

## History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine MPhil: Senior Examiner's Report 2020-21

### Overall results

The MPhil course was taken by 25 students this year. Of these, 4 achieved First Class with distinction (75-79), 16 First Class, (70-74), and 4 High Performance (65-69); one student withdrew. There were no passes (60-64) or fails. The gender distribution of performances is as follows:

Class	Female	Male	Total
Starred Distinction (80+)	0	0	0
First Class with Distinction (75-79)	2	2	4
First Class	6	10	16
High Performance	2	2	4
Pass	0	0	0
Withdrawn	0	1	1
Total	10	15	25

These numbers suggest a relatively even distribution of marks across gender, though it is difficult to identify statistical trends given the small cohort.

The examiners followed University guidelines in ensuring cohort equity to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 (see Assessment Bulletin 4, May 2021) by checking that the class distribution for this year's cohort of students was broadly in line with that of the last three years before the pandemic (2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019). Distributions for 2020-1 exceeded the average for 2016-19 so no adjustment was necessary.

### Prizes

The Jennifer Redhead prize for the best overall performance on the MPhil essays was awarded jointly to Svit Komel, Anin Luo and Mona-Marie Wandrey. The Anita McConnell Prize for an outstanding performance on work using an object in the Whipple Museum collection was awarded to Rosie Williamson. The Annual 17th Rausing Prize for the best MPhil dissertation was awarded to Mona-Marie Wandrey.

### External examiner

Dr Chiara Ambrosio (UCL) continued for a second year as External Examiner for the Part III and MPhil. Once again, Chiara noted that she was impressed by 'the quality, diversity and calibre' of student work. She also praised the assessors' reports as 'fair, constructive and supportive', saying that she views the quality of this feedback as 'absolutely crucial to the students' flourishing'. Chiara regarded the actions taken to provide support during the pandemic as effective, thanked us for clear documentation and efficient organization of her workload and generally praised the continued functioning of the examinations process despite the ongoing disruption of the pandemic.

### Recommendations

The examining process worked smoothly, especially considering the time pressure that some assessors were under, which was exacerbated by changes to coursework deadlines and extensions. In cases where there was a spread of marks or an agreed mark that fell below a boundary, the External Examiner found it helpful when assessors gave an explanation in the

confidential comments about how they arrived at their agreed mark. The letter to assessors was amended to encourage them to do so in such cases; it was also updated to remind assessors that a mark below 60 was a failing mark on the MPhil. A rare case is worth noting: two assessors were unable to agree a mark on an essay, and this was referred to the External Examiner. Disputed marks should continue to be reviewed by the Senior Examiner in the first instance and sent to the External Examiner only in exceptional circumstances. In general, the process itself has again proven robust enough to withstand the ongoing uncertainty and disruptions due to Covid-19 across the academic year and no further changes are recommended.

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