

**Preliminary Examination in Philosophy, Politics and Economics  
Trinity Term and Long Vacation 2011  
Report of Chair of Moderators**

**BASIC STATISTICS**

239 candidates sat the examination in Trinity Term 2011. Their results were as follows:

Category	Number			Percentage		
	2011	2010	2009	2011	2010	2009
Distinction	43	47	63	18.0	19.2	28.0
Pass	193	183	155	80.8	75.0	68.9
Fail 1 paper	2	12	6	0.8	4.9	2.7
Fail 2 or 3 papers	1	2	1	0.4	0.8	0.4
Total	239	244	225	100	100	100

3 candidates failed one or more papers: 3 failed Politics, and 1 failed both Politics and Economics. The number of failures decreased from last year, when seven candidates failed for not fulfilling the Politics rubric with respect to country knowledge. The three candidates who failed Politics this year had also failed to show country knowledge; this issue is discussed further below.

Of the 3 failing candidates who retook one or more papers in September, 2 passed the examination and 1 failed.

**RUBRICS AND CONVENTIONS**

The rubric for the Politics paper requires the candidate to show knowledge of either two or three countries (depending on the number of questions answered in section B). The Conventions specify that failure to fulfill the rubric will result in failure on the paper concerned (point 3), and also, in the list of mark descriptors, that a mark of zero will be awarded for the script. Eleven candidates failed to fulfill the country-knowledge requirement, and were therefore awarded a mark of zero at the Examiners' meeting. Following the release of the marks the Proctors received queries and complaints about the zero marks from a number of colleges.

After extensive discussion with the Proctors, the Examiners agreed to depart from the Conventions by adopting a less harsh penalty for failing to show country knowledge: specifically, a reduction in the overall mark for the script of 15 marks per country not adequately covered. With this amendment, eight of the eleven candidates obtained passing marks.

The principle behind the amendment was that the requirement to show country knowledge should have a similar status to other requirements for spread of knowledge, which are imposed implicitly by limiting the choice of questions. Thus failure to show knowledge of a country should have an effect on the overall mark comparable to answering one fewer question than required (as a candidate with inadequate spread of knowledge might do), which would incur the short-weight penalty.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Excellent administrative support was provided by the PPE Administrator, Liz Griffith, and in general the examination process ran smoothly, but two specific problems arose with respect to script handling. This year, examiners in all three subjects chose to specialize, each marking a subset of the questions on the paper. For Politics and Philosophy candidates were asked to answer each question in a separate booklet, and the booklets were then separated and sent to the appropriate examiner. This process proved to be administratively cumbersome, and the Examiners agreed to recommend that scripts are not separated in this way in future.

A very unfortunate incident was the loss of parts of four scripts (three philosophy and one politics) during transmission between examiners, before marking. In consultation with the Proctors the four candidates were awarded marks that compensated generously for the missing questions. One of these candidates chose to resit the philosophy paper in September.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The examiners in all three subjects were disappointed by the quality of the scripts. The majority of candidates displayed only superficial knowledge and partial understanding of the material studied. There were few excellent answers to individual questions, and even fewer excellent scripts. We suggest that it may be time to look again at the content and objectives of the first year course, asking whether students can reasonably be expected to cover the material, and if so, what obstacles are preventing them from reaching a good standard.

### **Specific recommendations**

1. In view of the large number of rubric failures in politics in the last two years, the politics department should reconsider the format and rubric for the paper in relation to the requirement to show country knowledge. It may be that the requirement could be better tested by changing the format; alternatively this might be addressed through information for tutors and students about the interpretation and implications of the requirement.
2. In future the rules relating to transmission of scripts should be drawn to the attention of all examiners and assessors immediately before the examination.
3. If examiners decide to mark subsets of questions in future, they should consider swapping scripts halfway through the marking period rather than splitting them.
4. The PPE Committee should consider:
  - (a) the penalty for rubric failure in the Conventions. If the rubric for the Politics paper remains similar to the current one, the PPE Committee should consider adopting the approach eventually used this year, of a 15 mark penalty per country, which the Examiners found to be both fair, and sufficiently harsh to provide a clear incentive to take the requirement seriously. This approach also has the merit of consistency with FHS conventions.
  - (b) the implications of specialization by examiners: for example, when the combination of two examiners' marks results in a borderline mark of 40, there is no provision in the Conventions for the examiners to take an overall view of the script.
  - (c) the differences between the spread of marks in the three subjects. This raises some concerns, in particular because papers with higher variance tend to determine distinctions, and because students may tend to focus their efforts on

subjects where both high and low marks are possible. Over recent years, the standard deviation of economics marks has been consistently higher than the others. This year, the standard deviation for politics was only 3.8 excluding the penalties for rubric failure.

**Margaret Stevens (Chair, PPE Prelims Moderators)**

**DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS**

<b>Distribution of Marks for June 2011 [2010 figures in brackets]</b>			
	Politics	Philosophy	Economics
Average	61.0 [62.4]	61.1 [61.5]	61.8 [60.2]
Standard Deviation	5.7 [9.1]	8.3 [8.2]	8.5 [11.6]
75+	0% [0.8%]	7.5% [4.9%]	6.3% [7.0%]
70-74	2.1% [12.0 %]	7.9% [7.4%]	10.4% [8.6%]
60-69	67.8% [66.1%]	41.3% [51.2%]	46.3% [41.4%]
50-59	25.5% [14.9%]	37.5% [32.3%]	28.3% [31.6%]
40-49	3.3% [3.7%]	5.8% [3.2%]	8.3% [8.6%]
37-39	0.4% [0%]	0% [0%]	0% [0.8%]
Less than 37	0.8% [2.5%]	0% [0.8%]	0.4% [2.0%]
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The average marks for Politics and Philosophy were lower than in 2010. Politics had the lowest mean score.

