# History

# Prelims 2012

# Examiners' Report

**PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2012**
**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**

| Year | A | B | C | A1 | B1 | C1 | A2 | B2 | C2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2012** | **229** | **38** *16.59%* | **191** *83.40%* | **108** | **7** *6.48%* | **101** *93.51%* | **121** | **31** *25.62%* | **90** *74.38%* |
| 2011 | 223 | 55 *24.7%* | 168 *75.37%* | 107 | 19 *17.8%* | 88 *82.25%* | 116 | 36 *31.0%* | 80 *68.96%* |
| 2010 | 236 | 47 *19.9%* | 189 *80.1%* | 106 | 17 *16.0%* | 89 *84.0%* | 130 | 30 *23.1%* | 100 *76.9%* |
| 2009 | 237 | 51 *21.5%* | 186 *78.5%* | 109 | 20 *18.3%* | 89 *81.7%* | 128 | 31 *24.2%* | 97 *75.8%* |

Columns

A: number of all candidates

A1: number of female candidates

A2: number of male candidates

B: number of distinctions

B1: number of women achieving distinctions, with the second figure in italic providing the percentage of distinctions among the female cohort

B2: number of distinctions and percentages (similarly constructed) for male candidates

C: number of passes

C1: number of women passing, with the second figure in italic providing the percentage of passes among the female cohort

C2: number of passes and percentages (similarly constructed) for male candidates

**Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2012**

| Paper | Main School | Joint Schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| History of the British Isles I - *c.*300-1087 | 36 | 4 | 40 |
| History of the British Isles II – 1042-1330 | 35 | 1 | 36 |
| History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550 | 35 | 4 | 39 |
| History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700 | 39 | 16 | 55 |
| History of the British Isles V – 1685-1830 | 42 | 13 | 55 |
| History of the British Isles VI – 1815-1924 | 26 | 6 | 32 |
| History of the British Isles VII – since 1900 | 16 | 3 | 19 |
| | | | |
| General History I – 370-900 | 58 | 18 | 76 |
| General History II – 1000-1300 | 67 | 11 | 78 |
| General History III – 1400-1650 | 56 | 24 | 80 |
| General History IV – 1815-1914 | 48 | 11 | 59 |
| | | | |
| OS 1 – Theories of the State | 48 | 53 | 101 |
| OS 2 – The Age of Bede | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| OS 3 – Early Gothic France | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| OS 4 – England and the Celtic Peoples | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| OS 5 – English Chivalry and the French War | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450 | 15 | - | 15 |
| OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| OS 8– Witch-craft and Witch-hunting | 21 | 5 | 26 |
| OS 9 – Conquest and Colonization | 41 | 7 | 48 |
| OS 10 – Revolution and Empire in France | 17 | 5 | 22 |
| OS 11 – Women, gender and nation | 13 | 1 | 14 |
| OS 12. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914 | 10 | 4 | 14 |
| OS 13 – The American Empire: 1823-1904 | 14 | 2 | 16 |
| OS 14 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921 | 9 | 2 | 11 |

| Paper | Main School | Joint Schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| OS 15 – Radicalism in Britain 1965-75 | 3 | - | 3 |
| OS 16 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH) | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| OS 17 – Augustan Rome (AMH) | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| OS [18] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870 | - | 6 | 6 |
| | | | |
| Approaches to History | 110 | 45 | 155 |
| Historiography: Tacitus to Weber | 70 | 19 | 89 |
| Herodotus | - | - | - |
| Einhard and Asser | 5 | - | 5 |
| Tocqueville | 34 | 10 | 44 |
| Meinecke and Kehr | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Machiavelli | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Trotsky | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Diaz del Moral | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | | | |
| Quantification | 3 | 1 | 4 |

**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** | 53 | 19.20 | 38 | 26.02 | 15 | 11.54 | 28.31 |
| **Pass** | 223 | 80.80 | 108 | 73.98 | 115 | 88.46 | 51.58 |
| **Ppass** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **276** | **100** | **146** | **100** | **130** | **100** | **-** |

**General History (Sex/paper by paper)**

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | Men | | Women | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| **D** | 60 | 20.48 | 37 | 24.84 | 23 | 15.97 | 38.33 |
| **Pass** | 233 | 79.52 | 112 | 75.16 | 121 | 84.03 | 51.93 |
| **Ppass** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **293** | **100** | **149** | **100** | **144** | **100** | **-** |

**Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)**

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | Men | | Women | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| **D** | 67 | 20.19 | 45 | 25.43 | 22 | 14.19 | 32.84 |
| **Pass** | 265 | 79.81 | 132 | 74.57 | 133 | 85.81 | 50.18 |
| **Ppass** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **332** | **100** | **177** | **100** | **155** | **100** | **-** |

**Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)**

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | Men | | Women | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| **D** | 19 | 12.26 | 15 | 18.52 | 4 | 5.20 | 21.05 |
| **Pass** | 136 | 87.74 | 66 | 81.48 | 70 | 94.60 | 51.47 |
| **Ppass** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **155** | **100** | **81** | **100** | **74** | **100** | **-** |

**Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)**

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | Men | | Women | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| **D** | 10 | 11.24 | 7 | 14.28 | 3 | 7.50 | 30.0 |
| **Pass** | 79 | 88.76 | 42 | 85.72 | 37 | 92.50 | 46.83 |
| **Ppass** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **89** | **100** | **49** | **100** | **40** | **100** | **-** |

## II: Marking and classification

The percentage of distinctions (16.59%) in main school was noticeably down on 2011 (24.7%): indeed it is the lowest percentage for several years (19.9% in 2010, 21.5% in 2009, 23.7% in 2008, 24.4% in 2007 and 23.9% in 2006). The two largest historical methods papers, Approaches to History and Historiography, seldom produce a bumper crop of distinctions, but this year the numbers were particularly low. Overall, the small number of women candidates achieving a distinction is noticeable -- less than half the figure in recent years. We can offer no explanation for this discrepancy.

It is perhaps not much of a consolation that the first mark run was unproblematic and threw up few inconsistencies. The impression gained of candidates by examiners over four

different papers was a strikingly consistent one, even more so than in 2011 which was itself a noticeably unproblematic year. No single marker's marking average deviated to any significant extent from the overall average, nor were there any idiosyncratic marking profiles. Rereads, whether for the purposes of moderation or scrutinizing candidates at borderlines, were identified early by the Chair and Secretary, following the conventions for classification in the prelim exams.

As a result of both moderation and scrutiny at the classification borderlines, 56 candidates had 65 scripts re-read (a smaller number than last year, when 82 candidates had 106 scripts re-read). 24 marks were confirmed; 41 marks were changed, of which 16 went up and 25 went down; 4 women and 3 men were raised from Pass to Distinction by re-reads; 3 women and 1 man were demoted from Distinction to Pass by re-reads. All in all therefore, about 24% of candidates had at least one script remarked. Given the striking consistency of the great majority of the initial run of marks, the Board was satisfied that the subsequent outcomes were as robust as is feasible under a single-marked examination.

Two candidates required partial retakes. In two further cases medical evidence explained short weight or other problems with a particular script, and the Board was able to classify the candidate on the basis of completed questions or completed papers.

## III: Comments on papers

### General observations

A number of points reoccur in the comments on individual papers below and we consider it worth raising these at a more general level. Many candidates exhibited writing traits that may have served them well at A-level but which could be counter-productive at degree level. For example, we suggest that it is a waste of time to provide an extensive summary of the argument in both the introduction and conclusion, leaving little space in between to provide any detailed analysis. It might be more useful to use the introduction to consider the purport of the question. Too many candidates responded to a particular keyword in a question by providing a prepared answer involving that keyword or summarising what they knew in relation to that keyword, without grasping the issues the question was specifically asking them to address. Most candidates were able to provide evidence to back up their arguments or examples to illustrate their points, but the best answers were those that, rather than merely mentioning the odd name or quoting the odd figure, were able to provide detailed evidence and which analysed their examples at length. Both of these traits -- a close reading of the question and providing detailed analysis of the evidence -- should encourage candidates to pay proper attention to historiography. Too often, even in the historical methods papers, arguments were advanced as if ideas existed in a tool-cupboard from which one can pull out whatever tool seems relevant, rather than with an understanding of the context in which ideas arose, new issues engaged with by historians and new evidence gathered. There was a marked tendency to 'play safe' and opt for the questions that lent themselves to narrative answers, but students would be well advised to be more courageous in their choices and more adventurous in the manner in which they tackle them.

