

**Preliminary Examination in Philosophy, Politics and Economics
Trinity Term and Long Vacation 2014
Report of Chair of Examiners**

BASIC STATISTICS

235 candidates sat the examination in Trinity Term 2014. One additional candidate re-sat the Economics paper only. The results, not including this additional candidate, were as follows:

Category	Number					Percentage				
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2104	2013	2012	2011	2010
Distinction	51	46	61	43	47	21.7	18.4	24.6	18.0	19.2
Pass	179	198	179	193	183	76.2	79.2	72.2	80.8	75.0
Fail 1 paper	4	4	7	2	12	1.7	1.6	2.8	0.8	4.9
Fail 2 or 3 papers	1	2	1	1	2	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.8
Total	235	250	248	239	244	100	100	100	100	100

5 candidates failed one or more papers: 3 failed Economics, one failed Politics and one failed both Economics and Philosophy. Although only slightly, the number of failures decreased in comparison to last year, when 6 candidates failed one or more papers: 2 failed Politics, 2 failed Economics and 2 failed both Politics and Economics.

Of the 5 failing candidates who retook one or more papers in September, 4 passed the examination and 1 failed. The latter did pass the Philosophy and Politics papers, however, she/he did not pass the Economics examination.

ADMINISTRATION

Administrative support was provided by the PPE Administrator, Wendy Wilkin, up to July 2014 when she left for another job. Her (temporary) replacement was Armando Román Zozaya. Both provided excellent administrative support and the examination process ran smoothly.

There are no recommendations for next year.

**Howard Smith (Chair, PPE Prelims Examiners)
Nicholas Owen, Paul Lodge, Dan Butt, William Mander, Jacinta Pires**

DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS

Distribution of Marks for June 2014 [2013 figures in brackets]			
	Politics	Philosophy	Economics
Average	62.4 [61.0]	61.6 [62.0]	60.9 [60.7]
Standard Deviation	5.0 [5.8]	8.06 [6.8]	9.82 [10.6]
75+	0.4% [0.0%]	7.23% [2.8%]	6.8% [7.2%]
70-74	9.4% [3.2%]	8.08% [9.6%]	12.3% [11.2%]
60-69	67.6% [62.8%]	42.6% [54.4%]	42.6% [41.6%]
50-59	20.4% [30.8%]	39.5% [28.8%]	23.0% [26.4%]
40-49	1.7% [2.4%]	2.12% [4.5%]	12.7% [11.2%]
37-39	0.42% [0.0%]	0.0% [0.0%]	1.7% [0.0%]
Less than 37	0.0% [0.8%]	0.42% [0.0%]	0.85% [2.4%]
Total	100%	100%	100%

The average mark for Politics was higher than in 2013. This is the case for Economics as well, although the increase in the Economics averages between 2013 and 2014 is very modest. Also, as for last year, Economics had the lowest mean score. Philosophy's average for this year is slightly lower than for 2013.

GENDER BREAKDOWN

Category	Female June 2014 [2013 figures in brackets]		Male June 2014 [2013 figures in brackets]	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Distinction	11 [10]	12.8% [11.6%]	40 [36]	26.8% [22.0%]
Pass	70 [73]	81.4% [84.9%]	109 [125]	73.2% [76.2%]
Fail 1 paper	4 [2]	4.6% [2.3%]	0 [2]	0.0% [1.2%]
Fail 2 or 3 papers	1 [1]	1.16% [1.2%]	0 [1]	0.0% [0.6%]
TOTAL	86 [86]	100%	149 [164]	100%

Gender distribution of Marks June 2014 [2013 figures in brackets]			
	Politics	Philosophy	Economics
Female Average	62 [60.9]	59.7 [61.3]	59.3 [58.5]
Male Average	63.1 [61.0]	62.7 [62.3]	61.8 [61.9]
Overall Average	62.4 [61.0]	61.6 [62.0]	60.9 [60.7]
Female Standard Deviation	5.7 [5.6]	7.7 [5.6]	10.8 [10.3]
Male Standard Deviation	5.2 [5.9]	8.1 [7.4]	9.1 [10.6]
Overall Standard Deviation	5.0 [5.8]	8.06 [6.8]	9.82 [10.6]
% of Female cohort achieving ≥ 70	5.8% [2.3%]	7% [3.5%]	20.9 [14.0%]
% of Male cohort achieving ≥ 70	12% [3.7%]	20.1 [17.1%]	18.1 [20.7%]

Report on Introduction to Philosophy paper (June 2014)

This is the report on the *Introduction to Philosophy paper* taken at PPE Prelims. Logic was set and marked by Dr Alexander Paseau, General Philosophy by Dr Paul Lodge, and Moral Philosophy by Dr William Mander.