## GENDER BREAKDOWN

Category	Female June 2011 [2010 figures in brackets]		Male June 2011 [2010 figures in brackets]	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Distinction	10 [13]	13.0% [16.5%]	33 [34]	20.4% [20.6%]
Pass	67 [65]	87.0% [82.3%]	126 [118]	77.8% [71.5%]
Fail 1 paper	0 [1]	0% [2.5%]	2 [11]	1.2% [6.7%]
Fail 2 or 3 papers	0 [0]	0% [0%]	1 [2]	0.6% [1.2%]
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77 [79]</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>162 [165]</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Gender distribution of Marks June 2011</b>			
	Politics	Philosophy	Economics
Female Average	61.0	60.8	59.9
Male Average	61.0	61.4	62.7
Overall Average	61.0	61.1	61.8
Female Standard Deviation	5.3	7.2	7.7
Male Standard Deviation	5.9	8.7	8.8
% of Female cohort achieving $\geq 70$	1.3%	11.7%	9.1%
% of Male cohort achieving $\geq 70$	2.5%	17.3%	20.4%

<b>Gender distribution of Marks June 2010</b>			
	Politics	Philosophy	Economics
Female Average	63.4	61.6	59.7
Male Average	62.0	61.4	60.5
Overall Average	62.4	61.5	60.2
Female Standard Deviation	5.5	6.1	8.3
Male Standard Deviation	10.3	9.1	12.9
% of Female cohort achieving $\geq 70$	11.4%	11.4%	10.1%
% of Male cohort achieving $\geq 70$	13.5%	12.7%	18.2%

## PAPER REPORTS

### 1. Report on INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY (June 2011)

#### SECTION A: LOGIC

1. (63 answers)

(a) Although part of the point of the exercise was to ignore irrelevant aspects of the English argument, some candidates went too far and formalised particularly skeletal arguments. Candidates could generally have been more explicit and more patient when discussing their formalisations.

(b) Several good answers. Part (iii) afforded room for much ingenuity and discussion, which some candidates displayed.

2. (13 answers)

Perhaps the easiest question for those who knew what they were doing: a sizeable number of the students who answered the question scored full or close to full marks on it. (Candidates should be encouraged to tackle unconventional questions, which as a rule tend to be easier, precisely in order to compensate for their unconventionality.) Although the logic course does not introduce proof by induction, many candidates displayed implicit understanding of this technique in tackling part (a)(iii).

3. (55 answers)

Parts (a) and (b) were almost uniformly answered perfectly. In part (c)(iii), a surprisingly large number of candidates forgot that  $L_1$  has a one-place connective, namely negation, with the consequence that infinitely many elements of  $S_P$  have a single occurrence of the letter P. Answers to part (d) were mixed. Too many candidates provided arguments that did not take into account the fact that  $\phi$ ,  $\psi$  and  $\chi$  are members of  $S_P$ . After all, the following statement is not generally true: if  $\phi \models \psi \models \chi$  but the reverse entailments do not hold then  $\phi$  is a contradiction and  $\chi$  is a logical truth. The correct answer proceeds by showing that any member of  $S_P$  is logically equivalent to one of  $P$ ,  $\neg P$ ,  $P \vee \neg P$ ,  $P \wedge \neg P$ , by a quasi-inductive argument from truth tables.

4. (8 answers)

Part (a) was mostly well done, as was (b)(i). Part b(ii) was mixed, even though it involves reproduction of textbook material. Part (b)(iii) elicited some very impressive answers. Several candidates unfortunately failed to distinguish between analogues of free and bound variables, conflating the two.

5. (66 answers)

Several excellent answers and many good ones. A surprising number of students had trouble with (i); you would imagine anyone attempting this question would know by rote how to introduce and eliminate double negations in the Halbach system. Part (iii) was tricky, presumably because students have not thought about the rules for moving quantifiers to the front of expressions.

6. (35 answers)

Part (a) was perfectly done, as one would expect. In part (b)(i), several students gave incorrect examples by failing to appreciate that the definition of a Euclidean relation encompasses cases in which  $c = d$  or  $d = e$  or both. Many candidates produced correct answers for parts (b)(i) and (b)(ii), usually by giving natural deduction proofs which, although perfectly acceptable, were unnecessary: the direct arguments are very short.

7. (68 answers)

Part (a) was fairly well done. Students' Achilles heel still seems to be the formalisation of definite descriptions (in (a)(vi)). Part (b) elicited some meandering answers, and rewarded students who had done a bit of reading around the subject.

## **SECTION B: GENERAL PHILOSOPHY**

### **8. Could it be that there is no coherent account of what we refer to as 'knowledge'?**

(96 answers) Despite its popularity this question was on the whole very poorly answered — although there were a handful of exceptions. Most candidates appeared not to know the meaning of the word 'coherent' or (perhaps) were hoping for the words 'adequate' or 'satisfactory' instead and chose to write on that anyway; that is to say, answers failed to distinguish between, on the one hand, a lack of success to date in coming up with any account of knowledge that satisfactorily accommodates all cases and, on the other, positive marks of incoherence, tension or essential untidiness among the various things we want to say about knowledge. Most answers consisted in simply a sequence of expositions of standard theories and counter-examples; a depressing parade of pre-prepared rote-learning, with scarcely any evidence of actual philosophical thought having taken place at all. Barely anyone was able to raise themselves up to the required level of generality to ask if it *might* really be possible that there just exists no coherent account of what we refer to as 'knowledge', many supposing that it was sufficient to urge simply that they did not think this is *in fact* the case.