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

This paper was taken by forty candidates, including four joint school candidates. Prior to scrutiny, six scripts were adjudged first class (one of which was subsequently reduced at scrutiny), twenty nine were awarded marks in the 60-69 range of which the great majority (22) were in the 60-65 range, and the remaining five received marks in the 50-59 range. This run of marks, which was considerably lower than that for GH1, might appear worryingly low. However this is precisely what one would expect of a paper studied in the first term by candidates who will have had no prior experience (post primary school) of medieval history and the particular challenges and demands it poses. All but four of the twenty questions attracted answers; predictably, the peasantry were firmly avoided, and so too the history of the Picts, oral culture, and the change from a minster landscape to one of parish churches. The absence of any answers to the latter was surprising in view of the fact it is the central story of John Blair's *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. As in previous years candidates came unstuck not so much due to lack of knowledge but rather because of a failure to focus on the specific implications of each question. A lively essay on Beowulf which made no reference to the manuscript evidence could not pass muster for an answer to a question on what could be learnt from close analysis of any one manuscript. A question advocating the need for a local rather than national focus (with an all embracing shopping list of culture, economy, politics or religion) could, with a bit of thought, have been applied to just about anything but was in fact eschewed by all candidates. Instead they rushed to embrace those with familiar markers (conversion, Mercian, West Saxon... ) regardless of whether they were equipped to address the demands of each question. The one on conversion proved the most popular question in the paper but very few candidates discussed the christianisation of the population as a whole, as demanded by the question, and instead resorted to detailed but largely irrelevant rehearsals of the evidence for the conversion of kings. Another popular question was the one asking candidates to gauge the importance of the control of coinage for the maintenance of royal authority: most answers displayed a reasonable command of the evidence for royal control but very few even bothered to address the central requirement of the question, namely what if anything this level of control contributed to the maintenance of royal authority. As tutors constantly remind students, gaining a familiarity with the period and the sources is one essential requirement but for examinations this has to be coupled with a readiness to think carefully about the import of each question.

**History of the British Isles II: 1042-1330**

By far the most popular questions amongst the 34 candidates were: crown-church conflict (19) and baronial consent (18), followed by the completeness of the Conquest by 1087 (11) and the vulnerability of England before 1066 (10). There were no answers on saints (surprisingly?) or archdeacons (perhaps less so), vernacular literature or archaeology, and very few on the visual arts, literacy and education, peasant society, parliament, the crown, the law, the Scots, Welsh and Irish, or commerce, and only a few more on castles and the past. The distribution of answers was therefore strikingly unbalanced, both because of the usual neglect of the economy and culture, and because of the unwillingness to tackle traditional topics through thematic questions (as well as declining interest in the Celtic polities and regions); the exception was baronial-consent, which is presumably

where most people dumped their political answers, to the exclusion of the law, the crown, and parliament, the latter two perhaps a symptom of the largely pre-1216 coverage of most undergraduates. In line with this profile, solid competence was much more in evidence than conceptual facility. There was very little irrelevance, and plenty of well-structured essays offering some kind of well-directed and plausible argument. But conceptual penetration was markedly lacking, not only in the avoidance of thematic questions, but also in how the popular ones were addressed. Very few probed what the religious or ideological basis of the relationship between crown and church might be (and are those the same thing?), or offered some structural analysis of what role we might expect barons to play in the central-medieval monarchy (or even who the 'barons' were). Even what might be meant by vulnerability to invasion and the completeness of a conquest did not provoke sufficient thought. Of course this paper is generally studied in the first term and students are getting to grips with new procedures and unfamiliar information, but they should nevertheless be encouraged to approach British History more analytically and conceptually (as they appear to be able to do more successfully in the equivalent General History paper). And once in the exam, the terms of the questions need to elicit more explicit and focused thinking on the part of candidates (thinking which might then be reflected in introductions unpacking the questions more fully).

**History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550**

Candidates answered a pleasingly large range of questions. The pressure of the public on politics (2) and the success of usurping kings (6) led the way, but only artistic patronage (20) attracted no answers at all. Richard II (3), kings and nobles (5), Wales (9), Ireland (10), church and state (11), parish religion (12), church reform (13), demographic recovery (15), social mobility (17), the subordination of women (18) and vernacular literature (19) all won significant attention. As ever, the stronger answers thought broadly about the topics in hand and could support their arguments with relevant detail. The best showed an impressive familiarity with primary sources, complex events or challenging debates, while the weakest cited half-remembered bits of textbooks, discussed kings and nobilities without naming any nobles, or tried to shoehorn prepared essays on the Black Death, Lollardy or bastard feudalism into the nearest available question. It was encouraging to read answers that took, for well-argued reasons, very different views on such matters as the degree of women's subjugation in practice, the effectiveness of public pressure in shaping the behaviour of kings and magnates, the relative successes of Henry IV, Edward IV and Henry VII as usurpers, or the possibility of significant social mobility in the period. More disappointing was the number of candidates who wrote otherwise well-informed essays on Wales and the English state in apparently complete innocence of the legislation of the 1530s and the number who thought that reform of the church could only ever be a matter of Lollards and Protestants.