Section 1: Logic

Question 1: One of the most popular questions, generally well done. A small, but non-negligible, percentage of answers did not give the correct textbook definitions for parts (a)-(e).

Question 2: One of the most popular questions. Part (b) was generally well answered. Candidates did not approach the questions in part (c) sufficiently critically. Part (a) was answered poorly: candidates did not seem to appreciate the consequences of the fact that the language Noquotelish lacks quotation marks.

Question 3: A popular and generally well answered question. Most candidates fell down on 3(b)v and 3(c)iv but otherwise did well.

Question 4: A less popular question. Candidates payed insufficient attention to the meanings of the English sentences.

Question 5: A less popular question but mostly well answered.

Section 2: General Philosophy

Overall the standard of answers was reasonably good, given the fact that the majority of students would have had little formal exposure to material of this kind. Most showed an understanding consistent with 2.1 marks in the FHS, and some were clearly indicative of 1st class potential. There was relatively little difference in the mean score for most of the questions that was answered by more than 5 candidates, although the mean score for question 8a was somewhat lower than for the others. The most frequent weaknesses that were found were the perennial ones: failure to engage with the details of the question asked; the tendency to try to include superficial discussion of as much material as possible rather than selecting material that would help with the particular foci of the questions; and failure to display a firm grasp of key concepts.

In setting this paper, it was noticeable (as it had been in 2013) that the portions of the syllabus represented by questions 1 and 11 covered significantly more material (arguably two distinct topics in each case, viz. knowledge *and* scepticism and the ontological argument *and* the problem of evil respectively, rather than the single topic covered by the other questions). The Faculty may wish to consider the extent to which this asymmetry might affect the number of options available for students who have prepared different topics for the exam.

Yet again, few students chose to answer questions in ways that displayed any significant acquaintance with historical material. This seems to raise serious doubts about the extent to which the general philosophy syllabus is actually being studied in an explicitly historical way. Furthermore, it seems that students may have been somewhat disadvantaged by attempting to answer questions for which their limited acquaintance with historical texts had left them inadequately prepared, simply because these questions were closest to the issues with which they felt most comfortable.

Given the extra resource cost entailed by the bifurcated syllabus in connection with lecturing, teaching and examination setting, it may be that the Faculty should revisit the issue of whether the general philosophy syllabus need have any greater historical focus than it did before the last change in syllabus. If, as it seems, students at the Prelims stage are not generally willing to engage with historical texts other than as springboards for contemporary approaches, then the Faculty might consider removing this route through the general philosophy syllabus, with a view to bolstering the place of history of philosophy by reform of the Early Modern option at Finals.

Comments on particular questions

Please note that, to ensure anonymity, comments are not provided on questions answered by 5 candidates or fewer.

6a What bearing do considerations concerning clairvoyance have on what it is to know something?

Total answers 20; mean 62.40; SD 1.24

The better answers to this question were those that did not restrict the focus of their discussion exclusively to externalism (often Nozick's conditional theory) but considered how clairvoyance might bear on internalist accounts as well. The other main distinguishing feature between candidates's answers was between those which offered a critical assessment of Bonjour's account of the clairvoyant rather than just presenting it as a problem or non-problem.

6b If you don't know you are not dreaming right now then you don't know that you have hands right now. So do you know whether you have hands right now?

Total answers 48; mean 61.33; SD 1.41

Most candidates used the question to display knowledge of Nozick's conditional theory of knowledge, with most also providing some discussion of Moore. The better answers did full justice to both sections of the question, rather than simply determining whether the dreaming argument poses problems for empirical knowledge more generally.

7a Does Hume provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of induction that he raises?

Total answers: 7; mean 64.00; 0.53

Answers to this question showed reasonable understanding of the problem as Hume conceives of it. However discussion of the solution tended to be relatively unsophisticated

and this had an inevitable knock-on effect when it came to the critical appraisal. The range in quality was considerably less variable than with any other question.

