

History
Prelims 2014

Examiners' Report

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2014

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 cand's	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
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%
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%

Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2014

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles I - c.300-1087	34	2	36
History of the British Isles II – 1042-1330	49	4	53
History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550	27	2	29
History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700	58	6	64

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles V – 1685-1830	38	4	42
History of the British Isles VI – 1815-1924	17	9	26
History of the British Isles VII – since 1900	17	9	26
General History I – 370-900	73	10	83
General History II – 1000-1300	51	8	59
General History III – 1400-1650	53	16	69
General History IV – 1815-1914	63	20	83
OS 1 – Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx)	48	34	82
OS 2 – The Age of Bede, c.660-c.740	4	-	4
OS 3 – Early Gothic France c.1100-c.1150	4	2	6
OS 4 – Conquest & Frontiers: England & the Celtic Peoples 1150-1220	5	1	6
OS 5 – English Chivalry & the French War c.1330-c.1400	9	1	10
OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450	13	1	14
OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance	9	3	11
OS 8– Witch-craft & Witch-hunting in early modern Europe	26	3	29
OS 9 – Making England Protestant 1558-1642 (new) (<i>no takers</i>)	-	-	-
OS 10 – Conquest & Colonization: Spain & America in the 16 th Century	29	3	32
OS 11 – Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815	27	5	32
OS 12 – Women, gender and the nation: Britain, 1789-1825	7	2	9
OS 13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914	10	2	12
OS 14 – The American Empire: 1823-1904	17	4	21
OS 15 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921	11	3	14
OS 16 – Radicalism in Britain 1965-75	14	1	15

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
OS 17 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH)	4	-	4
OS 18 – Augustan Rome (AMH)	3	-	3
OS [19] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870	-	10	10
Approaches to History	125	33	158
Historiography: Tacitus to Weber	73	14	87
Herodotus	1	-	1
Einhard and Asser	9	-	9
Tocqueville	22	8	30
Meinecke and Kehr	4	1	5
Machiavelli (<i>no takers</i>)	-	-	-
Trotsky	2	-	2
Diaz del Moral	4	1	5
Quantification (<i>suspended 2013-14</i>)	-	-	-

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	64	23.36	38	28.57	26	18.44	40.63
Pass	210	76.64	95	71.43	115	81.56	54.76
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	274	100	133	100	141	100	-

General History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	67	22.95	42	29.37	25	16.78	37.31
Pass	225	77.05	101	70.63	124	83.22	55.11
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	292	100	143	100	149	100	-

Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	86	27.04	50	31.06	36	22.93	41.86
Pass	232	72.96	111	68.94	121	77.07	52.16
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	318	100	161	100	157	100	-

Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	38	24.52	23	30.26	15	18.99	39.47
Pass	117	75.48	53	69.74	64	81.01	54.70
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	155	100	76	100	79	100	-

Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	30	34.48	15	30	15	40.54	50
Pass	57	65.52	35	70	22	59.46	38.60
Ppass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	87	100	50	100	37	100	-

II Marking & Classification

III Comments on Papers: General

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

36 students (including two Joint School candidates) took the paper, and achieved 5 distinctions, 29 2.1-level marks and 2 2.2-level marks. Four questions remained unanswered (8, 10, 15 and, predictably, 17). Questions 2, 14 and 1 were most popular (19, 18 and 17 answers respectively). Least popular were kinship, the commercial economy and lay piety (q. 9, 12, 13, with 1-2 responses each). Questions 6 on Alfred and his successors and 20 on the two conquests of England presented popular topics in unfamiliar ways, and were done well by the brave three that risked them. The best answers to q. 14, How well was England governed in the tenth and/or eleventh centuries, thought hard about what 'well' governed meant in the early medieval context, and drew on the historiographical debates effectively. The stronger answers to q. 1 on the post-Roman period clearly differentiated the trajectories taken by the East and the West of Britain. All candidates showed good understanding of the challenges of reconstructing the religious beliefs of the conversion period from the written and archaeological evidence (q. 2). Weaker answers presented their argument in general terms, with limited and sometimes inaccurate supporting detail: this was a problem across the paper, bringing many students with a good grasp of the key issues down.

Q. 5 on Mercia (9 responses) was generally done well, with the 'culture' element of the question attracting some thoughtful definitions. Some answers on kings' expectations of ecclesiastics (q. 4, 4 responses) unfortunately veered towards discussion of the church in general, rather than referring to specific ecclesiastics. Q. 3, comparing Anglo-Saxon society and kingship with the Celtic regions, attracted 6 responses, all comparing Anglo-Saxon England with Ireland, and generally stronger on kingship than society. No-one discussed Picts, or tackled q. 15 on the emergence of Scotland; indeed, Scottish material only appeared in a couple of essays on the Vikings. Rightly or wrongly, the scripts give the impression that the British and Irish dimensions of the paper are covered to some extent for the early period, but that from the Viking period onwards, the paper is taught very much as English history.

