History
Prelims 2015

Examiners' Report

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2015

REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS

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

I: Statistical overview

Table 1: Performance of candidates by gender

Year	All HIST cands	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
2015	225	71 31.60%	154 38.44%	107	31 29.0%	76 71.0%	118	40 33.90%	78 66.10%
2014	240	74 30.83%	166 69.17%	128	35 27.34%	93 72.66%	112	39 34.82%	73 65.18%
2013	230	64 27.8%	166 72.17%	115	23 20.0%	92 80.0%	115	41 35.66%	74 64.34%
2012	229	38 16.59%	191 83.40%	108	7 6.48%	101 93.51%	121	31 25.62%	90 74.38%

Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2015

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles I - *c*.300-1087	37	2	39
History of the British Isles II – 1042-1330	41	5	46
History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550	25	3	28
History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700	44	3	47

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
History of the British Isles V – 1685-1830	45	10	55
History of the British Isles VI – 1815-1924	25	6	31
History of the British Isles VII – since 1900	8	3	11
General History I – 370-900	65	22	87
General History II – 1000-1300	47	10	57
General History III – 1400-1650	55	16	71
General History IV – 1815-1914	58	22	80
OS 1 – Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx)	31	16	47
OS 2 – The Age of Bede, *c.*660-*c.*740	6	2	8
OS 3 – Early Gothic France *c.*1100-*c.*1150	6	3	9
OS 4 – Conquest & Frontiers: England & the Celtic Peoples 1150-1220	2	3	5
OS 5 – English Chivalry & the French War *c.*1330-*c.*1400	14	1	15
OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450	8	3	11
OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance	10	1	11
OS 8– Witch-craft & Witch-hunting in early modern Europe	18	4	22
OS 9 – Making England Protestant 1558-1642 (new)	7	0	7
OS 10 – Conquest & Colonization: Spain & America in the 16th Century	31	9	40
OS 11 – Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815	28	6	34
OS 12 – Women, gender and the nation: Britain, 1789-1825	13	0	13
OS 13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914	10	0	10
OS 14 – Haiti and Louisiana: The problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery (new)	17	6	23
OS 15 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921	6	2	8
OS 16 – Radicalism in Britain 1965-75	14	2	16

Paper	Main School	Joint Schools	Total
OS 17 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH)	0	3	3
OS 18 – Augustan Rome (AMH)	4	7	11
OS [19] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870	0	5	5
Approaches to History	122	36	158
Historiography: Tacitus to Weber	67	15	82
Herodotus	0	0	0
Einhard and Asser	2	0	2
Tocqueville	20	4	24
Meinecke and Kehr	3	2	5
Machiavelli	2	0	2
Trotsky	1	1	2
Diaz del Moral	5	2	7
Quantification	3	0	3

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	21%	30	22%	23	19%	43.40%
Pass	201	79%	105	78%	96	81%	47.76%
Ppass							
Total	254	100	135	100	119	100	

General History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	85	29%	50	32%	35	25.5%	41.18%
Pass	209	71%	107	68%	102	74.5%	48.80%
Ppass							
Total	294	100	157	100	137	100	-

Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	**Men**		**Women**		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	84	27.9%	42	26%	42	30%	50%
Pass	217	72.1%	119	74%	98	70%	45%
Ppass							
Total	301	100	161	100	140	100	-

Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	**Men**		**Women**		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	26	16.6%	16	18.8%	10	13.9%	38.5%
Pass	131	83.4%	69	81.2%	62	86.1%	47.3%
Ppass							
Total	157	100	85	100	72	100	-

Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
D	26	31.7%	14	29.8%	12	34.3%	46.2%
Pass	56	68.3%	33	70.2%	23	65.7%	41.1%
Ppass							
Total	82	100	47	100	35	100	-