7b Are any of our inductive beliefs justified?

Total answers: 37; mean 63.24; SD 1.20

Most answers were couched in terms of Hume's discussion of induction and candidates considered selections from the 'classic' responses that have been offered. The most sophisticated answers also showed some sensitivity to the issue of what it would be to provide a justification.

8a Is there a compelling case against Cartesian Dualism?

Total answers 28; mean; 57.57; SD 1.40

This question was the one that was least well answered. Most candidates failed to tackle the question head on and used it as an excuse to display a reasonable acquaintance with the 'argument from doubt', the 'argument from clear and distinct perception' and the problems that can be raised for those arguments. The better answers explained what Cartesian Dualism is and considered a range of standard problems that can be raised for the position. However, very few candidates' answers evidenced close attention to the content of the question.

8b Does the knowledge argument show us that there is more to the world than the physical facts?

Total answers 24; mean 62.50; SD 1.70

This question produced answers which ranged most widely in terms of quality. Some candidates displayed a poor understanding of the knowledge argument and received the equivalent of third class FHS marks. Others used the question to display a sophisticated grasp of these difficult issues and were able to construct careful arguments for their views.

9a Does Locke have an adequate account of what it is to be the same person over time?

Total answers 28; mean 61.57; SD 1.26

Many candidates received reasonable marks on this question because they were able to discuss a number of the standard concerns regarding psychological accounts of personal identity and use them to produce a coherent answer to the question. However, these answers were generally preceded by very sketchy accounts of Locke's views, with next to no attention to central issues such as the fact that Locke regards personal identity as a forensic notion. There was generally little evidence that candidates had focussed on Locke other than giving the relevant section of the essay a cursory reading as the starting point for contemporary discussion.

9b Will you be the same person as you are now when you have finished this exam? Should you care about the answer that question?

Total answers 47; mean 61.19; SD 1.35

This question enabled candidates to utilize standard material concerning personal identity and survival in a number of ways. Whilst there were a few very good answers, most did not pay much attention to the specific form of the question itself (in particular, there was little philosophical reflection regarding the second part in most answers) and rehearsed standard positions and objections with varying degrees of success.

10a Can we learn anything significant about freedom from Hume?

Total answers 2

10b Should we be compatibilists about freedom?

Total answers 81; mean 62.03; SD 1.61

By far the most popular question. Candidates often relied on critical discussions of Van Inwagen's argument for incompatibilism and then opted either for incompatibilism, or more often their favoured version of compatibilism. The better answers were those that showed a better understanding of the nature of the reasons one might not be persuaded by Van Inwagen's argument.

11a Does Descartes manage to prove that God exists in Meditation V?

Total answers 1

11b Should the existence of extreme human suffering lead a religious believer to abandon her faith?

Total answers 37; mean 62.92; SD 0.91

The quality of the answers to this question was more consistent than for most of the other questions. Candidates generally displayed a good grasp of the main responses to the 'logical' problem of evil. The better answers engaged with the fact that the question focussed attention on how serious the problem would be from the epistemic situation of a religious believer rather than from a more neutral perspective.

Section 3: Moral Philosophy (Mill's Utilitarianism)

Two general comments. (i) The considerable ignorance of what Mill actually said was disappointing and suggests that candidates spend but little time reading *Utilitarianism* itself. There was much speculation about what he *would* or *might* have said on various points, when the text itself would have told them exactly what he *did* say. (ii) A general failing was that essays tended to be very one sided. Too often they failed to put the other side, or to volunteer possible objections against their own views.

12. Mill's 'proof' of utilitarianism fails because what we ought to do is not a matter that could ever be settled by mere 'observation and experience.' Is this correct?

(49 answers) Many of the answers to this question were disappointing. Candidates seem to have thought little about what it might mean to establish a moral theory, empirically or otherwise. Not a few seemed quite unaware of what Mill himself maintained about the status of his own proof, and even where it was known what he said, only minimal efforts were made to really understand what he might have meant by it. Many thought it enough to reference the difference between *desired* and *desirable*, but left it unclear what connection this had to 'observation and experience.' Quite a few others (closely following Crisp) urged that Mill was not 'proving' but merely 'offering evidence', but there was a widespread assumption that if that was indeed the case, it must be an alright thing to do. The meta-ethical question of just how empirical evidence could lend support to a normative theory was rarely touched on, but the best answers did explore this point in interesting ways.