### **9. 'If I know something, then I cannot be mistaken about it. But it's possible that an evil demon is deceiving me about the existence of the external world, in which case all my beliefs about external objects would be mistaken. So it follows that I cannot know anything about the external world.' Should we be persuaded by this argument?**

(76 answers) Again, the vast majority of answers attempted to interpret the question in terms of standard rote-learned moves, for example by rehearsing Descartes' sceptical arguments, G. E. Moore's or externalist responses, or claiming – rather implausibly but with surprising frequency – that the argument of the question implicitly appeals to the 'closure principle' that knowledge is closed under known entailment. (The last of these was fairly often combined with attempted formalisations that typically helped very little.) Depressingly few candidates engaged seriously with the argument actually presented and thus noticed how it can be challenged in various ways. The first premise, for example, is susceptible of two interpretations, roughly: 'It cannot be that I know that  $P$  and yet  $P$  is false' (true) and 'If I know that  $P$ , then  $P$  must be a

necessary truth' (false). The second premise introduces another ambiguity, since 'it's possible that an evil demon is deceiving me' looks like an *epistemic* claim, whereas connecting with the second reading of the first premise requires a *metaphysical* modality. A really good answer to this question would start by analysing the argument carefully in this way, to clarify what is being claimed under the various interpretations, only then moving on to consider how far any tenable reading can be answered by appeal to standard moves (such as Putnam's semantic externalism).

**10. 'The debate over whether we perceive objects directly or indirectly is pointless, because both sides agree that perception is mediated by physical and physiological processes, and the only thing at issue is what they choose to call "direct"'. Discuss.**

(3 answers) The least popular question, perhaps because it very explicitly required critical reflection on standard moves, rather than recital of them. A few good points made, but little real engagement with the question.

**11. What is the best way of characterising the distinction between primary and secondary qualities? Is it a tenable distinction?**

(4 answers) This topic tends to be unpopular, though the question was fairly straightforward. One answer was excellent, highlighting the various criteria that Locke conflates and discussing intelligently how they come apart. The other answers were very routine.

**12. 'In all reasonings from experience, there is a step taken by the mind, which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding.' (HUME) Is Hume right, and if so, is this a problem?**

(77 answers) Generally answered reasonably well, though as usual there was a tendency to ignore the specifics of the question (e.g. the emphasis of the Hume quotation on '*a step* taken by the mind, the reference to 'the understanding', and the final 'is this a problem?'). Many students gave an outline of Hume's argument, and a fair number of these were quite well done. But once they got beyond textual exegesis, a high proportion of candidates seemed quite quickly to run out of interesting things to say, resorting to waffle or irrelevance, and desperately bringing in whatever they knew in the vicinity of the topic. Thus Goodman's paradox was frequently mentioned, though often badly misunderstood (by supposing that a grue emerald has to change colour at time *t*), and rarely brought to bear on the main point of the question. Very few attempted seriously to tackle the issue of how far Hume's conclusion – even if accepted – actually constitutes a *problem*. Is it really surprising if some aspects of our cognitive processing are fundamental in the sense of not being 'supported' by any *other* cognitive process? Or is this, perhaps, inevitable, and if so, then why should it worry us? Is the sceptic asking for something that is in principle impossible?

**13. Is free choice easier to reconcile with a process of choosing that is completely determined, or with a process that is significantly affected by random factors?**

(77 answers) Nearly all answers were satisfactory, but relatively few were really good. The question asks for a comparison between two familiar tensions or oppositions: on the one hand, free will versus determinism; on the other hand, free

will versus randomness. Each of these is very familiar from questions in previous years, and most candidates were able to say intelligent things about them individually. But the question was also asking candidates to consider the contrast between the two tensions, and most failed to rise to this challenge.

**14. If my mind is distinct from my body, does it follow that my mind could exist independently of my body?**

(37 answers) As usual, there was a disappointing tendency of candidates to trot out standard material (e.g. on Descartes' arguments and his dualism), when the question is asking whether a specific *inference* is warranted. Here it is crucial to ask what 'distinct' means, because it has at least two interpretations which are quite different from each other. In one sense, *A* is distinct from *B* if it is not *identical to B* (i.e. it is *numerically* distinct); in another sense (or arguably range of senses), *A* is distinct from *B* if it is *separate from B* in some way. So, for example, my stomach is distinct from my body in the sense that my body is not *one and the same thing* as my stomach; on the other hand my stomach is not distinct from my body in the sense of being separate, because it is obviously part of my body. If distinctness is interpreted in the first sense, then the inference of the question is hopeless (clearly my stomach cannot exist independently of my [current] body). In the second sense, the inference is more plausible, but then would require consideration of the modality involved in the phrase 'could exist' (is this to be understood epistemologically or metaphysically?) as well as some of the familiar issues of dualism.

