

MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science & Medicine: Senior Examiner's Report 2024-25.

Overall results

The MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science & Medicine (HPSM) was taken by 25 students and completed by 24 (1 withdrew prior to dissertation) this year. 18 achieved a Distinction (70-79) overall, 4 received a High Performance (65-69), and 2 received a Pass (60-64).

Starred distinction (80+)	Distinction (70-79)	High performance (65-69)	Pass (60-64)	Total
0	18	4	2	24

Prizes

The **Jennifer Redhead** prize for the best overall performance on the MPhil essays was awarded to Jackson Hartigan. The **Rausing Prize** for the best MPhil dissertation was awarded to Rebecka Mähring. Additionally, this year's departmental **Jim Bennett Prize** for an outstanding performance on an essay or dissertation based on an object in the Whipple Museum's collection was awarded to Ella Sheddick.

External examiner

Professor Charlotte Sleigh was the external examiner for the HPSM MPhil for the third consecutive year. Professor Sleigh remarked upon the overall high standard and quality of the course, noting positively the higher average marks awarded in this year's cohort compared to the previous year, as an example of the continual improving standards of assessment within the course. Professor Sleigh also praised the 'excellent diversity' of the work by students within the course, and on the 'generally high' overall standard, with some pieces of work demonstrating 'extremely high' standards. The practice of marking, agreement of marks, and wording and use of marking rubrics are noted in Professor Sleigh's report to have improved in line with her suggestions and feedback from the previous year, and it is noted that the higher average marks this year are reflective of the overall quality of the submitted work. We are very grateful to Professor Sleigh for her excellent, honest and detailed report, for her work and commitment to this role throughout the year, and in her previous two years.

Recommendations

Professor Sleigh emphasises the importance of maintaining high standards within the management and assessment of the program through continued focus on the average marks awarded, and the relative averages for essays/dissertations in the history of science and the philosophy of science. One specific piece of recommendation concerns the continued monitoring of the quality and detail of assessors' feedback, ensuring that they are always reflective of the mark awarded for a piece of work, and in particular to ensure that there is no use of AI in the production of feedback. We wholly endorse this sentiment and will continue to ensure that assessors do not use AI tools in the evaluation of work or construction of written feedback. Further feedback from Professor Sleigh concerns the clarity of marking rubrics, and the relationship between marking schemes for the HPSM MPhil and HPS Part III programs, where some key differences reflect the fact that the former is a postgraduate program and the latter an undergraduate program, meaning that different marking schemes are required.

One specific issue raised by Professor Sleigh concerns the ongoing management of student use of AI tools. There was one case of academic misconduct relating to improper use of AI in the production of work within this year's cohort, which was addressed using the existing departmental policy on plagiarism and AI use, and in line with the guidance of the University's Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals. Professor Sleigh emphasises the need to have a detailed and up-to-date policy regarding the use of AI to allow examiners to properly adjudicate cases of academic misconduct, and to ensure that the quality of student work is not negatively affected

through the use of AI tools. We welcome this feedback, and have undertaken the production of a new departmental policy on AI that will ensure that students are informed as to what is and is not acceptable, and how improper use of AI is to be investigated and sanctioned.

Matt Farr
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