Having dealt with the first, most people rushed on to consider the second and third steps, but by this time they appeared to have wholly forgotten the issue of observation and experience, and the answers tended merely to repeat standard analyses.

13. Do utilitarians make good friends?

(101 answers) One of the two overwhelmingly popular questions, this was by and large well done. Most people thought that utilitarians had difficulty with the partiality and loyalty aspects of friendship; their commitment to universal utility maximization seems to rule out special affections and they would not necessarily respect promises or keep secrets. Rather fewer people saw that unselfish concern for other people's happiness, and their commitment to promoting whatever generates happiness (as friendship surely does) would make them rather good friend-material. Many thought that discussion of act-utilitarianism, rule-utilitarianism, multi-level-utilitarianism or sophisticated utilitarianism would help, but since often enough these discussions proceeded either wholly without reference to friendship or with only rather vague reference to it, they largely gave the impression of set-piece work — pre-prepared essays to which this question seemed the best fit. Only a handful of the better answers saw that rules telling us to honour friends because that is what promotes overall happiness were themselves rather at odds with the spirit of genuine friendship, or that rules insisting promises be kept and truths told could themselves be very damaging to friendships. Many got so caught up in criticising their potential utilitarian friends that they seemed to forget that the duties of friendship are *always* limited by other moral concerns. Occasionally putting other needy people before you is hardly unique to the utilitarians among one's friends, nor indeed in itself a bad thing. Given their complaints about utilitarianism, it was ironic how instrumental many people were about what makes a good friend; only rarely did one encounter the notion of an intrinsically valuable bond of commitment between unique individuals held, not because of, but even in spite of, its hedonic upshot.

14. Is love a higher or a lower pleasure?

(78 answers) The second of the most popular questions, again, this was generally well done. Unfortunately, no one realised that Mill himself offers an answer to this question, clearly putting pleasures of 'the feelings' and the 'moral sentiments' into the higher category. Similarly many pointed out that love can be a source of very great pain, apparently unaware that Mill himself points out that the higher our faculties the more acute our capacity for suffering thereby. Focusing on the judges criteria, it was widely allowed that for most human beings to love and be loved is a highly preferred state, making it a pretty high quality pleasure. Stronger answers explored the kind of reasons that might lead judges to make a different ranking. Focusing on Mill's more descriptive criteria, most people recognised that love involved 'higher faculties', although there was little discussion of just how or why any faculty might be deemed 'higher'. It would have been good to see more discussion of the differences between, and respective values of, sensations, emotions and thoughts. Better answers saw that the sensory, biological, or even instinctive, nature of love meant that there was also a case for calling it a lower pleasure, and drawing on Mill's talk of animal pleasures there were a handful of interesting discussions of love in the animal kingdom. Only a few of the best answers wondered about how these two sides of love might fit together, or noted that love was just one member of a larger group of 'mixed pleasures'. Although this was a popular question, many candidates went to considerable effort to avoid

answering it. Noting that there are many different kinds of love, rather than pick out some and ask the question of them, many thought it better just to say the question was unanswerable. Similarly, noting that the judges test requires a contrast, rather than suggest some interesting comparisons, again many candidates thought it easy just to give up. The worst of these non-answers simply attacked the distinction itself in wholly general terms, and thereby decided there was no need to even to think about the phenomena of love.

15. Is Mill's universal hedonism undermined by his own psychological egoism?

(8 answers) Very few candidates answered this. Since much of the material about the alleged fallacy of composition that was awkwardly inserted in answer to question 12 would have been very apt in response to this question, I can only conclude the question itself was not understood. If that is correct, it is concerning.

16. Can Mill make adequate sense of the interest we typically pay to people's motives?

(20 answers) Pressing a standard line that utilitarians don't care about motives, rather too many candidates were unaware of what Mill himself says about the importance of motives in assessing agents, or about the difference between motives and intentions, or saw fit to bring in his views about the importance of virtue. While most who answered this thought that motives were very important, none seemed able to say why or to explain in any detail the nature of this special value to which the utilitarian was so insensitive. For example, few even drew out explicitly the connection between motive and responsibility.