**15. Were you once an embryo?**

(41 answers) Generally quite well answered, with most candidates discussing the central issue of bodily versus psychological continuity. Thought-experiments figured prominently and sometimes at great length, when it would have been better to describe them briefly, since they are very familiar and came up repeatedly. Many of these had a science-fiction flavour (with minds being swapped, bodily relocation through transportation beams etc.), but candidates often seemed to assume that such thought-experiments could nevertheless count as decisive evidence, as though some imaginative exercise regarding 'what we would say if ...' were enough to decide the appropriate identity conditions for the real world. It would have been good to see more critical consideration of the role of such thought-experiments, and how much they can show us. As in question 9, attempts at formalisation were often artificial and rarely illuminating.

**SECTION C: MORAL PHILOSOPHY**

**16. 'Never mind. It's the thought that counts.' Can Utilitarianism make sense of this common response?**

(26 answers) A moderate batch of answers. Despite its apparent centrality, the issue of inner motivation did not appear to be something that had much been thought about, and in consequence there was a certain amount of irrelevant material which candidates attempted to force into an answer to the question. Everyone saw the *prima facie* puzzle, and most saw the utilitarian value in encouraging good motives, though fewer were able to relate this to Mill's own statements on the matter. (No one, for instance, saw any connection with his discussion of virtue.) Disappointing few



answers were able to appreciate that people's happiness or unhappiness is affected by the question of how others feel towards them, or to understand that sometimes the only real value which an action has is precisely as an expression of that feeling. (An arm around one's shoulder is not *in itself* the cause of much pleasure.)

**17. Should Utilitarianism's supporters be either encouraged by the extent to which the demands of their theory coincide with those of common sense morality, or discouraged by the extent to which they run contrary to ordinary moral intuitions?**

(37 answers) Generally this question was not at all well done; barely any candidates were able to bring in the range of points, or rise to the level of reflection, needed for an adequate response. The worst answers thought it sufficient simply to point to some *one* respect or other in which utilitarianism and everyday moral thinking coincide or (more usually) in which they conflict. Most answers were able to list *several* respects. A moderate number of candidates were able to recognise *both* points of coincidence and points of tension. Barely any answers, however, were able to raise themselves up the next level of critical self-reflection and consider in general terms the *significance* of whether or not there obtained such agreements or disagreements. How do we decide between moral theories? What are common sense morality and moral intuition? Where do these things come from? What is their status? Can intuitions refute moral theories, or do moral theories show us there is something awry with our intuitions? It is worrying that students appear not to be asking themselves such questions.

**18. Is the difference between higher and lower pleasures best understood as a scale or as a dichotomy between two distinct classes?**

(80 answers) By and large this question was well done. Most people were able to see some case for both readings, though rather fewer were able to mount much by way of an effective argument to show why their preferred reading was superior to the alternative. Less positively, there was a near-universal assumption that were different measures of quality arranged on a single scale that this would have to be both cardinal and commensurable with any scale of quantity.

**19. Have I any less reason to think it worth bringing about the happiness of other people than I have to think it worth bringing about my own happiness?**

(21 answers) Some candidates found it difficult to switch to thinking about justifying concern *for self* rather than the more usual issue of justifying concern *for others*, and in consequence just presented their standard essays on the first two steps in Mill's proof anyway. Most answers felt it was sufficient simply to *assert* that human nature, or personal integrity, or the requirement that ethical codes should not be too demanding of us, or suchlike, give us stronger reason to care about ourselves. It was disappointing that scarcely anyone felt it necessary to offer any argument or evidence for such claims, to explain how they translate into moral reasons, to consider possible objections, or to think about the sort of arguments that might be given in support of the opposing view that all happiness is equally worth bringing about.

**20. ‘Everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one.’ Does this mean that Utilitarianism recognizes the intrinsic value of equality?**

(15 answers) Competently done by most candidates, but done well by very few. Rather than thinking about the precise meaning, implication or justification of the sentence quoted in the question, most answers dwelt on the more general question of utilitarianism and equality (either utilitarianism’s failure to recognise distributive equality and/or indirect utilitarian arguments for promoting equality). It was also surprising, given the question, how few candidates thought it worth discussing the various possible meanings of the word ‘equality’.

**21. Can Utilitarianism explain why it is (generally) wrong to kill people?**

(54 answers) Despite its popularity, this question was in general very badly answered. There was widespread failure to distinguish between asking whether utilitarianism has within its resources the capacity to offer *any* explanation of this moral code, and asking whether those explanations are in fact adequate; whether they really match why *we think* killing is wrong. Most candidates treated it as unproblematically obvious that killing lowers utility without going on even to ask such obvious questions as: *For whom* does it lower utility? Is it still wrong if the victim feels no *pain*, or if they are *unloved*? Must we assume that the victim’s life would have contained more pleasure than pain? Would murder be less bad if you then went and had a baby in order to maintain the overall levels of potential happiness? Would it be less bad if victims were killed secretly and social fear thereby avoided? Despite, or perhaps because, of the word ‘generally’ many candidates decided that this was simply a question about the difference between act and rule utilitarianism.

**Bill Mander**  
**Peter Millican**  
**Alex Paseau**

## **2. Report on INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS: The Theory and Practice of Democracy (June 2011)**

The standard was very varied, with few scripts managing to combine theoretical understanding with up-to-date empirical knowledge. Many candidates were able to display only limited knowledge of the countries covered. Too many candidates tried to turn the question around to enable them to deploy familiar essay material. Too few candidates seemed to have *thought* about what they'd read and memorised.