Questions 7 (archaeology and the Vikings, 5 responses) and 19 (answered with reference to laws, coins and place-names, 6 responses) asked candidates to address different types of evidence; those with good, specific examples to offer did best, as was also the case for the question on towns (q. 16, 5 answers). Answers to q. 11, on the importance of the written word (8 responses), divided evenly between candidates treating this as another primary source question (written v. other types of evidence), and those thinking about the symbolic uses of the written word, its use in government, or oral means of communication (the original intention behind the question). Nevertheless, the question produced some enthusiastic and thoughtful work. The challenging legal evidence was in general handled well across the paper, for example in answers to q. 18, on women and the law (3 takers). Overall, candidates were less likely to discuss primary source problems the later they went chronologically on the paper; conversely, with some exceptions, reference was more likely to be made to historiography on later topics. Fewer candidates were brought down by an incomplete third essay than last year; the tendency to write in generalising terms caused more problems. Some candidates ended their essays with a single-sentence restatement of their central point, often overriding nuances brought out earlier in the essay: a full summarising conclusion is vital to clarify and do justice to the argument of the essay. Pleasingly, some fruitful use was made of insights from other papers, especially

Approaches. This was a solid to strong cohort, with all the candidates showing command of the key issues, while the best scripts showed a real engagement with the evidence and the debates, and offered lively and well-written essays.

History of the British Isles II: 1042-1330

There were 53 candidates for this paper, which was cheering, all the more so because of the level of engagement they displayed with what is by any standards a difficult period. For the vast majority it will have constituted a startling departure from both the subject matter and the type of writing which is nowadays *de rigueur* at school. Most of them have risen to the challenge, and benefited accordingly. One of them produced the best exam answer which this particular examiner had marked since 2001 (and that was in Schools); another produced a memorable aphorism about Earl Warenne being better advised to brandish Domesday Book, rather than his rusty sword, in response to a Quo warranto inquest. This I may use (with due acknowledgment) in the future.

I also set and marked General II, and the comparison between the two papers was instructive. By and large candidates for this paper displayed a greater readiness to engage with the complexities of the evidence, and to essay a wider range of the questions. For these reasons, the quality of scripts was better at the top and also more diverse than for General II. The paper is now genuinely one in British (as opposed to English) history: there were large numbers of answers on Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, though these answers tended to make less use of source material than the English ones, perhaps because the sources are thinner and fewer.

This generally positive response is not unalloyed. Some answers were marred by striking errors in interpretation, chronology, and attribution.

One of the cheering aspects of these scripts was that what must have been an unexpected question, on the significance of the dead for the living, elicited some of the best answers – including that outstanding answer. Some answered in terms of purgatory and the role of intercession for the dead, other in terms of changes in the legitimation of succession. Both seemed equally valid responses: unlike at school, there is no model answer. The question on the significance of any single book failed to inspire the anticipated range of responses: a few candidates simply downloaded essays about books which they did not seem to have read very carefully, and which failed to make plausible cases for the great importance of those books in this period. One candidate had the cheek to select Magna Carta, having already written another question on John, and proceeded to reiterate many of the same points in a slightly different guise. Several of the more conventional questions threw candidates. Few had a clear and precise idea of what feudalism might be, so they floundered in the face of a predictable question on the subject. The question on the peasantry and the Conquest was answered by lots of people who plainly knew nothing about the peasantry, and scrambled around for any material to fill up the blank page in front of them. That about interdependence and tension between kings and prelates tended to produce answers which considered only tensions, and only with certain archbishops of Canterbury. No-one made much sense of King John's exploitation of Joan de Neville's carnal passion for her husband to sate his passion for roast chicken, a passion he was not prepared to indulge in Lent, though one candidate realised that this might be one of John's sadistic little jokes. Another candidate evidently relished opening his or her answer by quoting John Gillingham to the effect that John was 'a bit of a shit'.

The key to success is mounting a strong response to the question, preferably one which analyses some of the key evidence on which other historians have based their arguments. The adverb 'incredibly' should be excised from the vocabulary of all candidates.

History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550

Twenty-nine candidates sat this paper, with a marks awarded range of 58 – 70. Five candidates achieved marginal First class marks. As the mark range indicates, the average script for this paper was competent but not outstanding. Pleasingly, most of the questions on the paper were attempted, and there was a good distribution of answers between the social and political questions, although as usual there were a small number of questions that were attempted by most candidates.

The more conceptual questions (for instance on chivalry) received fewer answers, and rather than providing an opportunity for more creative responses, instead resulted in broad, imprecise answers that made little use of specific historic examples. The most popular questions were on revolts, kingship and the role of parliament. Unfortunately, the candidates mostly gave 'safe' answers to these questions that often had the feel of replicating tutorial essays. There were a good number of candidates who attempted the questions on Wales, Ireland and Scotland, although material about any of the Celtic countries very rarely featured in questions not specifically about them. Very few candidates used material after c.1485, aside from those candidates who answered the English Reformation question.

Although I would not expect much use of primary source material from Prelims candidates, it was notable that few candidates made recourse to any sources, not even for questions such as the one on the increase of writing in the vernacular. The best answers to this paper risked a little more imagination and also attempted to deconstruct the questions, resulting in more sophisticated essays. A number of candidates clearly did not plan their time very well and had to rush their last answers, and several candidates clearly struggled with essay structuring. In general, while candidates showed an adequate understanding of the period and its historiography, their essays were fairly pedestrian, with many candidates giving competent but superficial answers.