II Marking & Classification

III Comments on Papers: General

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

Thirty-nine candidates took the paper (main school 37, HENG 2), and the majority performed well. Almost all questions were answered, and most candidates were able to draw on a mix of critically-handled literary, documentary and material evidence in a way that the examiners were pleased to see. Particular favourites were Q 1 on 410, Q 4 on Bede, Q 5 on material evidence, Q 10 on Alfred, Q 13 on powerful women, Q 15 on the generation of 1050, Q 18 on law codes, and Q 19 on English resistance to the Normans. Good lectures and successful tutorials clearly lay behind many effective answers, but they could also be a trap to candidates who weren't thinking hard enough about what the question was really getting at. Answers to Q 1 that simply wanted to explain that Roman Britain was already changing in the fourth century were only dealing with part of the question. What about the fifth century? Tackling Q 4 it helped to have read Bede; but it helped as much to have read Campbell's classic and highly accessible essays which bring out the peculiar nature of Bede's world view. Q 5 was usually answered with reference to coinage. Most candidates knew something about Dolley and Metcalf on Edgar's coinage reforms; a few were able to subject that venerable thesis to critical analysis. Many used the question to bring in Offa's coinage reforms, which was usually fine, but sometimes undermined by ignorance of basic facts. Offa, for example, did not strike an extensive gold coinage. Whatever period they had in mind, those candidates who had found time to explore the *Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds*, especially its mapping function, were almost bound to do well. Q 10 lured the unwary into an explanation of why Alfred defeated the Danes and no more, but was nevertheless usually well done. The best answers showed a sophisticated appreciation of Asser and the other literary products of the reign, based on close reading and detailed knowledge. That wasn't so true for Q 13 on powerful women. Answers were often engaged and lively, but only a few seemed aware of either the debates surrounding the issue, or the potentially relevant evidence found in such standard collections as *English Historical Documents*. Q 15 was a question about economics, changing standards of living, who gained and who lost. Despite the fact that most candidates had evidently read Fleming's *Britain after Rome* (2010), this key theme in her book seemed to have passed them by, and too many tried to turn it into a question solely about politics and government. Quot homines, tot sententiae, but even so "better off" cannot simply be reduced to living under a strong government and paying high taxes. Q 18 on law codes deserves mention only because the few candidates who had read these interesting texts clearly enjoyed talking about them, and generally had good things to say. Finally Q 19, asking "Why were the English unable to offer stiffer resistance to the Normans in 1066?" was well-done too, producing several fresh and energetic answers. Overall, and as ever, candidates who had clearly spent time reading and engaging with primary sources invariably produced the strongest answers.
(M Whittow)

History of the British Isles II: 1042-1330

46 took the paper, earning, on first marking, 8 distinction-level marks, 31 in the 60s (of which 5 at 60), 6 in the 50s and one in the 40s. On the whole, therefore, the paper was well done, with the large majority of candidates writing competent, informed and relevant answers. Every question on the paper was addressed by at least one candidate, but the most popular were the political questions: notably those on the Norman Conquest (17), the causes of Magna Carta (16), Anglo-Norman succession (13), Church-State relations (11), and Scotland

and Wales as lordships or kingdoms (9/4). Least popular were the questions on trade and towns (1), knights (1), population growth and economic expansion (2), free peasants and serfs (3), lay religious devotion (3) and the history of parliament (3). The quite tough question on women and changes in the law notched up 5 answers. There is no reason why candidates should not home in on political and constitutional questions, given the wealth of outstanding literature on these topics, though it is a shame that the rich body of writing on social and economic topics is reflected in only a small minority of scripts. By and large, the answers to political questions showed a sound grasp of both secondary and primary sources, but there are some criticisms that could be made. Few candidates grasped the meaning of the first question: the emphasis on expectations was designed to draw attention to the unplanned and dynamic aspects of the Conquest, and the way in which processes of confiscation, colonisation and revolt made for a more complete transformation and militarisation of the political order than William had apparently intended. Answers on the causes of Magna Carta were perceptive on the implications of the Conquest, but generally weaker on the results of the 12th-century legal reforms, particularly in explaining the more legalistic reaction to royal arbitrariness under King John. The knowledge of too many candidates seemed to peter out after 1215, and even more after 1265, and this was damaging to candidates who attempted questions that invited knowledge of the whole period. Candidates wrote well about Scotland and Wales, but few seemed to realise that the Lordship of Ireland was a significantly different place by 1300 from what it had been in the 1170s. Candidates need to take care with statistics: they presented a wide range of numbers of castles in England – from a low-sounding 100 in 1150 to a high-sounding 500 in 1100 – while numbers and proportions of English tenants-in-chief in Domesday were frequently muddled. References to historians were often inaccurate and unnecessary, and too many candidates were mistaken in their use of 'disinterested' (which means 'impartial', as any fule kno).

History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550

28 candidates took this paper; there were 6 distinction level marks. The overall standard achieved by candidates on this paper was promising. There were some outstanding scripts which would have achieved high marks had this been an FHS paper; many more scripts included least one strong answer. Among the most encouraging dimensions of this year's scripts was candidates' willingness to range across the whole period, particularly in answering questions on politics, military matters and revolts. The best answers arose when candidates substantiated and developed their answers through the consistent deployment of precise evidence and/or were able to engage closely with relevant historiographical approaches and specialist case studies. Most questions on the paper received at least one answer although those on material culture, the family, vernacular books, Henry VIII's reformation, and towns were not attempted. While there were several answers on Wales and Ireland, Scotland did not attract any responses. Among those questions which were answered, responses were fairly evenly distributed: ie. no one question dominated candidates' attention, although the questions on the ramifications of the Black Death, Lollardy, and popular revolt were the most popular with between 10 and 14 responses each. One of the most interesting, and perhaps unexpected, developments was the decent number of very competent, and in some cases excellent, answers to the question on the implications for political life of contemporary references to the common weal.

