, 5 and 6 and these were, on the whole, answered well. Analysis of the marriage question

and of the sexual double standard was impressive, as was candidates' understanding of historiographical approaches to these issues. The very best answers were distinguished by their close and precise knowledge of the set texts and by their clear engagement with the question. Weaker answers tended to be repetitive and less familiar with the details of the texts; some candidates did not engage directly with the set questions and this was penalised. Candidates were generally stronger on social rather than political questions, though those who took account of Ireland's specific political and social context tended to produce the strongest answers.

Optional Subject 16: 1919: Remaking the World (new)

15 students took this Optional Subject in its first year. 5 received marks over 70, and the remaining candidates received marks between 60 and 69. There were no marks below 59. Questions 1 (Wilsonianism), 3 (Mandates), 9 (race) 11 (humanitarianism), 12 (non-state actors) and 14 (internationalism) proved particularly popular. Two questions (on women and the Minorities Treaties) attracted no takers, although the role of women during 1919 came up in some other contexts (q12 on non-state actors for example), as did the Jewish question and the role of Jewish organisations in 1919. It may be that the material on gender, in particular, would merit closer attention in class or tutorials. In general, the scripts engaged well both with the primary source material and with the broader themes of the paper, and the overall standard was encouraging. The only recurrent problem area related to nationalism: too few candidates had any real understanding of what this was, and how it differed from the nation-state.

Approaches to History:

151 candidates took this paper, 33 of them from the joint schools. Three different examiners were involved in marking the paper. This is a challenging paper for first-year students as it is very different from the other papers they do, but an important and valuable one – especially as it builds the foundations for part of the Disciplines of History paper). Yet despite the difficulty, there were some excellent answers from some students who were able to combine a good knowledge of the historiographical literature with an understanding of the debates and issues within the relevant disciplines. At the other end of the marking range, however, there were still too many students who had not grasped that this is a historiography paper that deals with historians' approaches to a subject and the relationship between history and other disciplines, rather than a paper demanding conventional history essays. There was also a tendency, as in previous years, to spend too long discussing examples while failing to integrate them into a coherent argument. Another common failing among weaker scripts, again seen in previous years, was to confuse the disciplinary background of the author being discussed - for instance stating that Weber was a historian. In all, though, the standard was good, with some real excellence at the top end.

Anthropology

This was a popular section and Q2, on the relationship between ritual and power attracted the largest number of responses (as indeed did the ritual topic last year). The quality of the answers was mixed, though some candidates had a very good grasp of the different approaches within anthropology, and were able to relate them to historical studies. Q3 on religion or popular culture – the next most popular question - also produced some good

essays, as did Q5 on the family. The most successful students had clearly thought hard about the issues before the exam and managed to adapt their essay plans to the question effectively; a common problem among less successful students was a failure to express the arguments of the essay coherently.

Archaeology

This was one of the less popular sections. Q 9 on the purposes of funerary ritual attracted most responses; Q8, on the use of scientific evidence had no answers, probably because it is not an established topic on the syllabus even if it is being taught by some tutors; it may therefore be necessary to revisit the syllabus if this question is to be set in future. Some of the better essays addressed the ways in which historians used archaeological sources and different approaches to archaeology, though several pieces were simply history essays which used archaeological evidence – a problem seen in this section in previous years.

Art

In general, the questions were done well. The most popular question was Q12 on art and propaganda, which was also the most mixed in quality, with some candidates struggling to make useful and convincing distinctions between 'art' and 'propaganda'. Q 11 on definitions of artistic value and Q14 on different understandings of art in different societies attracted fewer but generally more sophisticated and successful answers.

Economics

This section attracted the smallest group of answers. By far the most popular question was Q17 on the role of institutions in differing economic performance, and several of the essays were of high quality, showing a good knowledge of the historiographical debate. The general weaknesses on historiographical issues noted in last year's report were not as noticeable this year, and overall standards were higher, with fewer formulaic answers.

Gender

This was the most popular section of all, and the question on women's work and bodies attracted the most answers. The standard of the answers was mixed, with some sophisticated, analytically sharp and historiographically aware essays at the top end, with weaker essays lacking discussion of methodology and historiography at the bottom. Questions on 'hegemonic masculinity' (Q22) and the politicization of sexuality (Q25) had fewer answers but their average quality was higher.

Sociology

The most popular question in this section was that on secularization (Q29, with 22 answers). The most successful candidates showed an excellent knowledge of both the classical sociological texts, and very recent historiographical debates (especially on Christianity in Britain). The next most popular was on class (Q27), which again attracted some excellent answers at the higher end, successfully showing how the ideas of inter alia Weber and Bourdieu influenced historical works – though others launched into discussions of theorists whom they had clearly failed to understand.

Historiography: Tacitus to Weber

88 candidates took the paper, 75 for History Main school, 32 candidates got marks of 70 and above, the remaining 43 candidates got marks between 57 to 69.

[REDACTED]

HPOL: 6 candidates took the paper, one candidate got mark of 74, the other five candidates got marks between 64 and 68.

As the figures attest, Historiography continues to be a paper in which candidates give of their best. This was another very good year, with candidates demonstrating a variety of interpretative skills in their elucidation of the set texts and their historical contexts. The virtues of close reading, independence of mind, historical sensitivity, and critical relationships with interpretative orthodoxies were prominently displayed in a pleasingly high proportion of papers. Apart from a very small number of weaker candidates, every paper demonstrated intelligent enthusiasm for at least two of the authors under scrutiny; there is still a tendency on the part of some to learn and then recite passages from the primary texts which is a waste of intellectual energy: at most, a few well-chosen phrases from the set texts is quite enough for people to know for examination purposes. Perceptive answers were given to all of the questions set on individual authors; fewer people than usual chose to write a comparative essay, and these were usually well done, although it was plainly sometimes a means of people meeting the rubric by writing a little less about their 'third' author, although this was very much a minority activity. This paper provides many intellectual possibilities, not the least of which is to encourage historians with a literary interest to hone and develop their abilities as readers; this was rewardingly evident in a high proportion of papers. It was rare for candidates simply to rehearse over-ready tutorial essays, and even rarer to rely on quoting from the lectures provided for this paper, an option strongly to be discouraged. Historiography is something with which very few undergraduates are even remotely familiar before coming to university, and this encourages the development of a high level of critical self-awareness that in turn informs a healthy scepticism about the nature of historical enquiry and its literary forms.

Examiners:

[REDACTED]