**History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700**

Candidates' work covered an encouragingly wide chronological, thematic and geographical range. The Reformation (5), Tudor politics (4), early Stuart government (15) and the civil wars and Interregnum (19) were the most popular questions. But significant numbers also tackled Ireland (1), Scotland (2), foreign policy (6), popular politics (7),

magic (13), gender (14), parliaments (16), composite monarchy (17) and James II (20). Each question attracted at least one taker except global power (18). The stronger answers showed thoughtful engagement with the terms of the question and an ability to deploy detailed knowledge and, where necessary, historiographical insight to construct a cogent argument. Widely divergent but well-founded views were taken of such matters as the nature of English rule in Ireland, the conservatism of the English people faced with the Reformation, the degree of popular engagement in politics, the importance of fiscal malfunction in early Stuart England, the qualifications placed on gender subordination by differences in age and class and the novelty of political developments between 1642 and 1660. Weaker answers were often disadvantaged less by simple rehearsal of pre-packaged material – though there was some deployment of vulgar revisionism to deny that the English Reformation had any successes worth explaining and some concern to describe how English witchcraft was different from Scottish without much attention to the learned and popular aspects of either – than by narrowness of focus. Essays on the politics of the 1530s that ventured no further through the decade than 1532 or essays on seventeenth-century parliaments that barely ventured outside the reign of Charles I inevitably struggled to provide convincing answers.

**History of the British Isles V: 1685-1830**

This is a period with which few candidates can have had a prior acquaintance and it was gratifying that 55 students in the main and joint schools took the paper. Candidates tended to divide into two groups. Half preferred to concentrate on a narrow range of high political topics such as Qs 1, 2 and 6 on James II, the Glorious Revolution and Walpole, while others chose questions that covered the whole period such as Qs 4, 19 and 20 on the Enlightenment, the middling sort and Britishness. Candidates in both categories produced answers of varying merit. The best answers were those that focused on the question and provided detailed and accurate information. Too many answers to Q1 for instance displayed very limited knowledge of James II's reign or knew next to nothing about international affairs, while it was frequently the case that those answering Q20 knew Colley's account of Britishness backwards but had very little to say about the armed forces as such. The really good answers to Q1 contained authoritative accounts of events such as the expulsion of Magdalen's fellows, just as the best answers to Q20 detailed the national balance of the officer corps and described how 'Britishness' was conveyed in military paintings such as West's 'Death of Wolfe'. Too many candidates tackled questions that they clearly knew nothing about and paid the consequences. All who attempted Q13 on women's education knew a lot about women in the period but nothing about their education and the plethora of educational treatises discussing the subject. Similarly, hardly anybody who did Q15 on radicals knew anything about Scottish radicalism post-1790 so intuited what must have been going on. No one attempted Q12 on children, though this was the period when childhood was supposedly invented and it was a child-heavy society. Nor did anyone attempt Q16 on the effects of the Union of Britain and Ireland. Indeed, surprisingly, very few scripts showed any knowledge of Ireland in the period and candidates largely failed even to mention the country when the question, such as Q8 on the American War of Independence, could not be successfully answered without doing so. The wide variety of ways in which certain questions were answered and the sorts of illustrative evidence that candidate used suggests this is a tutor- not lecture-led paper, and that tutors have their own takes on the

period. The very best candidates were those who could use what they had learnt in tutorials creatively. The first-class scripts were genuinely enjoyable to read.

**History of the British Isles VI: 1815-1924**

32 candidates sat the paper this year (26 main school and 6 joint school), of whom **6** obtained distinctions for British History. All of the questions on the paper with the exception of Q1 on industrialization were attempted, the most popular being Q12 (imperial expansion), Q17 (domesticity) and Q3 (parliamentary reform). Only two or three of the essays on parliamentary reform, however, showed any awareness of the recent historiography that prompted the question. Most responded by discussing the extent to which the limitations of the Great Reform Act were responsible for the success of Chartism. More generally, responses to the questions focusing on politics were striking for their failure to engage with any recent work on Victorian politics, particularly on politics beyond Westminster. Essays on imperialism, by contrast, suggested that most candidates were aware of some fairly current debates, with Porter and Mackenzie frequently being invoked, however a significant proportion got bogged down in tedious and tangential discussions of the differences between formal and informal empire. The best essays on this topic discussed a broader range of the historiography and used it to highlight the diversity of responses to and experiences of imperialism. Only one candidate thought to wonder about the experience of indigenous populations, and while it is not within the remit of this paper to explore such experiences in depth, one would expect that the recent historiography might at least prompt students of imperialism to recognize the fact that they are only looking at one side of the story. Essays on domesticity were striking for the extent to which students were aware of more recent work, particularly that on masculinity; the best essays were sophisticated in their discussion of influence and recognized the degree to which ideas of domesticity were class-specifics. The strongest candidates produced essays on a range of political, social and cultural questions, demonstrating their awareness of the connections between high politics and other aspects of nineteenth century society and culture. The weakest tended either to write essays focusing too much on the big personalities of Victorian politics, or vague surveys on social and cultural topics which suggested only a very limited grasp of the political context.

