Preliminary Examination to Part I of the Historical Tripos 2017

1 Marking Conventions

a) Prelims are not classed. However, part of the feedback process essentially lies in marks being given that correspond to Tripos classes, and marking procedures take this into account. All papers are marked out of 100. Marks are expressed as whole numbers and not as fractions. The range of marks for each class is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>100-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.1</td>
<td>69-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.2</td>
<td>59-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>49-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>39-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A solid First Class mark is 70-74 and a high First is 75 and above.

Scripts which fall short of First Class quality overall but contain a first-class answer to at least one full question should be signalled by an asterisk following the mark (e.g. 68*). The asterisk is, therefore, not used for Paper 1 (HAP) scripts, where there is only one answer per script.

b) There are only three further ways in which the numerical marks are qualified. The proper use of these conventions is reinforced by including a note of all the symbols and their meaning on the front of each mark book.

i) Exiguity (‘short measure’)
Each answer must be marked separately and an individual mark recorded in the comments book. Where one or more essays are so exiguous as to be deficient as essays, this must be signalled by the letter ‘X’ after the mark. A missing answer should be awarded ‘0’ and be included in the averaging of the marks (for example, in a 3-question paper a candidate who scored 66 in two essays but failed to produce a third essay would be awarded 44).

However, exiguity may also manifest itself in more pervasive ways, less amenable to arithmetic formulae. Notes are deficient when an essay is expected. Similarly, an essay, although ostensibly complete, may be so short as to constitute an inadequate answer. In such cases, examiners should assign a mark only to what has actually been presented.

The mark awarded to an individual essay should reflect the short measure and not be based on the indicative quality of the essay, were it complete. The overall mark would then, as usual, be an average of the three questions, questions; no penalty will be imposed by individual examiners.

The frequent appearance of ‘X’ across a range of papers provides evidence of persistent failure to meet the rubric and may be penalised by the Board.

ii) Peculiarities
Some scripts will show very diverse qualities or other peculiarities which should in the examiner’s opinion be drawn to the attention of the Examining Board, and subsequently the candidate. Such scripts should be signalled by an exclamation mark following the mark (e.g. 65!), with a brief explanation given in the comments.

iii) Breaches of Rubric
Where a candidate has infringed the rubric in some way other than by exiguity, this should be signalled by a hash following the mark (e.g. 65#), with an explanatory comment. Serious breaches of rubric (for example, attempts at both (a) and (b) in an either/or question) should result in the disqualification of an answer.

c) Fail marks: Except in cases where the Chair considers the script to be so exiguous as to rule out any possibility of a pass mark, the Chair, or an examiner nominated by the Chair, will read and mark all scripts awarded a mark of 39 or below. The higher of the two marks will stand.

2 Assessment of Scripts

In assessing individual answers and scripts, Examiners are asked to have regard to three principal criteria:

- the extent to which the candidate addressed the question(s) asked;
- the quality of the argument offered;
- the range of knowledge displayed.

Of these the extent to which the candidate addresses the question is most fundamental. This applies to Historical Argument and Practice no less than to other Papers. Indirect and tangential answers that appear to have been pre-prepared are no more acceptable on HAP than on other papers.

In building up a profile of each performance Examiners are asked to begin by evaluating work under each of these heads, and should also take account of the quality of the candidate’s presentation, including grammar, punctuation, use of language and spelling. A list of candidates with a Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia and/or dyspraxia) will be circulated. In respect of these candidates, Examiners are requested not to penalise minor spelling or grammatical errors.

The following grid offers a more detailed sketch of the performances under each head to be associated with a particular class and mark range. However, it is not intended that Examiners should isolate qualities that meet these requirements and reward them separately; and it is appreciated that different papers eventually awarded the same or similar marks may display very different combinations of qualities. Moreover, as will be plain, there is overlap between the criteria. When Examiners move to the assignment of a single mark overall for a paper, the assessments under each head will often be seen to converge, contributing to a uniform profile.