(J Machielsen)

History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700

Forty four candidates sat this paper from the main school and three from HPOL. The candidates answered a wide range of questions; only qs 1, 3 and 20 had no takers. And they also tended to cover a wide chronological and geographical range. The most common question was q 4 on the Reformation (21 takers), followed by q 8 on Ireland (14), and q11 on the civil war and q14 on the Glorious Revolution (12 each). Q 10 on the Union of the Crowns and q11 on succession were also popular, and when candidates had a choice of monarch, as in qs 12 and 6, they tended to select Elizabeth and/or the early Stuarts, suggesting many candidates feel most comfortable in the late Tudor and early Stuart period but had also covered the Henrician Reformation.

Although the Reformation question was popular, it tended not to receive very good answers, perhaps because it is often the first topic that students encounter. This year candidates were invited to consider the changes to religious *practice* but many offered instead a brief account of all the Reformation legislation they could remember, with some comments on how well they thought it went down with the English people. Few seemed to have a firm grasp on what Reformation ideas were (in contrast to answers for GH III), and although many mentioned in passing the dissolution of the monasteries and the iconoclasm of Edward VI's government, very few considered how this might have altered the way Christianity was actually practised or understood. Those who answered q 8 on Puritanism did tend to see it as a cultural as well as a spiritual movement, but when it came to the Reformation, it was disappointing how often candidates failed to engage either with the question or with contemporary historical debates. Rather than discuss the work of Duffy or Shagan, for example, they fell back instead on what they knew of Haigh and Dickens. The treatment of the early Stuarts was sometimes little better – too often Charles I was portrayed as the central or sole cause of the civil wars; and many candidates saw q 10 as an opportunity to detail James I's failings rather than consider the wider issues raised by the Union of the Crowns. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is still viewed in a very positive light. Stereotypes may be hard to shift, but some of the answers showed a worrying reliance on an extremely old fashioned and Whiggish narrative, seemingly unaware of any recent scholarship.

More positively, many of the answers were done very well. There were excellent answers on Catholicism, on the impact of succession crises, and on political ideas (q 13). Essays on the Glorious Revolution were consistently good and sometimes very good; they were balanced in their assessments of James II and William of Orange and seemed much more aware of recent trends in scholarship (Pincus's work found little favour, but did at least attract critical discussion). Tudor Ireland was clearly a subject of interest to many students, who tended to resist the urge to offer a pre-packaged answer but instead engaged with this year's question. There were some impressive answers on masculinity (and several mediocre ones on femininity), but on the whole candidates preferred the political questions to those on social and cultural issues – and more could certainly be done to encourage the undergraduates to connect political, religious and cultural themes together. Generally candidates were knowledgeable about the events and developments they described, and (except when answering q 4) did make some effort to shape their answer to the specific question in front of them. Often they illustrated their answers with anecdotes, quotes and brief case studies, which enlivened the prose.

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

evidence of the widespread ability to analyse the period in an intelligent and informed way.

History of the British Isles V: 1685-1830

55 candidates took this paper. Four fifths of all candidates attempted Q1 (How revolutionary was 1688?), but that apart, there was a good spread of answers. Five other questions attracted ten or more takers (Q2, on Whigs and Tories, usually answered with respect to 1714-60; Q3, overwhelmingly answered with respect to Jacobitism, not Jacobinism; Q4, whether wars united or divided Britons; Q14, on popular enlightenment and Q15, on politeness). Only one question attracted no answers (Q5, Why were there not more tax revolts – though given what students knew about the fiscal-military state, the Excise crisis and the American War of Independence, someone should have been able to cobble something together). Qs 18 (on sex and liberty) attracted only one answer; Q 13 (on the household as economic unit) two, but the modal number of answers per question was four.