History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700

There were sixty four candidates for this paper; fifty eight from the main school, one from History and English, and five from History and Politics. Nineteen candidates were awarded Distinctions on this paper, thirty five achieved II.1 marks, and ten received II.2 marks. As the marks attest, the paper was generally well done, with many excellent answers and only a few weak ones.

As last year, candidates ranged widely through the paper. No question on this year's paper was entirely ignored. There were strikingly few answers on the period post 1650 and, again, the preponderance of interest was in the earlier part of the period. By far the most popular question (with 33 answers) concerned the Reformation under Henry VIII (3), and here theological knowledge as well as a sense of political and dynastic pressures were evident in the best answers. The questions on the justification of rebellion (5) and revolt against Charles I (15) attracted 23 answers each, answers which often impressed by their scope and depth of knowledge of the course of events, but did not always evince an understanding of contemporary religious belief or political thought. As often before, there was a flight from the economy and demography, and questions 1 and 2 invited only three answers each. The 18 candidates answering on the witch hunt (6) were generally more confident in comparing the English and Scottish trials than in examining socio-economic crisis, but there were some subtle and well informed answers. The question on women's freedom of action (4) was answered by 16 candidates, many of whom adduced vivid evidence to support their arguments. The question inviting a comparison between the Personal Rule of Charles I and Elizabeth and James's relationship with Parliament (14) was tackled by 15 candidates and produced some interesting

and independent answers. Few answered the questions which were specifically about Wales and Ireland (8, 10), but in answering other questions candidates often showed an awareness of the relation between the several polities.

This paper had evidently stimulated the interest and enthusiasm of undergraduates for its central themes and a broad range of topics. Where candidates were less successful it was usually due not to a lack of knowledge but to a failure to plan answers which became, in consequence, precipitate and discursive. Candidates often impressed by the breadth of their secondary reading, but there was almost no evidence of engagement with primary texts.

History of the British Isles V: 1685-1830

Numbers of takers for this paper again declined: the last three years has seen a fall from 55 through 50 to 42, of which 38 were in the main school, 4 Joint Schools. Equal numbers of scripts were awarded marks of 70 and above and 59 and below (6 in each case); overall more candidates scored 65 and below than 66 and above. Nonetheless, the general impression was very cheering, both in terms of how the paper is being taught and in terms of what students are achieving. The paper seems to be doing a good job of exposing students to a range of different kinds of historical issues and modes of analysis. Most candidates displayed quite a convincing feel for complexities of period: there was only the occasional bit of invented history (death of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden) and only a few overschematic 'Whiggish' answers (though it was startling to find one answer on economic growth in which the only historian invoked was Eric Hobsbawm, with no clear indication that the candidate was aware of more recent discussion). There was plenty of 'British Isles' consciousness in evidence – sometimes to the point where the three-kingdoms reflex became mechanical. But in general students showed a very pleasing willingness to think with what they knew. Weaknesses were more often concerned writing technique – failure to focus, or follow through on lines of argument -- than they did knowledge or thought.

Candidates answered a very wide range of questions: the paper was intended to spread out student choice and succeeded in doing that. All but two questions attracted at least one (in fact, at least two) answers – there were no answers on the younger Pitt's legacy or controversy over the slave trade (though the latter figured in answers to some other questions). The median number of answers per question was 4.5. Only four questions attracted more than ten answers (1. longer term effects of 1688; 3. Whig ascendancy; 11. empire, and 16. in relation to politeness). Several questions forced students to assemble knowledge in new ways – thus 11 on empire, 14 on science and/or technology (which attracted some good answers), and 15 on Francophobia (also often well done). Only fifty answers out of 126 focussed on broadly political topics; there were very few instances of students answering three political questions. Most students did one at most, some none, though the latter still usually showed range: e.g. answering on religion, masculinity, and science. This examiner sees no merit in forcing students to answer questions across a set of pre-conceived categories. Some candidates concentrating answers should however have tried harder to avoid overlap in illustration and argument.

In relation to specific questions: Q1 was testing because it forced them to think about several different things at once – there was a tendency to lose sight of the 'How long' phrase with which question opened; also students tended to work through material and decide what they thought at the end, rather than forming a clear vision of what they wanted to say at the start and letting that structure the introduction – though one student perceptively noted that what is at issue was in part the unity of 'the long eighteenth century'. Too many Whig ascendancy answers showed knowledge only of Walpole – who was dominant for only half the time. Both

this and the questions on empire and economic growth tended to attract answers of the kind that dismiss the question in a paragraph and then rehearse all the other elements of the picture known to the candidate – instead of giving the explanation propounded by the questions sustained, though perhaps critical attention. In relation to Q4 and sometimes other questions, the category ‘Irish’ often wasn’t unpacked enough: quite a few students failed to distinguish Anglo-Irish from Catholic-Irish opposition. Several students tried to answer Q5, on political mobilisation in the later stages of the American War, without mention of the Association Movement – one student said English demands for parliamentary reform had peaked in the late 1760s: Irish and even Scottish responses were better understood. Some good answers on evangelicalism were hampered by completely running out of inspiration after 1800. The category ‘middle class’ often needed more probing: its use to encompass everyone from wealthy merchants and top professionals down to small shopkeepers is too imprecise; students need to think harder about what elements *within* the middle class they really mean. Several students who cited Borsay, recognising him as the coiner of the ‘urban renaissance’ phrase, seemed to have no idea what he argued. Whether or not historians have overstated the centrality of gallows, many students do: only one student answering the question showed knowledge there were punishments other than hanging; it wasn’t evident that some who attempted it had read anything other than Doug Hay’s famous article.