**History of the British Isles VII: since 1900**

Nineteen candidates sat this paper and their results were solid rather than spectacular, with only one distinction. Nonetheless, it was encouraging that there was a good spread of answers, with only three questions – on minority parties, Englishness, and art – attracting no takers. Perhaps surprisingly, the most frequently chosen topics tended to be concerned with social history, with the impact of the First World War on women's lives, the integration of immigrant groups, and the nature of religious belief all proving popular. Amongst the political themes, it was the Edwardian crisis and Thatcherism that gained most attention, though this was from only a small minority of candidates.

After years of examiners bewailing the obsessively political focus of answers to this paper, it seems churlish to object to this social and cultural turn. This shift in emphasis also doubtless reflects the fact that much of the most interesting recent literature has not concerned itself with party politics. Yet there is a problem with this approach, which is

that candidates evidently struggle to integrate the political within their social history. This was most marked in the essays on women's emancipation and on immigration, where the State was often brought in *deus ex machina*, as a sort of all-purpose explanation for some change or failure to change, and with no reflection on how the State actually makes decisions or whether its actions reflect rather than create social attitudes. More effort needs to be made to integrate the social and political so that essays do not emphasize one at the expense of the other.

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

Seventy-six candidates tackled this paper – a take-up almost identical to the previous year's seventy seven. Eighteen of these were from the joint schools underlining the continuing attraction of this paper for those reading Ancient & Modern History (8 candidates) and History & Modern Languages (5 candidates). Prior to scrutiny, fifteen scripts were adjudged first class (one was re-read up and one was re-read down at scrutiny), fifty four were awarded marks in the 60-69 range of which the majority (30) were in the 66-69 range, and the remaining seven received marks in the 47-59 range. As already noted, this performance was considerably better than that for the History of the British Isles 1 paper. But it also attests to the way students continue to be gripped by both the period's grand narratives (fall of the Roman Empire and rise of barbarian successor states, Islam, holymen, Byzantium, the Carolingian Empire, transformation of cities, learning and practically everything else) and the close knit evidence provided by primary sources. The majority managed both to get to grips with an impressive amount of material and to use it to write intelligently about topics across this five hundred year period. All but two of the questions were tackled; the exceptions being one (predictably) on the organisation of agriculture and the other on what made an aristocrat in two different societies or periods. Discussions of the contrast between demilitarised late Roman aristocrats exchanging learned letters and their warrior successors might have been expected but were not forthcoming. The most popular questions were those on the nature of the barbarian successor states, the extent to which politics were shaped by religion, and the impact of the Vikings on the making of Europe. As always a considerable number of candidates were pulled down by a failure to analyse the precise import of each question. Many mistakenly treated the first as a question about rulers rather than states with the result that they regaled the examiners with stories about Clovis rather than analysing the evidence for taxation and the like. Too many used the politics and religion question to download a pre-prepared essay on the rise of Islam; the fact that no candidate used the question to write about iconoclasm in Byzantium (for which it was ready made) suggests that those wanting to write on this popular tutorial topic were sadly unable to think beyond a specific iconoclasm prompt.) But it was the question on the Vikings that tripped up the greatest number of candidates. Candidates wrote with knowledge and enthusiasm about the Vikings in general but hardly any bothered to address what they may have contributed to the making of Europe, for example by abetting economic integration or by sharpening a shared sense of Christian identity (fulfilling the same kind of role which the barbarians had done for the Roman Empire). Consequently 2.2 marks were very much the order of the day. Here as in other papers candidates needed to do more to work out and to address what each question was asking. But such warnings should not overshadow the quality that shone through much of the work for this paper. At the top end there was some splendid work on topics such as steppe nomads and the

impact of the fall of the Roman Empire on the christian church, and most candidates appeared to relish the chance to range widely, take on big topics and engage with supporting primary sources. As noted last year, this is a paper that is working very well.