The general standard was good: most students showed a good sense of how to construct an effective essay (though there were some rambling and unfocussed introductions, and some overly repetitive conclusions. Answers, especially but not only to Q1, sometimes fell into narrative or description, and did not maintain an analytical approach). Many candidates wrote punchily and conveyed a personal view; this examiner was struck by occasional corporate imagery (1688 as 'hostile takeover'; Toryism as a 'toxic brand'). Every candidate showed a convincing familiarity with the period, undoubtedly new to most of them, and some demonstrated a quite sophisticated grasp of the lineaments of an alien culture. Many showed a pleasing ability to think on their feet, and quite a few scripts were genuinely interesting to read. Most used historiography effectively (though repeated Pincus-bashing, warranted or not, did become tedious; no candidate reflected on why Pincus argued as he did). Also on the negative side, as has regrettably become usual, only a minority of candidates demonstrated a convincing grasp of anything that happened after 1800.

As to particular questions, only a minority of candidates thought to reflect on why contemporaries called 1688 a revolution (and some puzzles would have been resolved had candidates been aware that the new year was then deemed to begin on 25 March, though not knowing this was not deemed a fault). Answers to questions on class and gender in politics, India and ideas of empire, and regionalism and the industrial revolution were on the whole less well done, and candidates answering Q10, on Britain's standing as a great power, were generally hampered by inadequate – and in some instances what seemed to be a total lack of -- knowledge about British relations with other European states. By contrast, some well informed and interestingly conceived answers were supplied to questions on elections, the landed classes, popular enlightenment, the achievements of established churches (always answered with respect to England), whether we can study the history of crime, and on Britain's success or otherwise in developing an indigenous artistic and/or musical culture.
(J Innes)

History of the British Isles VI: 1815-1924

31 candidates took this paper. The quality of work was generally high. It was clear that candidates had engaged thoughtfully with the themes on which they wrote, and most seemed confident in framing their essays critically. Almost every question on the paper attracted an answer (only Q 15 on the pursuit of leisure was not attempted), and most candidates demonstrated range both in their choice of questions and in the ways in which they conceptualised their essays. The methodological flexibility was impressive. There were

some excellent answers - on gender and national identity in particular – which deftly wove together intellectual, social and political history. Few candidates answered Q 17 on the Victorian economy, but they did so intelligently; awareness of economic history was evident in other essays (most obviously in response to Q 12 on the Irish famine, but also to Q 9 on Empire and Q 5 on attitudes to poverty). Answers to Qs 4 (on parliamentary reform) and 11 (on Conservatism) tended to be narrower both in their range of reference and in their sophistication. It was clear that all candidates were building effectively on the lecture programme. The more limited stuck very closely to the contours provided by the lectures. The best showed a capacity to develop an individual line of argument, based on independent reading, and to cross-refer fruitfully between different areas of discussion.
(Jane Garnett)

History of the British Isles VII: since 1900
Only 11 candidates took this paper. The general level was reasonable, and candidates showed range across the period. The best scripts were confident in their problematisation of the questions, and showed both energy and precision in argument. The weaker scripts were marred by a tendency to become rather journalistic and to generalise – sometimes tendentiously - from the present. Clearly this is a particular risk in a paper which runs up to the contemporary world, and candidates need to ensure that they develop a sufficiently critical and historically textured engagement with the questions.
(Jane Garnett)

General History I: The Transformation of the Ancient World, 370-900
Eighty-seven candidates took the paper (main school 65, AMH 13, HECO 1, HML 4, HPOL 4), and the overall standard was high. There were only a couple of poor papers. Most candidates had clearly enjoyed what they had studied and virtually everybody had a great deal to say. All the questions were answered, with Q 8 on Islam and Q 11 on Charlemagne as particular favourites. Q7 on whether the Franks, Byzantines and Muslims could equally be described as heirs of Rome was best answered by those who knew that Byzantium was the Roman empire, that great Frankish estates look very like great Roman estates, and that Christian culture thrived in the seventh-century Near East even under Muslim rule. Q 16 on the impact of Scandinavian emigration was not well done by those who wanted only to discuss whether the Vikings were raiders or traders; the question was about impact, and good answers kept political and economic consequences in mind. The creation of the Kievan state arguably took the discussion past 900, but those who ignored that limit had a good example of exactly the sort of impact the questioner had in mind. Hodges and Whitehouse's argument that dirhems brought via the Russian rivers encouraged the growth of the western economy was also usefully brought to the discussion. Some candidates were keen to talk about China and Eurasian steppe nomads: usually a good idea, but not if you hadn't worked out what a steppe nomad was. Answers to Q 2 on migrations were not as engaged by the lively debates between Heather and Halsall as one would have predicted; indeed some were apparently unaware that this was a controversial topic in any way. Q 3 on women was particularly well-handled by those who had looked at Merovingian saints' lives or Dhuoda's handbook. Q 4 on Carthage was usually well-handled, although fewer candidates had read Wickham or Heather, in this case the 1995 article, with the care one might have expected. Q 5 on the prosperity of east and west was essentially a question about the late antique economy. Surprisingly few of those who answered the question showed much awareness of the archaeological evidence for the prosperity of the Roman east in town and country, and oddly no one answering this question mentioned the Limestone villages of northern Syria. Q 10 on conversion and social identity inspired several good answers, many looking at conversion to Islam. Q 15 on