There was some evidence of use of material and arguments from lectures, though less evidence of engagement with lecture *arguments* than one might have hoped. There was not much evident cross-fertilisation between papers studied, esp from Approaches, where one might most hope to see it. One (main school) student adduced Pomerantz and Acemoglu (probably encountered in the economics approach) in an essay on empire. Gibbon was occasionally mentioned (not always to good effect).

In terms of technique, quite a few students clearly did not divide their time evenly enough across the questions, submitting short and scattergun final essays. In this examiner’s view, a short exam essay doesn’t need a conclusion that simply repeats what’s been said – if the writer has no new twist to offer they should just stop when the argument has been fully unfolded. A few candidates use words like ‘huge’ and ‘incredible’ too readily, saying things like it was huge, but still we must question its extent.

History of the British Isles VI: 1815-1924

26 candidates sat this paper, 17 main school, 9 joint school. 4 candidates (16%) obtained marks of 70 or above.

Three questions failed to attract takers: (2) on urbanisation, (15) on sport, and (18) on foreign policy.

The most popular questions were (4) on franchise reform, (7) on the Liberal Party, ((10) on women and separate spheres., (11) on religion, (16) on Ireland, (17) on welfare and (20) on the Empire.

Essays on franchise reform (eleven takers) were generally handled well: it is clearly a popular topic in tutorials. The question invited candidates to discuss why the 1832 Great Reform Act was not a final settlement of the franchise question. Somewhat surprisingly, only one candidate referred to Lord John Russell’s speech of 20 November 1837 insisting that he would not carry through further reform, though the people of England might, earning him the sobriquet ‘Finality Jack’.

On the Liberal Party candidates were asked to consider what held the party together. Many candidates emphasised – perhaps over-emphasised – the unifying personality of Gladstone. There’s much to this, but Gladstone could in circumstances be a highly divisive figure, particularly when the Irish question came up. It would be useful for candidates to consider the

impact of franchise reform, and in particular electoral registration, in building up coherently organised mass parties.

Those who tackled the Chartism question were well prepared on this specific aspect, but much less willing to engage with the comparator included in the question: the independent working-class politics that developed from the late nineteenth-century. This is somewhat surprising, as Chartism in the historiography is often considered within the framework of the 'march of labour' thesis, and questions of continuity and discontinuity are highly illuminating.

The question on feminism and 'separate spheres' was popular with candidates (ten takers). Answers were effective. More attention could be paid to the 'feminine virtues' as constructed by separate spheres ideology, and how these were often utilised in the arguments of those promoting women's rights in the period.

The question on religion as either a conservative drag on reform or an engine of social change focussed on inter-denominationalism. This was somewhat unexpected, and it would have been useful had candidates spent more time discussing the impact of providentialism on political philosophy in the first half of the nineteenth-century (the Boyd Hilton thesis), and the contrasting rise of socially-concerned, reformist religiosity.

Essays on Ireland have of late have tended to be exaggeratedly generous to British rule; this year, in contrast, answers laid considerable stress on the iniquities of the British in Ireland. A via media between these views would be desirable.

Seven candidates answered on welfare reform. They generally succeeded in identifying the important 'self-help' principles in the nineteenth-century, but more could have been said on how these also underpinned the rationale for the early twentieth-century 'New Liberal' reforms.

Nine candidates answered on Empire, to a generally high standard. The question highlighted 'dynamic' forces tending towards imperial expansion, but this does not preclude consideration of 'inertial' forces – the famous acquisition of Empire in a 'fit of absence of mind', and the pressure applied on British policy by turmoil in the imperial periphery.

One candidate tackled the question on the Irish Famine. It is to be hoped that candidates will be allowed space to tackle this question, surely one of the most important events of any true History of the British Isles covering the nineteenth century, and that it will become a more regular feature of exam papers in the years to come. If candidates are equally directed to the particularities of the Welsh and Scottish experiences, we may hope that the paper will move further from undue focus on English priorities.

History of the British Isles VII: since 1900

26 candidates sat this paper, 17 main school, 9 joint school. 10 candidates (39%) obtained marks of 70 or above.

Four questions failed to attract any answers: (3) on the Labour Party (14) on the arts, (19) on coalition governments across the period, and - somewhat surprisingly - (10) on sport. Other questions were very heavily subscribed: (6) on welfarism, (8) on the decline of Empire, (13) on the 'teenager', (15) on immigration and (17) on Thatcherism.

The question on Conservatism, which asked candidates to compare the party's 'sectional' and 'national' appeal were generally good at analysing the party's sectional 'class' interest, but somewhat weaker on its ability to construct a discourse on national identity that had considerable purchase and electoral efficacy.

The question on welfarism (thirteen takers) asked candidates to link this to the impact of war. In general, this was done more successfully for the Second World War than the First World War. A number of candidates rightly mentioned the Boer War.

