

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

NST Part III History and Philosophy of Science

Senior Examiner's Report 2015-16

Overall results

The Part III course was taken by 12 students, of whom four achieved overall First Class marks (70 or above) and two High II.i (67–69). Four candidates received marks of (lower) II.i (65–69) and two 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. Four females and eight males completed this course. There are no particular concerns arising from this year's results, but we should continue monitoring.

Class	Female	Male	Total
First (70 or higher)	1	3	4
High II.i (67-69)	0	2	2
(lower) II.i (60-66)	2	2	4
II.ii (50-59)	1	1	2
Total	4	8	12

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

Prizes

The 7th Lipton Prize was awarded for the best performance on the Part III. This was awarded to Holly Clothier.

External examiner

Dr Emma Tobin (University College London) served as external examiner for the MPhil programme. This was her third and final year serving as external examiner. Throughout the year, she described the work of both MPhil and Part III students as outstanding. She also praised the greater spread of essays across the areas offered by the programme. She described the feedback provided by examiners as exemplary—beyond that seen in other institutions—and was pleased to see that examiners were using the full range of available marks.

Dr Staffan Müller-Wille has agreed to take over as External Examiner next academic year.

Recommendations

1. The MPhil/Part III Senior and Ordinary Examiners together with the Director of Graduate Studies will continue to suggest two examiners per student before Degree Committee meetings.
2. The anonymization of marking for MPhil and Part III students continues to be effective. The Senior Examiner has found no evidence of inequality in gender attainment.
3. In order to encourage consistency in the kind and quantity of feedback provided to students on examined work, the word limit of 200-500 words on examiner comments has been implemented.
4. Following the recommendation of the External Examiner, the department is encouraged to screen student work for plagiarism using software such as Turnitin. One case of plagiarism was detected this year by an examiner.
5. The Senior and Ordinary Examiners recommend that MPhil and Part III examination follow the Part II model with a fixed set of core examiners plus assessors who mark work but do not attend the examiners' meetings. This is in accordance with new regulations released by Education and Student Policy in which all examiners are expected to be present at the final examiners meeting.
6. A gift from Dr Anita McConnell who passed away on 28 April 2016 will form a fund called the Anita McConnell Prize. This fund will be used to encourage students to study objects from the Whipple Museum of the History of Science.
7. In previous years, candidates expressed discontent with the procedure of having to choose among 8 of 10 topics on their set essay exam. This year questions on all topics (12 in total) were provided. It is recommended that we continue to make writing on all topics available for the set essay exam.