

NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

SENIOR EXAMINER'S REPORT

SUBJECT: History and Philosophy of Science

Senior Examiner: Dr Matt Farr

Examiners: Drs Stephen John, Andrew Buskell, Emma Perkins, Nick Hopwood, Richard Staley, Daniel Margócsy

Structure of the examination: Candidates sat two three-hour open-book exam papers: HPS/1 and HPS/2. For each exam, candidates answered 3 questions from a choice of 15. For each exam, students were given a 24-hour window between receiving the exam paper and submitting their exam scripts.

Written paper/s: HPS/1 and HPS/2.

Practical components: None.

Number of candidates: 55 NST candidates sat both exams, 13 non-standard candidates sat HPS/1, 17 non-standard candidates sat HPS/2.

Conduct of the Examination:

- *any incidents that occurred during the examinations and summary of how they were dealt with,*
One script was found to be significantly over the word limit, and as such the two markers for this script used their discretion to mark up to and not beyond the allowed word count and agree a mark. However, this raised the wider worry about the lack of Turnitin, or an equivalent program, to check that the word limit for each script was adhered to, and relatedly to check for cases of plagiarism. We recommend that something to this effect is available for future years. One candidate did not submit a script for HPS/2.
- *was the timetabling of the examinations appropriate,*
The examiners unanimously raised concern about the scheduling of both exams. HPS/1 was scheduled to begin on midday Wednesday May 26th, a day earlier than we believed the examination period began, and clashing with a scheduled HPS IB lecture. The HPS/2 exam was comparatively late in the exam schedule, on the 21-22 June, allowing only three working days for the marking of the 72 HPS/2 scripts before the examiners meeting. There is a preference for the two exams to occur closer together in the schedule, which is typical of previous years.
- *where candidates have a choice of question, please give the number of candidates answering each question.*

HPS/1

Q1: 18

Q2: 9

Q3: 23

Q4: 33

Q5: 21

Q6: 30

Q7: 36

Q8: 2
Q9: 13
Q10: 11
Q11: 2
Q12: 12

HPS/2
Q1: 18
Q2: 21
Q3: 20
Q4: 6
Q5a: 26
Q5b: 0
Q6: 8
Q7: 5
Q8: 29
Q9: 15
Q10: 20
Q11: 17
Q12a: 6
Q12b: 5

Marking/Scaling:

- *the arrangements for marking and classing with reference to agreed criteria, noting any divergence and the reasons; please include the percentage in each class, the average mark and standard deviation,*

The agreed raw marks did not meet the expected grade distribution and so the scaling formula was used. This produced 22.81% firsts, and 59.6% firsts-and-2is. The average mark was 61.8 and standard deviation 11.89. 1 candidate withdrew.

- *any comments (if relevant) on variation of performance between papers.*

There was no significant difference in performance across the two papers, but the examiners did notice in both cases a tendency for marks to clump around low-to-mid 2i. We took this to be a consequence of the open-book format, which I come back to in the recommendations, below.

Subject Examiners' Meeting:

- *attendance and any dispensations for absences,*

There were three examiners meetings conducted via Teams: (1) all HPS/1 examiners (Margócsy, Perkins, Staley, Hopwood) met on June 22nd 2021 to agree the marks for the HPS/1 exam; (2) all HPS/2 examiners (Farr, Buskell, John) met on June 28th 2021 to agree the marks for the HPS/2 exam; (3) all examiners met on 10am June 29th for the final examiners meeting.

- *any discussion of marginal candidates.*

Given the need to apply scaling in order to meet the grade distribution, the relative ranking of students was agreed.

Administration:

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- *any recommendations relating to any representations concerning the conduct of the examination to be taken to the Final Senior Examiners meeting,*
- *Any suggestions for changes to procedure for future Subject Examiners,*
- *Any recommendations to be included in the Chairman's report for taking forward either to the NST Management Committee or to the Board of Examinations.*

Date:

6/7/2021

(Additional information may be required by Faculty Boards (e.g. question level data); this is not needed by the Chairman of Examiners but can be included if it is easier to provide one report. Faculty Boards may publish certain information and may therefore require content to be presented in a particular format.)