The Empire question (eight takers) asked when its decline became 'irreversible'. Interestingly, opinions were very various, with many different 'turning points' proposed. Of

course, no one 'right' answer was expected, and candidates were rewarded for the cogency of the case made. One had the feeling that candidates were prompted to think seriously around a topic that had not been addressed directly in tutorials or lectures, and this made for generally impressive answers.

Candidates used the question on 'teenager' culture to discuss the 1960s. There is a good deal of quite recent historiography on the rise of youth culture in the interwar period, and of course there is a good deal to say about it after the 1960s. A much broader chronological range is desirable.

Questions on immigration (no less than sixteen takers) rightly took considerable cognisance of the construction of 'whiteness'.

The Thatcherism question – seven takers, so not quite so over-subscribed as in recent years – was generally tackled effectively. It was striking, however, that only one candidate mentioned foreign policy, which is key to Thatcher's image, and no one mentioned the Irish question, obviously a major issue for her government (and very personal peril for the Prime Minister).

As ever, it's important for candidates to show breadth across the period. There are still too many answers which barely stray beyond one decade (answers on youth culture being the most egregious example). We should see more explicit reference to the particular experiences of Scotland and Wales. It would be good to see essays on demotic culture, and in particular sport – which was a popular topic in previous years – make a comeback.

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

83 candidates sat the paper, including 10 from Joint Schools, with 11 Distinctions, 65 marks in the 2.1 range and 7 marks in the 2.2 range awarded. All questions were attempted except 3 (Byzantine engagement with the West). The most popular questions were 10 (conversion, 40 answers), 1 (what survived the 'fall of Rome', 33 answers), 8 (Vikings, 25 answers), 4 (Carolingian kingship, 23 answers; there were no takers for Visigothic kingship), 2 (barbarians, 22 answers) and 19 (saints, 20 answers). Questions 15 (popes), 16 (steppe nomads) and 18 (feud-centred law) attracted three answers or fewer. Trade (q. 11, 4 answers) and rural life (q. 12, 3 answers) remain a minority interest, but attracted some good work. The challenging question on the expansion of Islam (9, 6 takers) helps account for the 22 answers on conversion to Islam (q. 10, with 9 answers on conversion to Christianity, and 9 comparative essays). The best responses considered the problems in studying religious conversion and addressed the source problems. Q. 1 on the 'fall of Rome' was generally answered with respect to long-term cultural survival, or a comparative analysis of the successor states. Many answers also presented a thoughtful critique of the terms 'fall' and 'survive', while weaker answers often failed to define when and what the 'fall' was. It is vital to unpack questions carefully, to ensure all terms, explicit and implicit, are addressed, and any underlying debates are noted. For example, q. 8 on the Vikings was generally done well, but the best answers also addressed the problems in using the term 'Viking' at all, and the significant source barriers to reconstructing what the Vikings wanted. Some weaker candidates unfortunately failed to spot that q. 17 on towns (9 answers) required discussion of the economy, although this was not explicitly included in the list of factors. The 'values' and the 'functioning of society' parts of q. 19 on saints were not always equally addressed, though overall this question attracted many good responses, often making effective use of a gendered perspective. Use of the historiography tended to concentrate in specific questions; most candidates were familiar with the debates on trade and the economy, and on Viking violence. Pirenne remains the most cited authority, followed by Gibbon, and Chris Wickham.

Candidates drew on a pleasing breadth of evidence in answering the more open political questions (5, 6, 7), from the Vandals, Justinian, the Frankish world and the Abbasids to Tang

China. Only 6 candidates tackled q. 7 on capitals, but this was done uniformly well. Q. 2 on barbarian identity attracted a mix of case studies and broad comparative responses, with some excellent and nuanced discussions at the top end. Happily, fewer candidates were brought down by an incomplete third essay this year than last. The most common problem in the lower half of the cohort was the limited use of supporting evidence to back up often thoughtful arguments. For example, answers to q. 14 on monasteries (9 answers) rightly emphasised the importance of prayer, but weaker candidates did not always support this with specific examples. On some questions, especially on monasteries, trade, saints and barbarian identity, the impact of the GH1 lectures and of tutorials was clearly visible. Some students are perhaps over-reliant on their lecture and tutorial notes in revision, which may help account for the rather generalising feel to the resultant essays (and some inaccuracies in the detail). Revision also needs to involve the amassing of detailed supporting examples, and practice in unpicking the key terms and identifying the underlying issues in exam questions. Candidates at the top end presented very sophisticated work, sometimes drawing effectively on material encountered in their other papers, and writing some particularly impressive comparative essays. Overall, students had clearly engaged actively and thoughtfully with the period, and had been prompted to think comparatively about the themes and topics of the paper, leading to much strong work.

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

This paper was attempted by 60 candidates. The number of recruits is in itself cheering, and most of those who opted for the paper plainly derived considerable benefit and pleasure from doing a period which was quite new to them. The quality of the scripts displayed less of a range than those for History of the British Isles II, also marked by this examiner. The reason seemed to be that, perhaps understandably, there was less detailed engagement with source material. There was also less of an inclination to chance one's arm with an unexpected question, although there were fewer such questions on this paper, so there was less scope for doing so. There was a healthy sprinkling of first class marks, but the first class answers were less original and adventurous than those for HBI II.