monasteries was generally well-handled and Dr Gowers' lecture on the topic had clearly given many a useful jumping off point. Q 18 on literacy produced some good answers, but these were less influenced by recent revisionist work on early medieval literacy than one might have expected. Q 19 on archaeological evidence exposed those who could only talk in general terms rather than being able to talk about specific sites, projects or categories of objects. Finally Q 20 on feuds gave some an opportunity to talk about Gregory of Tours and Frankish law codes which they had clearly enjoyed.
(M Whittow)

General History II: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours 1000-1300
57 candidates took this paper; there were 12 distinction level marks. This is a demanding paper which requires a broad and deep conceptual understanding of the history of western Christendom and its geographical neighbours over a three-hundred year period. It is now customary for the examiner of this paper to set questions which probe candidates' understanding of those broad concepts rather than asking questions which have a precise chronological or geographical focus. Most students rose to the challenge of breadth and to the demands of answering the question set by the examiner: i.e. relatively few candidates simply re-heated a tutorial essay; most tried to adapt their knowledge to the questions set. Where relevant, many students engaged in an encouraging manner with the development of any given theme over the chronological span of the entire period. The most successful candidates combined sensitivity to breadth with attention to detail. This attention could come in different forms. Some candidates worked closely with primary sources (particularly successfully in the questions on chivalry, the Papacy and Empire, heresy, Byzantium, frontiers, and the Feudal Revolution); others engaged closely with important historiographical debates (e.g. in the heresy, Feudal Revolution, frontiers, and crusades questions); the best candidates managed to do both. Success, however, did not require that candidates had acquired the same level of depth across all three hundred years of each topic. Instead success was more likely to arise when candidates could argue their case by showing how a precise focus on some particular first-hand evidence or elements of a historiographical debate can illuminate broader contours. It should also be stressed that reciting long quotations from primary sources with little connecting argument was not a route to success: i.e. it is important for candidates to remember to integrate detail into an argument not simply create chains of detail.

As for particular questions: there were some very strong answers on the Feudal Revolution, heresy, Byzantium and frontiers; while there were some good responses to standard topics, such as crusades, religious orders, Church Reform, the papacy/empire contest, and the Mongols, others were rather too vague to convince. The question on the relationship between kings and nobles attracted few responses, which was odd given the focus in the lecture series on kingship and in many tutors' teaching on royal dynasties such as the Capetians. Perhaps candidates need to remember that the king-noble relationship was fundamental to the theory and practice of kingship across medieval Christendom. The question on the economy was poorly answered in most cases. Most questions attracted at least one answer; only those on Italian cities, the Jews, and one of the options within the question on the Mongols (19b) were not answered by anyone. Finally, although the question on interconnections within the medieval world was answered by only a handful of students, those who chanced their arm offered creative and convincing answers.
(C Holmes)

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

71 students attempted the paper this year. The quality of the scripts was quite high, with just over one-fifth of students gaining a distinction. Unlike previous years all questions received at least one answer. In contrast to last year when section D proved most popular, this year sections B and, especially, C of the exam paper drew the largest number of answers. Much more notable than the spread of essays across sections, however, was their distributions within the four sections of the paper. Whereas answers were fairly evenly spread for the first two sections of the exam paper, a limited number of questions within sections C and D received a disproportionally high number answers. For section C, many candidates chose to write on question 11 (the impact of Luther's reading of Romans 1:17). For section D, the vast majority of students focussed their attention on question 17 (popular rebellion) or 20 (growing military burdens).

Just as last year, the most popular questions drew some of the weakest essays. A sizeable number of answers to question 11 ignored the particularities of the question, offering stock answers on the early Reformation, which (the examiners suspect) would have been identical had the question been on the publication of the 95 Theses instead. The best essays were those which noticed that Romans 1:17 did not speak of the just living by faith alone or engaged with the immediate (not only theological and intellectual but also political) implications of Luther's reading. More worrying were the essays on question 17 that showed no knowledge of resistance theory and attempted to write on 'resistance' instead. The role of theories of resistance (whether as a motivating or legitimating factor) in rebellions may well have been limited, but must nevertheless be addressed in a question that directly asks about it. A noticeable number of essays on questions 3 and 5 similarly managed to skirt the question, substituting poor relief for the effects of urban growth and ignoring the role of the climate on demographic change. Candidates should be discouraged from using the exam as a Christmas tree that can be decorated with pre-rehearsed essays. The purpose of this method of assessment is to test intellectual flexibility and historical imagination, as well as factual knowledge.

