

**MPhil in Health, Medicine, and Society**

**Senior Examiner's Report 2020-21**

**Overall results**

The HMS MPhil course ran for the fourth time this year. It was taken by 16 students. Ten students achieved overall First Class marks (70 or above) and four of these earned a First Class degree with distinction (75-79). Six candidates achieved overall High Performance marks (65-69). No students received a Pass (60-64) or Fail (0-59).

In line with the departmental agreement to monitor gender-based trends in student performance, we have considered the breakdown of results according to gender (female, male and other). There are no concerns arising from this year's results, but we should continue monitoring. There are also no significant trends that the Senior Examiner has detected on the basis of other demographic or disability categories. The small sample size of students (16) makes inferences regarding broader trends difficult to assess, however.

**Assessment Mitigation Measures**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions within the University implemented a range of adaptations to assessment methods this year. In consultation with the Head of Department, Student Representatives, and Course Managers, the following mitigation measures were approved for the HMS MPhil. Following University guidance, the aim of these measures was to recognise the disruption brought about by the ongoing pandemic and lockdowns and ensure that students' academic performance is assessed fairly.

Cohort equity: examiners ensured that the distribution of classes for the year was no less favourable than the average class distribution for the last two years before the pandemic (2017-18, 2018-19). That is, that the proportion of each class (First Class, High Performance, etc.) was broadly in line with the proportions awarded during 2017-18 and 2018-19. The HMS MPhil first ran in 2017-18 and data for 2019-20 was not used due to emergency changes to assessment methods made that year.

Impact statement: students were invited to submit impact statements for all submitted coursework. This statement was submitted alongside essays and dissertations and was taken into account by examiners. It explained how the student's work could have been different had the lockdowns not prevented access to particular resources.

Coursework extensions: students received a ten-day extension for the third essay and a three-day extension for the dissertation.

Individual mitigation measures: students experiencing significant disadvantages (due to unexpected illness, for example) were encouraged to speak to someone in College or the Course Manager according to University guidance.

### **Prizes**

The Benyamin Habib Prize for the HMS MPhil candidate with the best overall performance in the MPhil essays was awarded to Lilliana Buonasorte. The Forrester Prize for the HMS MPhil candidate with the best overall performance on the dissertation was awarded to Indigo Ayling.

### **External Examiner**

Professor Monica Greco served as External Examiner. This was her first year serving in this role. Professor Greco's principal role was to monitor the examination procedure. She also performed an adjudicatory function for certain essays and dissertations. Professor Greco stated that she was impressed by the range and quality of the work submitted by students, as well as the feedback provided by assessors which, "typically included a full justification of any reservations and constructive suggestions for improvement". She noted that according to the material she reviewed, the examination process was conducted "appropriately, consistently, and fairly". Professor Greco also commented on the helpfulness of James Livesey, the Graduate Secretary of the HMS MPhil, for his prompt and effective responses to queries throughout the examination process.

### **Recommendations**

1. To continue to hold orientation sessions for new Assessors on an ad-hoc basis and to make sure that new Assessors understand how the HMS MPhil differs from other MPhil courses they may be teaching.
2. To ensure that essays supervised in a specific discipline are examined by at least one Assessor familiar with the conventions of that discipline and that Assessor assignments also reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the essay being assessed. The Board of Examiners should not, however, be overly strict in their selection of Assessors. To distribute examining workloads, a wide range of experts should be used for assessment, rather than only those having expertise on specific essay topics.
3. As in previous years, marks clustered in the range of 65-79. Assessors should continue to be encouraged to use the full range of marks.

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