

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

NST Part III History and Philosophy of Science**Senior Examiner's Report 2013-14****Overall results**

The Part III course was taken by 13 students. Of those, 5 achieved overall First Class marks (70 or above), 4 High II.i (67–69), and 3 (lower) II.i (60–66), and 1 II.ii (50–59).

In line with the departmental agreement to monitor gender-based trends in student performance, we should note the following breakdown of results. There are no particular concerns arising from this year's results, but we should continue monitoring.

Class	Female	Male	Total
First (70 or higher)	3	2	5
High II.i (67–69)	2	2	4
(lower) II.i (60–66)	1	2	3
II.ii (50–59)	1	0	1
Total	7	6	13

There are also no significant trends that the Senior Examiner has detected on the basis of other demographic or disability categories.

Prizes

The Lipton Prize, for the best overall performance on the Part III course, was awarded to Filip Drnovsek Zorko.

External examiner

This was the first year in which Dr Emma Tobin (University College London) served as external examiner for the MPhil programme. At the final examiners' meeting she described the candidates' work as, in general, outstanding and of high caliber. She commended the examiners on the quantity and quality of feedback they offered to the candidates, noting that this exceeds what she has encountered at other institutions.

Dr Tobin will continue as external examiner next year.

Recommendations

1. The procedure of having the Senior and Ordinary Examiners, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, take a first pass at assigning examiners for essays and dissertations continues to be an effective means of making the process of assigning examiners more efficient. It is recommended however that the Senior and Ordinary Examiners be aided by someone whose expertise

complements their own (e.g., a historian if two philosophers), which may not necessarily be the Director of Graduate Studies.

2. Following a suggestion by the external examiner, departmental staff agreed to try anonymization of marking for MPhil and Part III students in 2014-15.

3. The department should consider including: in its advice to students, more specific guidance as to what counts as a topic in the History and Philosophy of Science; and, in marking criteria, a note that first-class work is expected to be polished and typo-free.

4. Candidates expressed discontent with the procedure of choosing 8 of 10 topics for the set-essay exam; a significant number of candidates this year saw 2 of their 4 prepared topics dropped and felt this put them at a disadvantage. It is recommended that the examiners try a new strategy next year in which essay questions are synthetic across topics rather than specific to them.