17. "the sentiment [of justice] itself does not arise from anything which would commonly, or correctly, be termed an idea of expediency; but... though the sentiment does not, whatever is moral in it does." (Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch.5) Discuss

(10 answers) By the few who tackled this it was generally well done, though people had clearly thought more about expediency than about the sentiment of justice.

W. MANDER

A. PASEAU

P. LODGE

Report on the Introduction to Politics paper (June 2014)

This was the last year of the 'old syllabus' for Section B. The problems that have prompted its revision were apparent in the scripts. As in previous years, candidates using comparative analysis to answer Section B(i) questions tended to argue more persuasively than those who chose to answer with reference to one of the set countries. This was especially so when the set country chosen was a poor case study for the question. Candidates attempting to answer single country questions in Section B(ii) often strengthened their answers when included comparative insights. The best answers in both sections managed to combine comparative analysis with empirical evidence. As in previous years, students were notably conservative in their question choices, gravitating toward a small number of popular questions. We are pleased to report that no candidate fell foul of the country-coverage rubric in its final year.

Overall, there were few really poor performances, with only one failure among the 274 PPE and HPOL candidates in June 2014. The average mark for the PPE Politics paper was 62.4, slightly higher than the typical average mark in recent years. The average mark for the HPOL 'empirical' paper was also 62.4.

Comments on specific questions

NB: The reported numbers of takers for each question are for **PPE only** (235 candidates) in Section A, and for both **PPE and HPOL** (274 candidates) in Section B, because only Section B questions are taken in common.

SECTION A (Questions 1 – 12)

1. 'Political theory is pointless unless it is realistic.' Discuss. (6 takers)

Too few answers for comment.

2. Is Rousseau's Social Contract consistent with constitutional democracy? (59 takers)

A popular question with a wide range of quality in the answers. Poorer answers tended to focus on whether Rousseau could be viewed as a democrat. Better answers were able to define "constitutional democracy", and to explore tensions between constitutionalism and the sovereignty of the general will.

3. Is democracy a uniquely fair way of reaching political decisions? (43 takers)

Another popular question which attracted a range in quality of responses. At the bottom end, responses tended to offer a general discussion of what justifies democracy and whether this is on grounds of fairness. Better answers concentrated on the putatively fair character of democracy but the term 'uniquely' was, unfortunately, largely ignored.

4. In what sense, if any, can Marx be described as a democrat? (13 takers)

Not a lot of answers, and a tendency to focus on the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but also some impressive knowledge of a wide range of Marx's works.

5. Does democracy distribute political power equally? (31 takers)

A mixed bag of responses. The best answers distinguished between the concept of democracy and the distribution of political power in real-world democracies. Not enough attention was paid to 'political' power as distinct from other forms.

6. Can ideological disagreements be resolved rationally? (3 takers)

Too few answers for comment.

7. 'Not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants, and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone.' Critically assess De Tocqueville's discussion of individualism. (12 takers)

Answers were polarised into poor or very good ones. Weaker answers offered largely descriptive accounts of Tocqueville's views on individualism whereas the better answers discussed ways of challenging Tocqueville's account.

8. Does a vibrant civil society improve the quality of democratic policy? (13 takers)

With a couple of exceptions, this question attracted mostly solid but unspectacular responses which offered general discussion of possible positive effects from civil society. Little attention was paid to different ways civil society might be 'vibrant'.

9. Is there a fair and rational way to aggregate voter preferences to reach a social decision? (7 takers)

Too few answers for comment.

10. Are positive and negative understandings of freedom answers to two different questions? (70 takers)

This question was the most frequently answered, but for the most part this was done relatively poorly with a large number of stock discussions of whether or not there is more than one concept of liberty. Few considered what it means for ideas to be answers to different questions, or thought insightfully about what those questions might be: unsurprisingly, those that did tended to produce superior answers. Candidates also frequently confused concepts and conceptions of liberty.

11. Do Mill's views on voluntary slavery undermine his case for the Harm Principle? (54 takers)

A very popular answer with a wide range in the quality of answers. The poorest offered general discussions of the harm principle with only fleeting attention to the issue of voluntary slavery; the best explored differences and commonalities between voluntary slavery and other self-affecting action. Most answers, however, did show a good working knowledge of Mill's broad position on the subject in question.