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

All questions found at least two takers amongst the 78 candidates, but the most popular were: changes to crusading (28); Cathars cf others (27); religious orders (24); church reform (20), which looks fairly traditional, not to say ecclesiastical, although leavened by: violence/power (20); Byzantium (18). Chivalry, Spain, Latin identity, nobility, bureaucracy and administration, levels of power, and gender attracted between thirteen and eight answers, leaving neglected (two to four answers): geography, external peoples, elite/popular religion, urban government, urban/rural economies, humanism, Romanesque and Gothic, and money. Thus there is some evidence of broadening approaches to central subjects, but less of attention to purely economic and cultural ones (in the latter case rather surprisingly). In general students rise well to the challenge of addressing three centuries in a broad and thematic manner, usually having to use their specific information to discuss more general questions; and it was pleasing that essays under the same title took a range of different approaches and often offered very different information. That said, occasionally a sense of chronology is essential to a satisfactory answer, for instance with Spain, Chivalry, reform, and the crusades (where grasp of developments in 'crusading' was notably weak). Moreover, there were some regular gaps in coverage, perhaps most strikingly in the eleventh century, seen above all in the endemic assumption that church reform started with Gregory VII (and not only in essays on that topic), but also in a hazier grasp of the politics of that century and the almost complete absence of early heretical outbreaks. Equally, coverage faded through the thirteenth century: it is preferable if the paper covers the whole period, rather than just a long twelfth century.

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

80 candidates took this paper and every question was attempted except Q7 on historiography. Particular favourites were Q3 on the economic benefits of the discovery of America, Q6 on the Italian Renaissance, Q13 on Protestantism and Q17 on war. Q10 on the Scientific Revolution and Q16 on absolutism received only a few answers. The best candidates wrote answers that were integrated and informed. Too many answers, however, were little more than a list of unconnected points which seemed to draw heavily on lectures rather than tutorial work. Names were grossly misspelt and legitimate points presented in a simple and unnuanced way. Some candidates too preferred to answer the question that they had prepared rather than the one set, so Q4 on the family was taken to be the 'woman' question and Q9 on popular revolt a general question on 'rebellion'. Even good candidates frequently failed to spot the obvious. Numerous answers on Q13 gave sophisticated accounts of the context in which Protestantism spread but never mentioned the difficulty of maintaining unity in a movement based on *sola scriptura*. Similarly, virtually all the candidates who struggled to relate post-1550 art to its socio-economic context failed to see that this was best done by discussing Dutch art, not the Catholic Baroque. That said, there was plenty of evidence of engagement and interest and an

impressive knowledge of Renaissance art. Though the mark range was wide, there is no reason to believe that this is not a successful first-year paper and that the quadripartite division is not working well.

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

**59** Candidates sat the paper (48 main school, 11 joint school), of whom **12** received distinctions for General History. All questions, with the exception of Q19 on art, were attempted by at least one candidate, but most candidates focused on a fairly narrow range of questions. The most popular were those on popular religion (Q12, 17 responses), socialism (Q16, 16 responses) nationalism (Q10, 15 responses) industrialization (Q1, 15 responses), urbanization (Q2, 15 responses) and rural society (Q6, 15 responses). Although the question on popular religion attracted the largest number of responses, they were also frequently amongst the weakest. Most candidates confined themselves to talking about European Catholicism, and very few made any attempt to account for this narrow focus. Essays on nationalism were in general much stronger, and made more reference to the relevant historiography than those on other topics; many candidates seemed to have a good grasp of recent debates and an awareness of the possible tensions between local, regional, national, and religious identities. The questions on industrialization and urbanization attracted some strong answers, with candidates having a good grasp of the historiography, but there were also some very weak essays on these subjects, where candidates had only a very broad sense of the issues involved and no concrete evidence or illustrations to support their arguments. Responses to the question on rural politics were numerous but very rarely attentive to the form of the question. Most candidates discussed the slow politicization of the peasants, very few addressed the issue of whether national political forces had any interest in rural issues. Answers to question 11 on masculinity and femininity suggested that some candidates lacked even a basic grasp of the way gender is used by historians. In general, candidates confined themselves to discussing France, Germany and occasionally Russia, and few paid enough attention to national and regional differences or took the opportunity to develop comparative responses. The best essays, however, were wide-ranging, making imaginative use of examples beyond Europe and using comparisons to develop their analyses.