It is worth singling out some of the strongest essays. A number of questions that took few answers, such as the two questions (1 and 4) about patterns of trade and commerce, the Scientific Revolution, and the nobility, received some of the best answers. Some of the best essays on question 9 (on print) successfully challenged Eisenstein's venerable work, while others questioned the premise of the question. It was particularly pleasing to see the number of students grappling with the more difficult religion questions with evident success. While question 12 received some very good answers, no student appears to have read the recent debate between Brad Gregory and Alec Ryrie on the fragmentation of Protestant Christianity. Question 13 received some particularly good answers, with some students also showing knowledge of Euan Cameron's important work on popular superstition. Finally, it is also worth noting that very few students appeared to struggle to answer three essay questions. The quadripartite structure of GH III forcing candidates to answer questions on a wide range of subjects does not seem to have adversely affected student marks.

(J Machielsen)

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

Eighty candidates took this paper. The general standard of answers was high, with few very weak scripts, while a reasonable number of marks in the 70s was awarded. All questions set were attempted, though those on industrialisation and imperialism were most popular, with those on nationalism, gender and religion not far behind. The strongest answers provided strongly analytical responses to the question set, with a wide range of examples. The more

mediocre responses were recycled tutorial essays which paid little attention to the question, and used standard examples from lectures and textbooks. A failure to deal with the question set was a particular problem with the imperialism topic, and several candidates proved themselves unable to sustain a well-informed discussion of either domestic opinion or the politics of the 'periphery'. However, in general candidates showed they had a good grasp of the issues covered by this ambitious course.
(D Priestland)

Optional Subject 1: Theories of State
This remains the most popular option, though there were only 47 takers this year. All questions attracted answers. Q1 (Aristotle, on the implications of the good man and good citizen not necessarily being the same); 3 (Hobbes, on how convincing is his case for life in the state of nature being nasty brutish and short) and 5 (on what Rousseau thought religion could do to help human flourishing) were the most popular. Of the thematic questions the most popular was Q12, inviting students to compare and contrast criteria employed to assess the success of political rule. Performances were often inconsistent: students who wrote knowledgeably and well about one author sometimes betrayed considerable ignorance in writing about others; this inconsistency pulled average marks down. Better but still weak answers showed knowledge of the text but tended to rehearse that without focussing closely enough on the question asked. Some showed knowledge of what an author said but little grasp of how the elements were combined into an argument. Some students showed knowledge of related texts – such as Nicomachean Ethics or the Discourse on Inequality – but didn't show enough ability to specify the arguments of particular texts; it's not impossible that this in some cases arose from overreliance on secondary reading. In general, diffuseness and a tendency to fall back on description were the most common weaknesses. There were however of course some knowledgeable and interesting answers, especially on relatively niche topics: Rousseau and religion, and the role of the family.
(J Innes & S Mortimer)

Optional Subject 9: Making England Protestant 1558-1642 (new)
7 candidates sat the inaugural Making England Protestant paper. There were 2 Distinctions and 5 Passes. The best of the former was really very impressive indeed, offering a sense of vigorous engagement with the questions through sustained and acute deployment of the set texts. The two least impressive passes tended to offer generalities; too much description at the expense of clear and sustained argument; and a tendency to twist questions in order better to suit term-time titles and discussions. 8 of the questions found takers (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13). Q. 6 on satire was the most popular, with 6 answers. Q. 5 (visual sources), q. 8 (the stability of the Elizabethan settlement), and q. 13 (did England become a nation of Protestants) all received 3 or 4. Stronger answers tended to dwell on the problems of evidence, and the need to think about change over time (answers to some of the more wide-ranging questions might vary depending on whether earlier or later periods were emphasised). The best answers tended also to locate arguments within the often ferocious historiographical debates concerning different aspects of the course. Less good scripts tended to be innocent of specific named historians, or else to mention one or two names in extremely cursory fashion. Overall an encouraging first batch of papers that generally displayed a real effort to engage with a variety of often challenging primary sources.
(G Tapsell)

Optional Subject 14: Haiti and Louisiana: The Problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery (new)