12. 'The real threat to freedom of expression comes not from the state but from the tyranny of prevailing opinion.' Discuss. (43 takers)

Another popular answer which was occasionally answered well, but for the most part candidates did not adequately discuss why prevailing opinion might be seen as a threat to freedom of expression. The best answers offered some discussion of, and substance to, what it means to be the 'real' threat.

SECTION B (i) (Questions 13-20)

13. 'Differences between presidential and parliamentary democracies are much less important for political outcomes than differences within parliamentary and presidential democracies respectively.' Discuss. (36 takers)

Answers varied in quality. Stronger answers clearly defined the core institutional differences between parliamentary and presidential systems, and clearly articulated the alleged links between these features and relevant outcomes weighing these against internal variation in types. Weaker answers often failed to define core differences, and tended to uncritically repeat one set of claims (e.g. Linz) about variation.

14. 'Single country case studies tell us something about the country at hand but little else.' Discuss. (17 takers)

Answers varied in their approach, with uneven results. Better answers defined what a case study involves, and then engaged with questions about knowledge generation and generalization, drawing on key examples. Weaker answers fell into two groups; some discussed case studies in an ad hoc way, failing to engage with the methods literature or the broader issues it raises; others discussed generic methodological issues in the study of political science but failed to really engage with the role of case studies or provide any empirical examples of case studies.

15. 'Without strong party discipline, legislatures are disorganized; but with strong party discipline, legislatures are the puppets of the executive branch.' Discuss. (50 takers)

There were many solid answers to this question. Many answered this question with a UK-US paired comparison and engaged well with the literature on legislative politics. Stronger answers defined the concept of 'disorganization' and 'puppet' carefully, and probed whether there is a tradeoff (theoretically or empirically) between disorganization and executive control.

16. 'Ideological cleavages matter far less than electoral rules in shaping the party system.' Do you agree? (125 takers)

This question was very popular and answers were generally strong. Most answers worked through the debate between institutional and more 'bottom up' approaches to party systems, engaging with the core literature on these questions. The best answers not only defined the key terms, but probed the idea of what it means for an explanatory factor to "matter less", setting out clear evaluative criteria for the analysis.

17. 'Judges are only as powerful as political actors allow them to be.' Discuss. (67 takers)

This question was very popular. Most answers defined power, some in clearer and most sophisticated terms than others, and probed the link between the power of judges and the political process. Some answers engaged more extensively with the theoretical literature on courts, others drew on case material. The latter approach yielded uneven results, with some using careful engagement with the cases to really flesh out the relative power of different actors, while others fell short in failing to engage with the theoretical question at hand.

18. Why do some countries have centralized governments and others decentralized governments? (26 takers)

Relatively few answers to this question, but those that did generally showed good knowledge of the literature on federalism and decentralization. Many answers tended to be quite functionalist (countries decentralize because they need to decentralize) without really acknowledging or probing this logic.

19. Do parties represent voters or act largely to preserve their own interests? (6 takers)

Too few answers for comment.

20. 'The idea that political institutions create political stability is naïve. Some countries are inherently unstable, regardless of institutional design.' Discuss. (22 takers).

Answers varied dramatically in how they defined this question, with a number of successful approaches. Some answers used careful case analysis, looking at institutional change in France, working through the ways in which institutions do (or do not) create stability. Others examined broader literatures (e.g. the debate on presidentialism). Stronger answers in both groups clearly defined and problematized the idea of stability and the mechanisms linking stability to political institutions.

SECTION B (ii) (Questions 21-28)

21. Is the U.S Supreme Court above politics? (65 takers)

A very popular question which was generally well done. Most candidates were very familiar with the work of the Supreme Court, and gave capable assessments of its political role. Weaker answers were either imprecise about what it might mean to be 'above politics', or dated – in some cases very dated indeed – about what the Court had been up to since the 1970s.

22. 'Effective American presidential leadership is mostly a matter of the personal skills of the incumbent'. Do you agree? (78 takers)

Another very popular question. Most answers were well-informed and relevant, although a surprising number of answers treated the President as an entirely solitary figure, neglecting to mention the political or bureaucratic resources on which incumbents could draw in office.

23. 'Party competition in France is more about the presidential race than about ideological and social differences.' Discuss. (8 takers)

Too few answers for comment.