**Optional Subject 1: Theories of State**

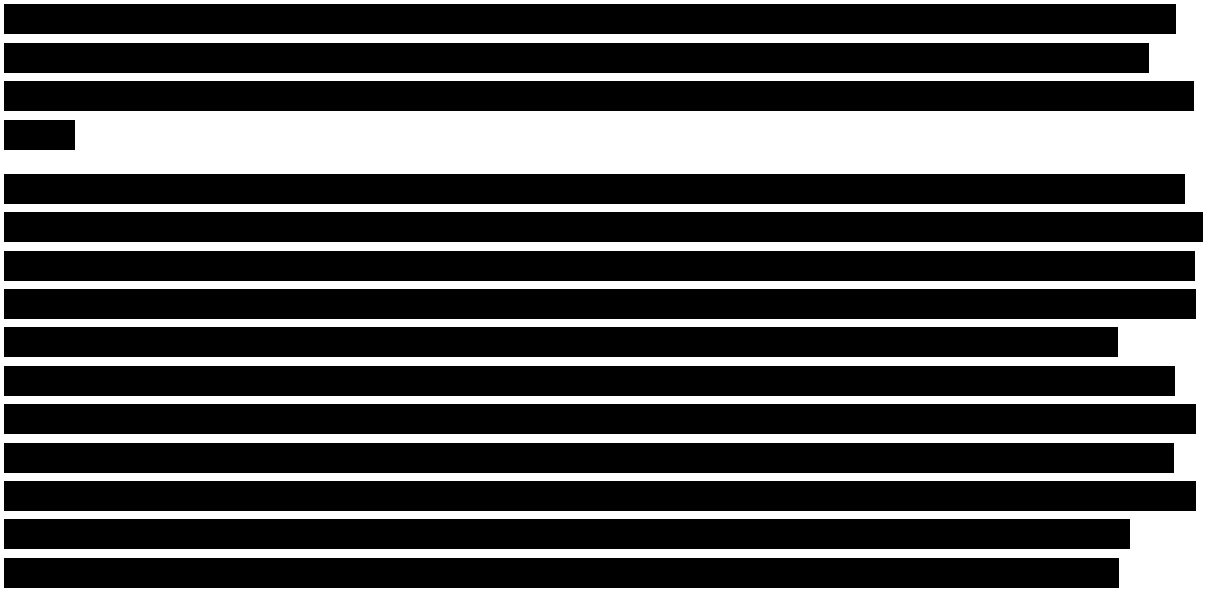
This year 101 students sat this paper, and all 14 questions were answered. The one innovation in the examination paper came in the thematic questions (9-14), in which candidates were invited to 'answer with reference to at least two of the set authors': this change was introduced in order to give students the opportunity to focus on two or three of the set authors, rather than thinking that they were obliged to discuss all four. Many of the better answers did, in fact, take advantage of this opportunity to maintain a sharper and more analytical focus.

One general pattern which emerged from the scripts is that many students felt safer answering questions about Aristotle and Hobbes, partly because they can follow a clear, linear development, from a foundational concept (man as a political animal in Aristotle, the state of nature as a state of fear in Hobbes) – and they did so. By contrast, many candidates clearly felt less secure on Rousseau and Marx, where they found a greater

range of possible intellectual starting points, and, in the case of Marx, complex changes of political context. Future examiners and tutors might want to shift the balance of questions slightly in order to encourage students to take more time over the second half of the paper.

If this desire for the security of a standard route through the texts betrays a hang-over from the certainties of 'A-level' essays, then it is also true that many candidates learned up considerable numbers of quotations which they offered as illustrations in the exegesis of the texts. The best answers, however, often quoted less and then they did so in order to discuss or explain problems of interpretation. The same held true of citing the views of scholars in the field or the political context of the time, with the strongest answers problematising them, whilst the weaker ones cited them as self-evident authorities or fact.

**Optional Subject 15: Radicalism in Britain 1965-75 (new)**



**Foreign Text: Tocqueville:**

44 students took this paper, 34 in Main School, 10 in the joint schools. As the paper divides into two parts (gobbets and essays), so will this report.

All essay questions were attempted, although question 6 was noticeably less popular than the others. Very few essays were of poor quality, most showed good general knowledge both of Tocqueville's arguments and of the broad themes of Old Regime history. Most students could name other, later historians who have written about this and correctly identify the historiographical trend with which they were associated. Three features distinguished those who received the top marks from the rest of the candidates. The first was the level of detail the student was able to provide. For example, many students commented on regional variations in terms of feudal pressures, tax burdens, the character and activity of intendants... but the best answers could give precise examples of these variations. The second distinguishing feature was the recognition that Tocqueville was a nineteenth-century historian, drawing on the work of his predecessors, and working in the context of emergent social sciences. Students who were able to place Tocqueville in the

political, social and intellectual context of mid-century France did well. The third feature was an awareness of Tocqueville's other writings and the ability to point out how his ideas developed over his career.