The most popular question was on heresy. But the repeated recitation of R.I. Moore, M. Lambert, et al. eventually became tedious, as the same arguments and examples were adduced over and over again. Anyone who attempted to say something different was rewarded. The question on crusading indulgences produced numerous discussions at varying levels of competence – one candidate clearly thought indulgence was a synonym for reason. Only one candidate mentioned the first extant crusading encyclical, easily accessible in the Riley-Smiths' collection of documents – indeed, only three candidates mentioned any crusading encyclical. The so-called feudal revolution is a formidably difficult topic, and it was pleasing that so many candidates attempted to grapple with it. By and large they failed to convince that they were familiar with any of the enormous French works they cited with such reverence. Almost everyone was far too ready to accept Brown and Reynolds on trust, and to reiterate a claim which is plainly false: that feudal terminology is not found prior to c. 1200. No-one mentioned the evidence for the emergence of toponyms – surely a key indicator, and lucidly explained (in English) in J.C. Holt's classic essay 'What's in a name?' The papacy continues to attract plenty of enthusiasm, but few seem to have read Ullmann or even Robinson with the requisite degree of attention. It was nevertheless pleasing that so many were willing to have a go at the question on Unam Sanctam. There was a surprising and pleasing interest in the Donation of Constantine, but knowledge of the detail was very patchy, although this document is also readily available in translation. No-one seemed to have read Johannes Fried's recently translated, short book on the subject. Essays on Byzantium tend always to be at least good, but the occasional, very general, citations of Choniates did not convince me that the translation of his great history had

been consulted. Kinnamus was never mentioned. Everyone should read Angold with more care: his book is much more than the text-book it purports to be. Indeed, it is a recasting in modern guise of Choniates' analysis. The questions on Sicily and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, which should have been gifts, were essayed by very few, and generally badly. Yet there is plenty of good literature on both subjects in English. No-one attempted the question on Joinville and St Louis.

The moral is to read more widely, and to study selected sources more intensively.

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

The virtue of the quadripartite structure of GH III in forcing candidates to answer questions on a wide variety of subjects is immediately apparent in the distribution of essays. Of the 68 scripts submitted this year, over 20 contained answers on equality between the sexes, humanism and innovation, Luther's radicalism, and popular revolts; while between 10 and 17 contained answers on overseas trade, the rising status of the artist, Catholicism and popular culture, and innovation in the conduct of war. While 5 of 20 questions went unanswered, those neglected were sometimes regrettable but rarely surprising; but this represents a much greater degree of bunching that was apparent in 2013 – a worrying trend, which Group II should keep an eye on in the future. Section D was the most popular (56 essays) but also the weakest: no one attempted the essays on the Ottoman Empire (alas) or (more surprisingly) republicanism, and few wanted to write about the nobility (although these essays were disproportionately good). This led to bunching on warfare and especially popular revolts: over half the scripts (35) devoted an essay to this rather amorphous question, which few could answer with distinction, confirming the general rule that the most popular questions rarely support superior quality work. Section B vied with D in popularity (54 essays), but the average quality was much higher: humanism (26 essays) probably attracted the largest number of good essays in the pile, despite the fact that the failure to define terms persists. As usual, some of the best and some of the worst essays were devoted to the two poles of economics and religion – with this extremism usually explained by whether the candidate displayed any theoretical grasp of the issues at stake. Despite – or perhaps because of – the thematic and chronological breadth of the paper, the general quality of the scripts was encouraging. More could always be done in interrelating economic, cultural, intellectual, religious, political, and military issues, but in general this paper appears to be serving the purpose of helping first years think about major issues in broad thematic terms.

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

Total Number: 76

Main: 63

HML: 6

AMH: 2

HPL: 5

There were 76 candidates taking this paper, including 63 from the main school (6 HML; 5 HPL; 2 AMH). The overall performance was strong: twenty-six candidates (just under 35 %) were awarded a first, forty-three (57%) a 2.1, six a 2.2, with a single candidate gaining a third (42). The most popular questions concerned the religious revival (chosen by 30 candidates) and socialism/anti-Semitism (29 candidates), followed by questions to do with women and gender (26 candidates), the role of the state (23 candidates), industrialization (19 candidates),

the European revolutions (18 candidates), nationalism (17 candidates), race and imperialism (16 candidates), education (12 candidates), as well as questions related to either space, migration, resistance to European imperialism (9 candidates). Very few candidates chose to address questions on conservatism (4 candidates) and on cultural tastes or attitudes to science (1 candidate). Nobody opted to write on either workers and peasants or global awareness. Candidates did particularly well on questions related to gender (15 of the 26 who did this question got 70+), industrialization (8 out of 19 got 70+), religious revival (9 out of 30), race and imperialism (6 out of 16).

Optional Subject 1: Theories of State

The examination was taken by 82 candidates, including 26 in History and Politics and 8 in other Joint Schools. All the questions on the paper were answered, with a marked preference for the questions on Hobbes (67 answers), followed by 40 each on Rousseau and Marx and 33 on Aristotle. Of the thematic questions the most popular was Q12 on the influence of the times in which authors lived, with 31 answers.