Twenty-three candidates, six of them from joint schools with History, sat the examination in this the paper's first year in existence. The examination paper set probably lay toward the 'tougher' end of the spectrum of possibilities. It is then pleasurable to report that the ambient level of attainment was high: seven marks of 68 plus were awarded as opposed to just three marks of 60 minus. Fourteen questions were set. Just one question, a marker for the future on Spanish colonies, was not attempted. Four other questions attracted single responses. That one of these was Q. 6, on Napoleon's Western Design was slightly surprising. There was some clustering of response, with Q. 11 (consequences of the Haitian Revolution for American Slavery); Q. 12 (the status of post-purchase Louisiana within the US); and Q. 4 (Toussaint Louverture as a figurehead and leader) proving popular with 12 responses, 12 responses and 13 responses respectively. Q. 4 asked a 'why' question which many candidates ignored in their haste to present prepared answers. In general though, most candidates engaged efficiently with the questions set. Respondents to Q. 1 (on C.L.R. James' treatment of race and class) and Q. 14 (on human rights and 'legacy') tended to perform better than respondents to Q. 12 and Q. 13, most of whom presented obviously narrative answers. There were some good answers to Q. 8 on British abolitionism. Without making a fetish of factual command, the Assessors were pleased to see (and tended to reward) candidates demonstrating familiarity, often sophisticated, with the prescribed texts and secondary literature.

Approaches to History:

One hundred and fifty eight candidates took this paper, thirty six of them from joint schools. Four different examiners marked this paper. Although there were some good scripts, on the whole the examiners agreed that this was the paper that least convinced them. It's certainly a challenging paper for first-year students (though one that should come to mean more to them in the longer term, and certainly it prepares the ground for the Disciplines paper). Still, the impression in a non-trivial minority of cases was that students had no idea what a question was getting at, and simply hoped that if they wrote about some things they had read for tutorials, this might convince the reader. The paper, which is above all a paper about thinking, is in these and other less egregious instances being approached as if it were primarily a knowledge test. (And the same knowledge may be indiscriminately mobilised to address all manner of problems. Thus, the Great Cat Massacre figured variously as a ritual and a myth – even when not conforming to the same students' definitions of what either myth or ritual consist in). Last year's examiners made a similar point, characterising answers as too often 'very example-driven'.

Even students who did better at engaging with issues raised by questions didn't always seem to examiners to be approaching them from the right perspective. What is perhaps not adequately being conveyed in teaching is that this is a historiographical paper (that's the slot in the programme into which it falls): that is to say, it's about how scholars in various disciplines think, the tools they use to think with – and the ways they influence each other.

It follows that to do well at this paper, or even to make a good stab at the questions, students need among other things to be clear about the disciplinary background of the authors they're reading. If they don't know who is an anthropologist and who is a historian, for example, they'll find it hard to write convincingly about the uses of anthropology for historians. Confusion about these matters was evident in assertions that, e.g. David Cannadine is an anthropologist, and Susan Reynolds a sociologist. A repeated tendency to think that a historian must have some different disciplinary affiliation makes more sense when one sees

the ways in which some students characterise history (notably in a question which asked them what distinguishes historical sociology from history): historians, it was suggested, amass facts and are concerned with events, whereas sociologists are concerned with structures. Though there's obviously something in this contrast, this account of what historians do is also much too limited, and if this is the notion that students come from this paper with, then it's not doing its job of showing how history cross-fertilises with other disciplines.
(J Innes)

Anthropology
Q2, on the study of rituals was the most popular question, though probably the least well done, eliciting the most descriptive and least thoughtful answers. By contrast there were some excellent answers to Q3, on where mythology ends and history starts; Q4, on whether thick description is just storytelling, and Q5, on the implications of studying kinship for understandings of the family. A persistent problem was that students were unclear about the disciplinary background of authors, and therefore found it hard to write effectively about how disciplines differ and interact.

Archaeology
These answers generally displayed a good knowledge of the subject, but engagement with the historiographical and disciplinary questions was rarer. The better answers discussed the different ways in which historians used archaeological sources, and debates between them and between them and archaeologists. The weaker pieces were straightforward history essays that used archaeological evidence. Answers to Qs 6 and 7 were on the whole the strongest and best informed. There were some spirited responses to Q 10, but this question also attracted essays marred by generalisation and assertion.

Art
The essays on Art and History were generally thoughtful, and showed some historiographical awareness. The most popular questions were Q 12, on whether changes in artistic style can be correlated with social or political change, Q 13 on the concept of a period eye, and Q15, on whether the study of patronage is sufficient to illuminate the power of art. Whilst some students struggled to control the vast field of discussion potentially opened by these questions (and failed to show close visual engagement), those who focused on particular case studies and drew out interpretative points comparatively were more successful. There were fewer answers to Q11, on iconoclasm, but they were particularly lively and well supported.