History and Politics candidates, with only three questions to answer, did not necessarily produce better answers: there was a tendency to waffle, rather than getting down to business.

### **Section A (PPE only):**

#### **1. 'The role of political theory is to challenge and question contemporary society and its institutions.' Is it?**

(1 answer) Only one candidate attempted this question.

#### **2. What is the 'fundamental problem' for which Rousseau offers the 'social contract' as a solution?**

(94 answers) This was a popular question. Candidates offered a wide variety of characterizations of Rousseau's 'fundamental problem', not all of which were very clearly or closely related to the author's own formulations in Book 1, Chapter 6, of the *Social Contract* (1762). Weaker answers tended to rely heavily on secondary sources for their understanding of Rousseau's views, and offered general overviews of the *Social Contract* whose relation to the question was unclear. Better answers addressed the advantages of association for Rousseau, and attempted to explain the character and relevance of his distinctions between 'natural', 'civil', and 'moral' freedom.

#### **3. 'Democracy cannot exist, let alone flourish, without deliberation amongst citizens.' Discuss.**

(25 answers) This question produced some very good answers. The best candidates knew something of the theory of deliberative democracy and had examples from the set texts, as well as from modern politics. They also considered democracy in a number of its facets, e.g., as process, as outcome, as value, and also addressed the nature of direct and representative democracy..

#### **4. According to Marx, what changes will the state undergo in communist society?**

(26 answers) Marx may have aspired to create a systematic social theory, but it does not follow that answers to specific questions about particular aspects of his thought have to be prefaced by lengthy overviews of the central themes of his thought as a whole. Weaker answers to this question contained little more than these general overviews (with much on 'dialectics' and the 'theory of history'). Better answers concentrated on the precise question asked, and a few of those better answers made intelligent use of Marx's reaction to the Paris Commune – in *The Civil War in France*

(1871), for example – and his discussions of the different stages of communism – in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) and elsewhere.

**5. ‘Power is a potentiality, not an actuality ... indeed a potentiality that may never be actualized.’ Is it?**

(12 answers) A relatively popular question, but the overall standard of answers was not high. Weaker candidates tended to offer basic summaries of Steven Lukes’ well-known discussion of ‘three faces of power’, and made little effort to relate those summaries to the precise question asked. Better answers focused on the question, made some attempt to clarify the distinction between ‘potentiality’ and ‘actuality’, and demonstrated familiarity with a somewhat wider range of literature.

**6. Should ideology be defined as ‘action-oriented’?**

(4 answers) This question was answered by rather few candidates. Better answers addressed the issue of what ‘action-orientated’ might actually mean, and the merits of incorporating such a requirement into a definition of what ideology is. Weaker answers remained content with simplistic overviews of differing approaches to ideology (usually contrasting somewhat caricatured accounts of ‘Marxist’ and ‘non-Marxist’ approaches).

**7. Did Tocqueville view America as a model for France to follow?**

(16 answers) Candidates generally showed very good knowledge of Tocqueville, but a number did not manage to keep to the question set, falling instead into a more generalised discussion of the virtues and vices of democracy.

**8. ‘The erosion of associational culture is likely to be disastrous for the democratic polity.’ Discuss.**

(15 answers) Weaker answers to this question typically gave rather simplistic accounts of one side of the various debates on this question. Better answers gave balanced and informative accounts of some of the many complexities here, and made good use of empirical examples. Disappointingly few candidates grappled with what ‘disastrous’ might mean in this context.

**9. What, if anything, have rational choice approaches contributed to our understanding of democratic politics?**

(7 answers) This question was not answered by a large number of candidates, but many of those who did attempt it managed to provide both an intelligent account of what might plausibly characterize a rational choice approach, and a balanced verdict on the success and failures of such approaches. Not all candidates appeared to notice the restriction of the question to ‘democratic politics’.

**10. ‘Lack of money, like lack of ability, does not impact on the freedom of individuals, merely on their ability to take advantage of that freedom.’ Discuss.**

(89 answers) This was a popular question. Weaker answers tended to offer general overviews of the distinction between so-called ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ freedom, and

largely took it for granted that these two ‘models’ disagree about the relation between ‘lack of money’ and freedom. Better answers recognized that disputes about the relation of ‘lack of money’ and freedom were not necessarily disputes about the respective merits of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ approaches; that adherents of broadly negative accounts, for example, could still disagree about whether ‘lack of money’ constituted an appropriate ‘constraint’. Disappointingly few candidates interrogated what ‘lack of ability’ might mean. Better answers recognized that allowing that ‘lack of money’ impacts on freedom does not decide the question of whether we ought to strive to do anything about that lack.

**11. ‘The major problem with *On Liberty* is that Mill does not recognize that all actions are “other-regarding”.’ Discuss.**

(74 answers) This was a popular question. A few candidates conveyed their familiarity with the text of *On Liberty* (1859), but many more were over-reliant on a very limited number of secondary sources for their understanding of Mill’s work. Weaker answers also seemed determined to bring in certain familiar issues – for instance, the character of Mill’s utilitarian commitments – without attempting to demonstrate their relevance to the specific question asked.

**12. What limits, if any, should be placed on freedom of speech?**

(59 answers) This was another popular question. Many weaker answers mistakenly assumed that a basic descriptive account of the arguments of Chapter 2 (‘Of the liberty of thought and discussion’) of *On Liberty* would constitute an adequate answer to this question. (Those answers that used Mill’s text more intelligently recognized the complexity of his views; grappling, for instance, with his comments on public decency.) Better answers to the specific question showed familiarity with, and made intelligent use of, the modern literature on freedom of speech (discussing the issues of offence and hate speech, in particular).