Questions may be divided into three categories, which require slightly different skills and approaches. The first are general in scope and invite candidates to draw widely on an author's thinking. At the same time they need focus and time to explore the ramifications of the proposition. For example, the best answers to Q1 on Aristotle (noble actions and comradeship) explored the question of noble actions through ruling and being ruled and the question of friendship in the polis; the weaker ones simply dealt with the polis existing for self-sufficiency and the good life. Similarly, the best answers to Q3 on Hobbes (the maxim 'Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thyself') engaged with the question of trust and reciprocity although few thought about following the answer through to an understanding of equality before the law, property rights and justice in the commonwealth. The weaker answers insisted on rehearsing the origins of sovereignty and could not think beyond the impulse to self-preservation.

The second kind of question is about a particular aspect of an author's thought – Q2 on discord in Aristotle, and both Rousseau and Marx questions. The best questions explored the ramifications of these questions with some imagination and persistence. EG 6 on how freedom could be maintained. Q7 on the proletariat as an agent of social transformation was generally well answered, with an understanding of the dialectic, the materialist conception of history, collective action and class consciousness. The better answers were fluent on the issues of surplus value and alienation and dealt intelligently with the question of the peasantry and intellectuals. Here the very best answers thought about what an intellectual was and mobilised Marx's critique of the utopian socialists and German social democrats.

The third kind of question – the thematic – invites a comparative approach. Too many candidates simply explore one author after another without making adequate comparisons. The better candidates offered some kind of framework of analysis within which to assess the authors' thinking. The popular Q12 was dealt with very differently. Weaker answers cited Hobbes' environment of the Civil War and Marx's of class war but were less clear on Rousseau's historical context (Geneva, France or the Enlightenment?). More promising answers looked at the issue of authors in exile and at odds with their worlds. Best of all were answers that had some idea of intellectual history and set authors in the context of the intellectual debates and scientific methods of their day.

One final point about the use of evidence. A minority of answers never offer a single quotation from any author. Clearly this paper is about analysis and argument but it is also about using evidence to dissect a nuance or support an argument. This is not a request that candidates learn long quotations and certainly not for another assertion that life in Hobbes' state of nature is nasty, brutish and short, but a suggestion that short quotations are where appropriate to sharpen the scholarly precision of an answer.

Optional Subject 15: The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921.

14 candidates sat this paper, 11 main school, 3 joint school. 4 candidates (29%) obtained marks of 70 or above.

There was generally a good spread of answers with all questions tackled except for (2) on reformism, (3) on socialists and liberals.

The most popular question was on socialist attitudes to 'bourgeois feminism' (twelve takers). This produced interestingly divergent answers, reflecting no doubt the twenty-first century salience of controversies over gender. Answers would be improved by more attention being given to the attitudes of 'bourgeois feminists' towards workers and the labour movement. The relationship between our principals was, of course, two-way.

There were seven takers for the question on the left and religion. These were well done, though more attention could be paid to attempts, often quite successful, of churches to address social concerns (the Papal encyclical of *Rerum Novarum* (1891) could be mentioned). Again, national variation is important. The SPD and the Catholic Centre Party worked quite well together in the early Weimar years, while the Italian Socialists and the Christian democratic Popolo d'Italia, despite having quite a lot in common, failed to unite against the common Fascist threat.

Five candidates tackled the question on militarism. Generally it was appreciated that militarism was distinguished by most of the left from 'legitimate' arming for 'national defence'.

Five candidates answered on the socialist response to the outbreak of the First World War. The idea that the 'defencist' left betrayed its values remains very powerful in the historiography, and it's important for candidates to appreciate that this is a matter of legitimate contestation and query.

In general, one would like to see more attention given to the left's relations with liberalism, a tradition out of which it arguably grew. The Ruggiero set text is useful as a discussion of this topic. Reformism and Revisionism, related topics, deserve more attention, as do the Trade Unions' relations to political socialism.

Candidates were expected to show knowledge of the left movement in various countries and sensitivity to variation. In general this was achieved by candidates, and the best scripts highlighted the real dilemmas faced by the left rather than simply identifying their errors from the comfortable vantage point of hindsight.

Approaches to History

Overall, a number of scripts were very example-driven. The better answers presented an analytical as well as case studies. The rubric requires references to specific authorities or studies, and candidates must bear this in mind.

Anthropology

Question 1 was not always well understood. Question 2, on myths, was generally well answered, defining myth, looking at how it was shaped from above and below and between communities. Question 3 elicited some rather predictable answers, dealing with ritual/ceremony or wrestling with structuralism/functionalism. Better answers grappled with the issues raised by Michel Foucault and Joan Scott. Question 5, on the family, were generally well done, though some answers were almost entirely innocent of anthropological concepts. The better answers dealt well with exogamy/endogamy, succession, and so on.