Examiners are asked to adhere closely to these guidelines in writing their comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
<th>Addressing the Question</th>
<th>Quality of Argument</th>
<th>The Range of Knowledge Displayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High First</td>
<td>75+</td>
<td>Work which engages closely with the question and addresses its implications in a sophisticated manner. Answers securing marks in this range tend to</td>
<td>Work which displays a striking command of relevant material and mobilises this knowledge to the best effect to develop a compelling argument. Writing will be clear,</td>
<td>Work which displays an unusually secure command of a wide range of knowledge, calling upon contemporary evidence where appropriate as well as the conclusions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
recognise the hidden complexities of a question, and they may also tackle the subject in an imaginative manner, though this should not be confused with simply a provocative or contentious approach. The structure of the answer will facilitate a clear, coherent unfolding of the writer's argument, and may display an unusual degree of elegance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solid First</th>
<th>70-74</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work which engages closely with the question and addresses its implications as well as its 'surface' sense, demonstrating the ability to engage with abstract issues. The structure of the answer will allow a clear, coherent unfolding of the writer's argument. Descriptive and factual elements will be harnessed effectively to the argument, and their relevance to the issues under discussion made authoritative and to the point. The engagement with historiography, where relevant, will display a sophisticated understanding of the significance of historical argument. Work in this class will display a strong command of historical concepts and will impress by the sharpness of its analysis and critical thinking. The work should appear original rather than derivative. Work in this category is also more likely to be original in the sense of putting forward persuasive and well-supported new ideas or making unexpected connections.</td>
<td>Work which displays the ability to use the knowledge at the writer's disposal to the very best effect. Linguistically and structurally the writing will be clear, authoritative and to the point. Where relevant writers will be aware of historical debate but will go beyond merely paraphrasing the ideas of others to demonstrate their own conceptual command. In this sense work should be original rather than derivative. It may, more rarely,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.i</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.ii</td>
<td>50-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>30-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>39↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a tendency to simplify the arguments of other writers or to stumble over factual detail. At the bottom of the scale the imbalance between understanding and data may be marked, or the knowledge deployed may at times seem hackneyed or imprecise.
3 Historical Argument and Practice (Paper 1)

This paper provides an opportunity for candidates to reflect on broad issues of historical argument and practice. It encourages students to raise and discuss fundamental questions that relate their specialist knowledge to more general themes of historical inquiry and explanation. The focus of HAP is on understanding the conceptual, historiographical and methodological dimensions of historical argument and practice. It is a summative paper, that requires candidates to forge connections between different aspects of their historical knowledge, for example by critically evaluating the merits of different approaches in relation to the more specific and empirical material that they have encountered elsewhere in their study of the past.

The paper is assessed by means of a three-hour examination, in which candidates are required to answer only one question. The exam paper, which normally consists of around 30 questions, is designed to encourage broad discussion of issues derived from, and relevant to the full range of papers offered by the Faculty. Candidates are also encouraged to draw upon their wider reading. The best way of viewing the Prelim paper is as a dry-run for Part II: an early opportunity to experiment with making the sorts of broader connections and comparisons that are not always possible in the context of the other more specialized Part I papers. Examiners should expect students to use a wide range of historical and historiographical examples and display an awareness, and hopefully an understanding, of more complex theoretical and methodological issues. However, examiners should also keep in mind that students will be drawing from their relatively limited experience in different papers from their first year in Part I, and so not all students will use the same pieces of evidence even when answering the same HAP question.

4 Comments for Candidates

a) One purpose of the Preliminary Examination is to give undergraduates the chance to experience a formal examination, the results of which nonetheless do not contribute towards their final degree result. As such it is a ‘dry run’, the only one they will have during their time at Cambridge.

b) A further, related, and vital purpose of the Examination is to give students feedback on the nature and quality of the answers they have offered. This feedback takes two forms:
   i) A numerical mark.
   ii) Written comments, assessing the positive and negative qualities of each answer with the aim of providing constructive feedback to students themselves.

c) Examiners are reminded that comments will be passed directly to students, via Directors of Studies. This imposes the following responsibilities upon examiners:
   i) To write at a fairly consistent length:
      • between 50-100 words per question in Papers 2-19 (i.e. 150-300 words per script) followed by a summing up of the candidate's performance in the whole paper;
      • between 50-100 words per question (and hence per script) in Paper 1.
   ii) To write both neutrally and constructively, identifying both strong points and weaknesses, in such a way that a candidate will profit from reading the comment.
   iii) Neither simply to attack the answer; nor to write a comment that simply reproduces the judgement expressed in the numerical mark.
d) In the case of candidates awarded a fail mark, whose scripts are then second marked by the Chair or another examiner (see 6(c) above), the comments of both examiners will be passed on, via Directors of Studies.

5 Final Meeting

a) Examiners are obliged to be present throughout the final meeting and to sign the list of successful candidates.

b) The Examiners will be provided with:
   i) A computerised mark book showing the numbers but not the names or colleges of each candidate;
   ii) Comments sheets for the paper they have marked;
   iii) Profiles of marks by paper and examiner;
   iv) Draft examiners’ reports.

c) Before confirming the markbook, Examiners will be invited to scrutinise comments sheets for their individual papers for accuracy.

d) The Chair will read through the anonymised markbook; the Board will confirm successful candidates and those not eligible to appear on the pass list. Candidates will remain anonymised and identified only by number until after the Board has agreed these lists.

e) As papers are single-marked, the Board does not have the discretion to raise marks ending in 9.

f) The Preliminary Examination is not classed by the Examiners, who approve a list of successful candidates. (Directors of Studies may give an informal class to their students.)

g) In order to appear on the list of successful candidates three papers must be offered, one of these being Paper 1.

h) The Board may wish to discuss exiguities, breaches of rubric and peculiarities with reference to section 6(b) above.

i) A candidate with an agreed failure in one or more papers will not appear on the list of successful candidates.

j) Examiners must not reveal any information relating to the performance of candidates until after their results are available in CamSIS.

(This version approved by Faculty Board 22 November 2016.)