**Section B:**

(NB: Numbers of answers given below include PPE candidates only)

**13. Why do we compare political systems?**

(2 answers) Not a popular question and the answers tended to discuss either methodological points or practical ones but not both.

**14. Is the concept of leadership a useful one in comparative politics?**

(3 answers) Again few takers and candidates were rather uncertain about the problems of studying executive *leadership*, as opposed to studying executives.

**15. In the absence of legislative support, what resources could enable presidents to govern?**

(52 answers) This was a popular question and there were a number of quite good answers relying especially on the American presidency but sometimes deploying information about the French president. Weaker answers ran through the powers of

the US president without really situating them within the US political *system*. Oddly, only a few candidates chose to discuss the resources which come from within the executive (for example appointment power and discretionary policy-making).

**16. What factors create change in a party system?**

(59 answers) This was a very popular question and most candidates could make a decent stab at analysing different sources of party system change and deploy relevant examples. The best candidates considered party *systems*, not just parties, and some brought in historical examples as well as current ones.

**17. Does decentralization of the political system change its political culture?**

(11 answers) Many candidates appeared uncertain about the meaning of political culture. Few managed to address the question of *change*, and fewer still thought about the effects on both sides of a decentralized system – local and national.

**18. To what extent is an effective committee system essential to the working of a modern legislature?**

(49 answers) This was a popular question, perhaps reflecting the fact that it corresponds quite closely to a question on the reading list. The US and UK systems were deployed by most candidates, but the answers often failed to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of committees and few were able to cite much by way of specific examples. Candidates often showed very good knowledge of committees and their workings, but only a few considered how (if?) they fitted into all the functions of a modern legislature, rather than just the scrutiny functions.

**19. ‘Judges have gained power in recent years, but that power is not yet seen as legitimate.’ Discuss.**

(30 answers) The best answers discussed what produced legitimacy and what might be done in order to provide it when judicial power increased. Weaker answers simply talked about what judges did.

**20. What factors determine the success of democratic transitions?**

(24 answers) A reasonable set of answers identifying different factors that might be relevant to the consolidation of democracy, many using the German example.

**21. What effect has reunification had on the agenda of German politics?**

(8 answers) A good set of answers providing an overview of change in the German political agenda

**22. What are the constraints on the power of the German chancellor?**

(30 answers) Candidates mostly had sensible things to say about the formal constitutional constraints on a Chancellor but fewer were able to say much about the wider political constraints of fellow executive members, party and public opinion.

**23. Have the effects of the Labour government's constitutional reforms of 1997-2010 been exaggerated?**

(105 answers) A very popular question. Answers were generally competent but few were excellent. The best candidates offered more than just a list of reforms (in more than random order), and included discussion of constitutional theory. Good candidates also distinguished between the legal and political possibilities for change. A number of candidates seem to think that, before reform, the House of Lords was made up entirely of hereditary peers.

**24. Is the British party system now one in which competition for the centre ground has eliminated any role for ideological debate?**

(19 answers) This question was designed to allow discussion of the role of ideology in British politics and the relationship between that and electoral competition. The best answers were able to handle the issues involved although few if any really bothered to define the centre ground and simply assumed that it was a point on an ideological scale neglecting the possibility that it might be a rhetorical construction.

**25. Why was the Fifth French Republic able to provide stability that the Fourth Republic could not?**

(37 answers) This was for the most part well answered with good knowledge of the Fourth Republic's weaknesses and Fifth Republic's constitution. There was less certainty about why the Fifth Republic has lasted. Better candidates considered factors beyond the borders of France.

**26. How far has the executive domination of the French political system been modified since 1958?**

(38 answers) A popular question, but answered in a narrow way, and not always with a great deal of knowledge. Too many thought this was an opportunity simply to discuss cohabitation. Many candidates did not consider what "executive" might cover, and pitted President against Prime Minister without comment. The best answers looked at both increase and decrease of executive power.

**27. To what extent does the Supreme Court have an agenda-setting role in the American political system?**

(49 answers) A popular question, but few candidates answered specifically with regard to agenda setting (even if they claimed they did!), rather than simply listing the powers and capacities of the Court. Many candidates claimed the Court had set an agenda (especially for civil rights and abortion) without giving any context against which to prove this had happened. Lots of answers gave Supreme Court cases (with sometimes wildly approximate names) without a date or even a general sense of even the decade they might have been decided: one or two seemed to be a century or so out in their thinking.

**28. ‘The recent polarisation of American politics is difficult to reconcile with its constitutional arrangements.’ Discuss.**

(21 answers) This question was designed to explore whether the Madisonian constitutional framework of checks and balances required a style of politics which employed compromise and cross-party bargaining. There were some good answers but few could explain why polarisation had occurred and some were unsure about its meaning.

Next year’s examiners would be cheered by candidates who could spell SEPARATE (but equal!), PRIVILEGE, and PROGRAMME; and who could distinguish between REIGNED IN and REINED IN, REGARD and REGARDS, CRITERION and CRITERIA, ITS and IT’S, and LIKE and AS. For many candidates, apostrophes are merely a decoration for the written page.

Candidates are reminded that it is their responsibility to write legibly. Words not legible to the examiner cannot be given marks.