Economics
Qs 16, on whether differences in wage levels explain why some regions have industrialised ahead of others and 18, on the role of the state in transitions between modes of production were the most popular. Though both elicited some interesting answers, too many answers to the first question rehearsed as many competing explanations as the student could fit in, without focussing sufficiently on the explanation pinpointed in particular; few students engaged with issues about how wage levels in different times and places can be effectively compared. In general the examiners felt that in this section, sufficiently historiographically conscious approaches were particularly lacking. Students wrote about problems more than about approaches to problems, and if they cited economists, might not get beyond Smith and Ricardo. Answers were also thought to be too formulaic. There was less evidence than in other sections of individual reflection and creativity.

Gender

Qs 21 (on the influence of medical theories on gender identities), 23 (on crises of masculinity) and 24 (on how changes in women's reproductive roles interact with the pattern of their working lives) were the most popular. It's notable that students tend to take Laqueur's 'one body, two bodies' theory (the most common medical theory cited) as gospel; criticisms by Karen Harvey and others were never explicitly cited. Students who wrote about crises of masculinity often found it hard to say much at all about strong women. The question about reproductive roles sometimes elicited assertions that things don't change, rather than consideration of ways in which they do. There were some interesting answers to Q 25 on female mystics.

Sociology

As in answering economics questions, students often hark back to classic texts, esp. Weber and Durkheim, and while that's good in itself, less evidence of acquaintance with more recent sociological work was on display. There was also a tendency to essentialise theories. Answers to the most popular question, Q30, thus, sometimes denounced secularisation as a mistaken theory, without engaging with ways in which theories of secularisation have developed. Q29, on the uses and limits of status as a tool for understanding social structure, also quite a popular question, often failed to consider what analyses of social structure might be designed to achieve, though it's hard to see how one can assess the utility of something except in relation to one or more specified objectives.

Historiography: Tacitus to Weber

A total of 82 candidates took the paper (67 HIST, 7 HPOL, 1 HENG, 4 HECO, 3 AMH).

This paper continues to be one in which the majority of candidates give of their best and in which they deploy thoughtfulness and sensitivity in relation both to the texts studied and to the contexts in which they were written. Sometimes, the balance between text and context isn't ideally achieved; too much context can leave the texts too far distant for interpretative clarity, the major end and purpose of the examination in Historiography. There is no substitute for knowledge of, and consistent attention being paid to, the set texts. The very best papers, of which there were many, read the texts in context without ever losing sight of the texts as the major focus of their answers. As with all examination papers, the best responses always displayed spontaneity of thought; the very best preparation for this paper is to know the texts well and to think about their contexts, and the worst way of presenting answers is simply to reheat tutorial essays. For example, all too many respondents to the question on Tacitus's possible Republican sympathies considered as making his trustworthiness suspect, ending up writing essays much more generally about his reliability as an historian; all too many unimaginative and under-prepared candidates substituted essays on 'rumour' rather than properly considering Republicanism in Tacitus. Examiners can usually spot reheated tutorial essays; candidates should take time to think before writing their essays, especially if the questions raise issues with which they are less familiar but which their knowledge of the texts invites them to take full advantage of the opportunity given to write about spontaneously and intelligently. There were, for example, excellent answers on Machiavelli and the military and about Gibbon's politics, as detailed in the *Decline and Fall*; the latter of these, less happily, also exposed those candidates who hadn't thought particularly deeply about the terms of the question. All of the set texts attracted good responses in the examination, although surprisingly few candidates attempted the question as to why exactly historians should continue to read the work of long-dead historians. Most candidates who essayed a comparative question did so well and circumspectly, although there is a tendency to

favour one of two historians at the cost both of the other historian under consideration and the general cogency of the essay. Sometimes it is clear that the comparative essay is the means by which candidates meet the rubric of writing about three of the set historians, but saving the historian about whom they are least confident for sometimes scanty comparative treatment. There is undeniably logic to this position, but candidates should not scant the less favoured historian, but should treat him with exactly the same respect and attention they give to the more favoured. One or two candidates chose to write about three historians in their comparative essays, a tactic which throws interpretative momentum and tends to become a checklist of similarities and differences. But, as always with this paper, the great majority of candidates wrote effectively, and it was rare to find a script without any interest or conviction. Historiography is a rewarding paper not only for study but also for examination, as the high quality of scripts continues to demonstrate, especially those of Distinction quality. (B Young)

Examiners:

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