

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

M. Phil in History, Sociology and Philosophy of Science, Technology and Medicine

M PHIL SENIOR EXAMINER'S REPORT 2010-11

The MPhil course was taken by 15 students, of whom 11 achieved Distinction (1st Class; final mark between 70-79), and 3 achieved High Performance (final mark between 65-69). No candidate achieved Distinction Starred First (mark 80 and above), and no candidate failed (either overall, or individual pieces of work). One student did not submit a dissertation and was taken off the Register as of 30 September 2011.

Prizes

The *Jennifer Redhead Prize*, for best overall essay performance, was awarded to Anna Kathryn Schoefert, as was the *7th Annual Rausing Prize*, for best dissertation performance.

Number of students enrolled in the program

The number of students increased from 13 in the previous year (2008-9), in line with expectations since the introduction of the new Part III course, which this year was taken by 14 students.

Late submissions

One candidate was granted a five week extension for the dissertation; as a result the M Phil Examiners' Meeting held on 21 June 2010 was not in the position to consider this mark. The dissertation was not completed and the candidate did not respond to requests to formalize her status, so her name was removed from the Register as of 30 September 2011.

External examiner

Dr Serafina Cuomo (Birkbeck History), the External Examiner, saw a total of 18 pieces of work (including 4 dissertations) out of 59 (31%). The reasons for referral were diverse. Dr Cuomo saw: the best and worst essays, borderline marks, those essays or dissertations for which there was a wide variation between the examiners' marks and those for which the internal examiners failed to reach an agreement. The Examiners wish to thank Dr Cuomo for her careful reading of the work and her constructive contributions to the discussion.

Recommendations

1. It was noted that students writing on historical topics may need to use extensive citations in the text and it was recommended that the Department introduce a policy whereby a student could

apply for an extension to the word limit on the basis of the need to use extensive citations, the process would be the same as when applying for an appendix. This recommendation should be considered by the Degree Committee.

2. The MPhil Manager's guidelines should advise that when students consider working with people outside of the Department, particular attention must be paid to ensure that the end result is still within the scope of HPS. When approving topics, the Degree Committee must pay particular attention to the description of the work to ensure this.

3. The examiners agreed that the rules for deadlines and word limits for the MPhil are clear and all students are expected to stay within the word limit and submit on time, or risk penalties. It was recognized that despite the clear guidance, the examiners still found it difficult to impose penalties where students had exceeded the word limit by very little or were just an hour or two late and eventually it was agreed that the examiners should be allowed to use their judgment in these cases.

Prof Jim Secord

Senior Examiner M Phil 2010-11

5 October 2011