24. Is the French Prime Minister more than the parliamentary agent of the French President? (59 takers)

Some very strong answers to this question, which defined the term 'agent' and provided good evidence both for and against the proposition. Weaker answers tended to reproduce a tutorial essay on cohabitation, and said too little about other periods.

25. If the UK Parliament is constitutionally sovereign, why do so many analysts argue that it is politically weak? (66 takers)

A popular question. Stronger answers engaged with the puzzle in the question, and defined the key terms - 'sovereign', 'weak' - carefully. Weaker ones considered first whether or not the UK Parliament was constitutionally sovereign, and then whether or not it was politically weak, but failed to link their conclusions. The weakest ones just considered whether or not it was politically weak.

26. Who has gained and who has lost from constitutional reform in the UK? (68 takers)

A very popular question, but no consensus whatsoever on the answer. The better answers tended to be those which explained precisely how specific measures had strengthened or weakened specific institutions. The weaker answers tended to reflect too broadly on the historical trajectories of the reformed institutions, without stopping to think whether the constitutional reforms were the best way to explain them.

27. Is the power of the German Chancellor exercised through leadership or co-ordination? (23 takers)

Some excellent answers, which distinguished carefully between 'leadership' and 'co-ordination', and provided persuasive bodies of evidence for their relative value as descriptive terms. The weaker answers were too descriptive and insufficiently analytical.

28. How should we explain the decline in the electoral dominance of Germany's mass parties (*Volksparteien*)? (9 takers)

Too few answers for comment.

Recommendations for 2014-2015

The Politics preliminary examination was set and marked by a team of two examiners (N. Owen, D. Butt) and two additional assessors (J. Gingrich, G. Elford). We think this four-person arrangement worked well this year, so we recommend that it be continued.

D. BUTT
N. OWEN
G. ELFORD
J. GINGRICH

Report on Introductory Economics (June 2014)

The Introductory Economics paper was taken by 348 candidates (236 PPE, 82 Economics and Management, 13 History and Economics, 17 E(M)EM). The paper generated a good distribution of marks. There were some very good scripts, but also a large number demonstrating worrying gaps in knowledge of rather basic concepts.

This examination was the first since the changes to the microeconomics part of the course, which were designed to improve students' economic intuition and grasp of basic concepts. Answers to parts of questions which required explanation and exposition of economic ideas were marginally better than last year but candidates were still more comfortable in the parts which required standard calculations.

As was emphasised in previous examiners' reports and in the document "Advice for Undergraduates Preparing for Examinations in Economics", answers to problem questions should contain full explanations and economic interpretation. Too many candidates continued to ignore this advice and the weights and instructions given in the paper. As a result many scripts had little or no explanation of their workings, commented too briefly or not at all on their results, or gave extremely short answers even when explicitly asked to explain "carefully". Candidates should be aware that without explanations or sufficiently detailed discussion the answer cannot be considered complete and will be marked down.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part A (candidates must answer three out of six multi-part questions)

1. Intertemporal Consumption (35% of candidates)

Most candidates correctly put a kink in the budget constraint in question (i a) but a surprisingly high number did not. Finding an algebraic expression for the budget constraint also proved challenging for some. It was very surprising and disappointing that only a very small minority of candidates even mentioned, let alone properly explained, income and substitution effects in their answers to part (iii). Overall the question discriminated well between candidates.

2. Supply and Demand (68% of candidates)

A popular question - perhaps because it is close to one that appeared last year - which most answered well. Weaker candidates did not calculate the effect of the tax on price correctly, and drew the wrong diagram in (iv, c) [e.g. using a parallel shift of the supply curve]. Apart from this, most candidates performed calculations correctly but few presented well-structured algebraic answers, where the relevant steps were included in order to give clarity to the answers provided. The parts that required more economic intuition were less well answered. For example, definitions and explanations of consumer and producer surplus were too short and superficial, failing to demonstrate a clear understanding of these concepts. Most candidates identified the importance of relative elasticities of demand and supply in their answers to part (vi); the best answers gave some intuition and used relevant diagrams to give a full explanation, rather than simply stating the result.