**Lesley Smith**  
**Gillian Peele**  
**David Leopold**



### 3. Report on INTRODUCTORY ECONOMICS (June 2011)

Most questions on this paper referred to very standard material for the first year course, covered fully in both lectures and textbooks. The level of understanding of the material exhibited by candidates was disappointing, however. While most were able to reproduce conventional diagrams and perform common algebraic manipulations, these were rarely accompanied by clear explanations or economic insight. Candidates generally coped better with the more “mathematical” parts of the questions than with other parts asking for explanation and economic interpretation.

#### Part A

##### 1. *Efficiency and Perfect Competition* (134+8+36)<sup>1</sup>

This question covered standard material, but was the least well-done of the micro questions.

- (i)(a) Most candidates were able to define Pareto efficiency, and to explain that society may also be concerned about distribution. Very few distinguished between the cases when A is a Pareto improvement over B, and when it is not. Discussion of welfare functions, perhaps in conjunction with a diagram of the utility possibility frontier, provided some structure for better answers.
- (b) Many candidates did not mention the central role of prices: a *very* common misapprehension is that in competitive equilibrium MRSs must be equal because if not, agents would exchange goods with each other until no-one could be made better off. Some candidates explained only that MRSs are equal at an efficient allocation. (Some credit was given for this if the 1<sup>st</sup> Fundamental Theorem was used as a link.) Even amongst the good answers, very few noted that well-behaved preferences are required for the statement to be true.
- (c) The most common approach was to describe situations in which *neither* free-entry *nor* price-taking are required for efficiency (Bertrand equilibrium; perfect price discrimination). Only a minority were able to provide good answers in the context of a perfect competitive market, distinguishing between the roles of the two characteristics. A natural way to do this would have been to distinguish between the short-run (no entry, but nevertheless allocative efficiency) and the long-run (production at minAC).
- (ii)(a) Most candidates were able to note that if price is above/below average cost, super-normal profits will induce entry/exit (although worryingly this was often explained as if firms were price-setting, and entering firms would undercut them). To explain why the long-run price is *minimum* average cost it is necessary also to explain the role of marginal cost.
- (b) The majority of candidates did the required calculations easily and correctly.
- (c) Very poorly answered. The majority of candidates who attempted this part interpreted the *short-run* as a period of fixed prices (i.e. the macro interpretation) which has no meaning in the context of the model of a perfectly competitive market.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers in brackets are the numbers of answers for each question in PPE, H&E, and E&M.

2. **Preferences and Demand** (167+9+58)

- (i) Most candidates understood and explained “well-behaved” as *monotone* and *convex*. Fewer could define “consistent” (e.g. as complete, reflexive, transitive). The example was a straightforward violation of WARP. Candidates who did not recognise this were often confused by their own assumption that income was the same in the two situations.
- (ii)(a) Almost all candidates were able to derive the demand functions correctly. Almost no-one used the information that the preferences were well-behaved to infer that all income would be spent and that the solution of the first-order conditions is a maximum point.
- (b) A common mistake was to show that *demand* is decreasing in price, and deduce that the elasticity is negative.
- (c) Good candidates did this successfully; others got stuck at the point of calculating what the new level of income must be, or calculated the new bundle but could not recognise the substitution effect. Some didn’t realise the implication of “still afford his original bundle” and hence attempted the Hicksian approach. For those who failed to do the calculation correctly, credit was still given for a good diagram.

3. **Price Discrimination** (144+8+63)

- (i) Good answers explained that if marginal costs are equal, price is a mark-up on marginal costs which is inversely related to the elasticity. Poorer answers stated the demand for men’s haircuts must be lower, and/or tried a graphical comparison of demand curves.
- (ii) A standard calculation, generally done correctly but mostly without mentioning second-order conditions.
- (iii) The majority wrote the correct profit function, and most of these obtained the correct first order conditions. Very few attempted second-order conditions. Algebraic/numerical mistakes were common. Few could explain that the increase in the price of women’s haircuts could be attributed to the effect of men’s haircuts on the marginal cost.
- (iv) A significant number of candidates did not attempt to calculate the required values of consumer surplus, but tried to make more general arguments, mostly unsuccessfully. In the second part of the question, credit was given for any sensible comments – candidates were not expected to know the precise conditions under which welfare increases or decreases.

4. **AS-AD Model** (29+ 1+15)

- (i) Brief explanation for the AS-AD diagram should have been given, but few students devoted more than a sentence to explaining AS. AD slopes down because at lower prices, the supply of real money balances is larger for a given nominal money supply, which leads to a lower equilibrium real interest rate and higher output. Good answers said something about nominal versus real interest rates. The Pigou effect could have been mentioned: falling prices raise the value of forms of wealth fixed in nominal terms, which could increase consumption

- (ii) Diagrams are useful here, showing the leftward shift of IS, and hence AD. Output and interest rate fall; prices fall along AS, partially offsetting the output reduction through the effects described in part i, with an increase in the real money supply lowering the interest rate further. Some candidates wrote that the interest rate falls because savings increase when consumers reduce their spending, which is incorrect within the structure of this model.
- (iii) With adaptive expectations,  $P^e = P_{t-1}$ , the AS curve shifts down in the next period because  $P$  has fallen, such that  $Y=Y^*$  at exactly last period's price level. AD remains unchanged. Output rises and  $P$  falls again, leading to a further round of adjustment. Eventually the economy returns to  $Y^*$  at a lower  $P$  than initially.