Answers to gobbets were much more of a mixed bag, but on average the marks on the gobbets had a negative effect on students' performances. Firstly, it's important to get the French right which was not always the case, especially in relation to gobbet (d). Secondly, answers to gobbets tended to be too general, more like the introduction to an essay than a forensic examination of how Tocqueville constructed his arguments. Students would pick out a key word in the gobbet -- such as 'clergé' in gobbet (d) or 'classes' in gobbet (e) -- and offer a potted summary of Tocqueville's thoughts about the clergy or class. But the point of the gobbet is to focus in very sharply on the precise meaning of the text, and only then broadening out the commentary to relate it to Tocqueville's overall themes. Those students who showed an awareness of how Tocqueville made his arguments (his use of sources, his rhetorical strategies...), and how he sought to make them convincing within the nineteenth-century context in which he wrote, did particularly well in their gobbet answers.

**Approaches to History**

157 candidates sat this paper, 19 of whom received distinctions and 37 marks of 50-59. Encouragingly, every single question produced at least one answer, and there was a very good spread of topics, with many scripts dealing with three sections, instead of remaining confined to the prescribed two. Inevitably, there was clustering around some canonical topics: the family in section A; grave goods in section B; iconoclasm in section C; divergent patterns of technological development in section D; the relationship between women's and gender history in section E; and revolutions in section F. It must be said that, in many respects, the most interesting answers were not on these themes. Candidates would be well-advised to take risks instead of seeking to play safe.

The best essays were united, however, not by topic but by a shared sophistication of approach. In answering questions about the value of 'anthropological approaches' or 'sociological explanations', it is critically necessary to define what these actually amount to. The strongest answers did precisely that, teasing out the various ways in which scholars from other disciplines have attempted to understand notions like family structure and then applying this model to historical examples.

The weakest, by contrast, spent no time considering how other approaches conceptualised the topic in hand, and many candidates seemed to not to have understood that the point is to consider the various approaches might contribute to *historical* analysis, not simply to provide a summary of, for example, what anthropologists say about ritual. Other weaker essays often did little more than seek to reproduce tutorial essays. For example, many people who tackled question 20 on technological innovation treated it as question on the 'Great Divergence' between China and the Occident post 1600. This is fair enough in as much as technological innovation forms part of the argument on the 'Great Divergence' (though it should be pointed out that one could just as reasonably have answered this essay with no reference to China at all), but it is not an opportunity to rehearse all the reasons that these two regions have followed different economic histories over the last four hundred years. It is also very important for candidates to tackle the question asked,

rather than the question that they wish had been asked. For example, question 17 – 'To what extent did trade promote inequalities?' – was not about whether regions that engaged in trade benefitted compared with regions that did not participate in trade, but rather it was asking whether trade *itself* promoted inequalities.

Some questions also produced very specifically weak answers. Number 11 and number 13 – 'Why have historians been so interested in outbreaks of iconoclasm?' and 'Have historians overstated the importance of patrons and collectors?' – almost never elicited any examples of historians' work. Yet, without some sense of the historiography, it is impossible to say why historians have been interested in image breaking or whether they have over-estimated the significance of those who paid for art. Number 29 and number 30 – 'Have sociologists been able to account for the continuing significance of religious belief?' and 'How useful are concepts of class and status for explain social change?' – likewise elicited a series of disappointing answers, which seemed to assume that little of relevance had been written on the topic since the nineteenth century. That Marx, Weber, and Durkheim are important writers goes without saying. That they are the last word on the subject is surely not true.

In general, in fact, the most disappointing conclusion that this paper suggests is that too many candidates have too little sense of how these different approaches have evolved over the last few decades. For too many, Evans-Pritchard remains the leading anthropologist, Sutton Hoo the most recent archaeological dig, Weber the only recent critic of Marx's theory of social stratification. A rather elderly faculty bibliography has not help candidates develop a sense of what has happened to these approaches since the 1960s.

**Historiography: Tacitus to Weber**

The standard of this paper continues to be excellent. There is a depth of knowledge of both texts and authorial contexts across a vast range of time which suggests that first year students respond very well to undertaking a kind of intellectual inquiry that is almost always unknown to them before they arrive in Oxford. All the questions were answered, but as usual the most favoured authors were Tacitus, Machiavelli, Gibbon and Macaulay, with Weber, Ranke and Augustine (in declining order) making up a second tier. A very few comments are in order. One of the most widespread misconceptions was the idea that Gibbon held that Christianity was of particular importance in producing Roman decline: this is debatable for his work as a whole, and is certainly ill-founded in regard to the early history described in c.15. Again, in a large swathe of answers on the literary component in Macaulay's work, only a minority allowed for the fact that "literature" was not merely a question of form and literary style, but also of content: of literary sources and ideas. A final point to note is that a few students who answered one of the "thematic" questions (those taking in two or more authors) came quite close to rubric failure by returning to authors they had discussed in previous answers, and displaying only slight additional knowledge of a third author. It goes without saying that examiners can observe this, and will mark accordingly.

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