3. Production (82% of candidates)

This question was very popular and discriminated well between candidates. Most were able to define increasing and decreasing returns to scale, but fewer were able to explain the difference between a SRAC and LRAC, and to draw them correctly. A surprising number of candidates failed to use a standard isoquant diagram to show the optimal input choices in (iv). In part (v) the best marks were allocated to those who explained carefully the intuition behind the results they were deriving.

4. ISLM/Mundell-Flemming (88% of candidates)

This was an extremely popular question with an extremely wide range in the quality of answers. There were some excellent answers, clearly explaining concepts and intuition behind the shifting of the relevant curves; some also using appropriate algebra even when not explicitly asked to. Poorer answers just showed shifting of curves with hardly any explanation. A significant number failed to explain basic concepts such as the IS and LM curve.

Some candidates were unable to derive the multiplier for the balanced-budget case in question (i b). Part (iii) was poorly answered. Candidates failed to identify the sensitivity of money demand to changes in income when explaining the horizontal shift in LM. In part (iv) candidates referred to crowding out of investment, but very few actually explained well the adjustment mechanism between the two equilibrium points. Only a few candidates mentioned in part (vii) that monetary policy may be ineffective when interest rates are close to the zero lower bound. A few candidates did not know the Mundell- Fleming model and had very poor diagrammatical illustrations.

5. AS-AD model (5% of candidates)

This was an unpopular question. Candidates did not attempt to derive an expression for Aggregate Demand which could then be used to answer the question more accurately. Instead, most candidates identified the positive signs to all parameters, but struggled to explain the first term of the AD curve. Most candidates provided good algebraic answers to part (ii). Parts (iv) and (vi) elicited some good diagrammatical illustrations, but in part (vi) candidates failed to discuss the possible effects upon the LRAS. Some candidates had difficulty in deriving the correct expression for the effect of a supply shock in part (iv). The best answers were able to explain in words the intuition for what they had derived algebraically.

6. Money (22% of candidates)

This question was moderately popular and discriminated well between the candidates. The final part of the question gave students the opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the model when applied to current policy questions. Most candidates derived the expression provided relating M with B. Fewer provided good explanations of fractional reserve banking. Many candidates struggled with part (iv), as they failed to correctly define cr and rr. In part (v), most candidates provided the quantity equation, $MV=PY$, but many failed to successfully convert the

equation into its percentage-change/growth rate form. In part (vi), most candidates referred to the inflationary consequences of printing money to finance the deficit. The rationale for a budget deficit (as opposed to a balanced budget) and the size of deficits were also discussed by many candidates. The best answers had a good discussion of seigniorage and the different options for financing Government spending.

Part B (candidates had to answer one out of four essay questions)

7. (Monopoly)(72% of candidates)

This was easily the most popular essay question. Most candidates concluded that monopoly was not always bad for society, and mentioned natural monopoly, price discrimination, and patents. The best answers used careful economic analysis to make the argument. There were, however, many superficial answers where the welfare analysis was rather sketchy. It was also not always clear what outcome monopoly was being compared with.

8. Externalities (11% of candidates)

Relatively few candidates answered this question, and most opted to discuss market failures in the environment rather than healthcare. Candidates varied in their ability to use economic modelling to answer the question; candidates who chose the environment scored better in this respect. In answers dealing with the environment, Pigouvian taxation was generally competently discussed. Some candidates discussed trade permits as well. Only the best answers discussed clearly the relative merits of the two.

9. Inflation Targeting (11% of candidates)

Most answers focused on whether the target for inflation should be higher, discussing the zero lower bound for the nominal interest rates and the costs and benefits of inflation. Better answers also discussed the Inflation targeting framework. Many candidates made reference to the recent financial crisis and policy responses. Weaker answers seemed to confuse short run and long run and made erroneous use of the Phillips curve. The Fisher equation was also often misinterpreted.

10. Fiscal Policy and Productivity(7% of candidates)

Relatively few candidates answered this question. Some candidates offered a thoughtful discussion of what data on poor productivity may mean for the estimate of current and future output potential, and consequent implication for the desirability and sustainability of fiscal stimulus. The best answers did so with a clear reference to standard AS-AD models, and with the help of relevant diagrams/equations. Some weaker answers failed to discuss the connection between productivity and the position of the aggregate supply function. Many weaker answers just treated the questions as an excuse to discuss fiscal policy in very broad terms with little or no reference to the question asked.