Description "in detail" required an explanation of the underpinnings of the AS curve. There are many possibilities: some candidates used a labour market model based on workers' price expectations, or a story about wage contracts; others tried a Lucas "surprise" model. This is difficult material for first years, and examiners rewarded serious attempts even if they contained errors. Good students understood that rational expectations imply that agents can anticipate the long-run equilibrium and adjust their price expectations accordingly so that AS will shift there immediately.

- (iv) Although the answer to this question comes directly from the lecture notes, it seemed to be a good discriminator. Good candidates could explain the steps in the derivation clearly, but many others produced a jumble of equations.

#### 5. *ISLM* (182+13+79)

- (i) Almost all candidates got the basic calculation right, but used few or even no words to explain what they were doing or how the model works. A first class mark was given only for an answer which showed a full understanding of the economics.
- (ii) Most students got the calculation right, but again, an explanation was required for a good mark. Some candidates were confused by the fact that this was an IS rather than an LM shock. The diagram should show a leftward shift of the IS curve. Output falls because of the fall in investment demand; the negative impact on investment of the risk premium is partially offset because a fall in the demand for money, leads to a decline in the (risk-free) real interest rate.
- (iii) This part of the question was more testing and produced more variance in marks. The central bank's problem is nominal interest rates cannot fall below zero; there could also be a liquidity trap at a positive interest rate. Arithmetically, setting  $r=0$  in the new IS leaves  $Y$  at only 2600. In quantitative easing, the CB creates money and uses it to intervene in asset markets, but instead of targeting the short-term risk-free rate of interest it seeks to influence other rates. In this case, it could purchase long term risky assets in an attempt to lower the risk premium  $\theta$ : QE would shift IS rather than LM. Candidates required some self-confidence to be able to say this. Going beyond the model, QE might create expectations of future inflation, allowing negative real interest rates – extending the range of real interest rates below the horizontal axis in the ISLM diagram.

#### 6. *Consumption* (64+3+14)

- (i) The diagram should be well-labelled, showing the budget constraint (PV of consumption equals PV of income), indicating its slope, with tangency to a conventionally shaped indifference curve, and distinguishing between the endowment and the consumption choice.
- (ii) This part required an analysis of income and substitution effects for savers and possibly also borrowers. Many candidates used a diagram.
- (iii) Again, a diagrammatic approach is helpful; it requires careful labelling to show how the change in endowment differs when increase in income is permanent rather than temporary. A neat way to allow for many periods is to let  $y_2$  represent all future periods, with  $y_2 \gg y_1$ . The analysis suggests that mpc out of a permanent increase in income would be large – even 100%, while mpc out of a temporary increase would be very small.

Really good marks required answers which referred to the model in the question. However some credit was given for a good general discussion of permanent income and life-cycle models.

- (iv) (Ricardian equivalence). This requires an explanation of why the budget constraint does not change if consumers and the government face the same interest rate. With borrowing constraints, the tax and refund plan *might* affect consumption: the best answers demonstrated this by using the model to analyse a simple case – for example, when households cannot borrow.
- (v) With a standard Keynesian consumption there is no distinction between temporary and permanent income changes, and the rate of interest does not matter. Fiscal policy is less powerful, and monetary policy may be more powerful, in the inter-temporal model than in the simple Keynesian model. One could argue that countercyclical policy would also seem less necessary in the inter-temporal model. Some candidates again attempted to answer this question based only on what they have learned about permanent income and life cycle models, the apc and mpc in the Keynesian model, etc, and/or neglected the instruction to address policy implications.

## Part B

### 7. *Oligopoly* (6+3+26)

This question was generally done well. Good candidates were able to give a reasonably detailed account of the oligopoly models, contrast their predictions, *and* discuss, with examples, to what type of market each of the models best applies.

### 8. *Invisible Hand* (18+1+2)

This was by far the least popular essay question. There were some very poor answers, consisting of ill-informed waffle about “free market economics”. A few good answers focused on the First Fundamental Theorem and sources of market failure.

9. **Unemployment** (48+6+18)

Many candidates interpreted the question as contrasting active policies suggested by classical and Keynesian models. Where wages are fixed by unions or legislation above market clearing, cutting wages can increase employment; in the interest rate story, monetary expansion can raise aggregate demand. Some students took the opportunity to talk about structural and frictional unemployment.

However, these were partial stories; for a really good answer the statements could be integrated in some kind of AS-AD model: for example, a negative demand shock will be followed by a fall in the interest rate and the nominal wage as the economy returns to equilibrium output with a lower price level.

10. **Mundell Fleming** (113+6+48)

This was the most popular essay question. The statement is correct. Interpreting the financial crisis as a negative IS shock, we could ask why depreciation has not quickly restored the UK economy to health. Part of the answer might be that it is a “world shock”; in addition, very low (short term risk free) interest rates may disable monetary policy. It is fiscal policy that might work in these circumstances, since the usual rise in the interest rate, causing currency appreciation, need not happen.

Candidates tended to lay out the MF model competently, and then offer generic criticisms of the assumptions, e.g. capital markets aren't really perfect, so that the UK interest rate could differ from world rates. Credit was given for this, but higher marks were reserved for answers that said something more specific about the current situation and that recognised the importance of the international context – a synchronous, worldwide downturn that lowers interest rates everywhere.

**Margaret Stevens**  
**Kate Doornik**  
**David Vines**