Art

Question 11, citing Panofsky, drew interesting answers, but few that really engaged with the point Panofsky was trying to make: that art works can be subjected to iconological analysis by the historian to reveal societal influences on the artist, expressed in their work, that would have been unconscious to the artist. This raises the possibility that art can reveal to the historian the 'common sense' of a society. As such, it is well worth engaging with. This question differentiated between those with marked art-historical ability and those with less. Questions (12), (13) and (14) in various ways asked the candidate to discuss the utility of art to elites. Answers were sound, but tended to be over-balanced to one direction or the other. For example, art may be an effective tool of propaganda (14) but the very fact of iconoclasm (13) reveals that the audience may violently reject the message being promoted by elite patrons of art (12). One might consider for example, not only the overwhelming promotion of 'socialist realist' art by Communist regimes, but also the toppling of Stalinist statues during, for example, the uprising of Hungary in 1956. Almost all answers were very good on patronage but less well answered on audiences. While some answers rightly mentioned salons, critics, the art market, museums etc., they were often in need of more conceptualisation

Economics

On the whole students displayed good familiarity with issues and data. There were some good, interesting answers – HECO students didn't clearly do better than others. The most common weakness was failure to sustain a coherent argument – too many answers just assembled relevant material. Q17 was by far the most popular, though 18 and 19 also attracted some answers. In relation to Q17, it would have been helpful had more students specified what they took 'industrialization' to mean, since the term can be (and was) understood in more than one way (though the student who explained that it meant 'industrial methods of production, like the factory', didn't advance their case). Many students related the question to 'great divergence' issues, sometimes effectively, though sometimes this proved diversionary; issues relating to the role of the state also reoriented some answers away from the question posed.

Gender

Question 21 was a popular question, generally well answered. Many thoughtful answers delved into female spirituality/religiosity and the feminisation of religion using case studies. Candidates often look at the Muslim and Hindu worlds as well as Christendom. Question 22, on whether warfare was primarily a masculine phenomenon, made for interesting answers. The question, of course, invited reflect not only on the experience of military combatants, but also on the 'Home Front' of modern 'total wars': the longer standing impact of wars of devastation and armies living off the land – characteristic of pre-modern wars – could have been given more attention. The question on household economics (23) attracted a good number of answers,

presumably partly because it allowed those with an economics bent to engage, but also reflective of the currently lively historiography on the topic.

Question 24, on whether gender history has prematurely displaced women's history, produced a considerable number of strongly argued and engaged essays, with the answer going both ways. Regardless of the position ultimately taken by candidates, they were rewarded for their cogency and evidence. The topic is clearly live and stimulating.

Sociology

Answers on revolution (27) often took the opportunity to tilt at a Marxist theory of revolutionary catastrophism and inevitability. Few pointed out, oddly, that the quotation in the question, evincing scepticism that a satisfactory general theory of revolution is possible, came from that noted Marxist historian, E. J. Hobsbawm. It would be useful for candidates to consider whether mid-range sociological theories – of resources mobilisation, radicalisation etc. – can be usefully applied to revolution, not to generalise about the phenomenon its abstract entirety, but to understand revolutionary *processes* in individual outbreaks.

There were many answers on 'class' and 'status' (question 28). These were often quite sophisticated, and most candidates, forced to choose, preferred 'status' as a hermeneutic device to 'class'. It might be useful to consider both these terms in a less all-or-nothing fashion. They might well ground social preferences, even if they do not determine them.

Answers on secularisation and modernization theory (question 30) were less closed than in previous years, with a willingness to treat secularisation as a plausible if problematic phenomenon. This openness is to be welcomed. Generally answers showed a good handling of evidence and examples. A popular and valid argument was that the theory needs to take account of the market in religion.

Historiography: Tacitus to Weber

There were 87 candidates for this paper, of whom 30 candidates gained Distinction marks, and 57 gained overall marks higher than 60%. In short, this was an outstanding crop of papers. The best of the Distinction papers were very good indeed; around a third of candidates to gain a Distinction in this paper were at the higher end of the 70+ range of marks. Historiography is a paper that demands a lot of related skills – close reading, sensitivity to context, awareness of a range of interpretative possibilities, the need to identify an argumentative core and periphery in primary texts, the need to avoid anachronistic judgements – and the very best papers were attentive to all of these elements. The best candidates always demonstrated awareness of the problems that necessarily follow from reading texts in translation, and there were especially fine responses to questions about the work of Tacitus, Augustine, and Ranke that paid proper attention to this matter; the usual observations regarding the untranslatability of '*virtu*' and '*fortuna*' when reading Machiavelli were sensitively in place in the responses of most candidates. It was especially pleasing to see how much theological understanding was accorded to Augustine's conception of history, and answers to questions on Augustine were often especially good at relating the primary text to the wealth of critical commentary it has inspired. To achieve the best in this paper, it is vital to know the texts and not to be too strongly indebted

to particular commentators on those texts; indeed, the best papers tended to be by candidates who demonstrated some distance from, and occasional healthy disagreement with, established authorities on individual historians, be it Robert Markus on Augustine, Quentin Skinner on Machiavelli, or Georg Iggers on Ranke. Originality can only be won through intense familiarity with the sources, and this was evident in a pleasingly high proportion of papers. There were particular favourites among the questions asked with a majority of candidates, but all the questions were answered by one or more of the candidates. Quite a high proportion of candidates attempted comparative questions, and quite a few tackled more than one; it is invariably better to discuss only two historians when working on a comparative question, otherwise valuable analytical space is given over to scene-setting and grounds for comparison being all too elaborately and lengthily laid out. When writing about historical texts, it is vital that candidates cut to the chase rather than spending too much time getting into the saddle. Historiography continues to be an intensely stimulating paper, and the best candidates presented equally stimulating Prelims' papers which it was a genuine pleasure to read. Undergraduate historians have much to learn from the virtues and vices of great historians, and such critical evaluation was richly evident in Prelims' this year.

Examiners:

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