

Preliminary Examination to Part I of the Historical Tripos 2021

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:

Class	Marks
I	70-100
II.1	60-69
II.2	50-59
III	40-49
Fail	0-39

Examiners are expected to use the mark range 80+ for exceptionally outstanding work. They are also encouraged to use the full lower range for weaker work.

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) Numerical marks may be qualified by the use of the following symbols:

- X One or more of the answers was exiguous or too short/insufficient to constitute a full answer to the question. 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.
- ! An indicator of a peculiarity about the paper (perhaps extreme diversity in quality of answers, for example) which is being drawn to the attention of the Board.
- # A breach of rubric, e.g. exceeding the word limit or failing to comply with guidelines on footnoting, bibliography or style in a Part I/Part II long essay/dissertation, or failing to follow the rubric about choice of questions on a written paper. A serious breach of rubric in a written examination may jeopardize the class awarded, as it will normally 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.

Class	Numerical Range	Addressing the Question	Quality of Argument	The Range of Knowledge Displayed
High I	80+	Work which engages closely with the question and addresses its implications in a sophisticated manner. Answers securing marks in this range tend to 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.	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, 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.	Work which displays an unusually secure command of a wide range of knowledge, calling upon contemporary evidence where appropriate as well as the conclusions drawn from it by other writers. It will demonstrate a clear sense of chronological development and historical context. Awareness of argument and interpretation will be held in an appropriate balance with factual information, so that the work is neither too generalising nor too weighed down by detail. The evaluation of evidence is likely to be unusually sharp and to the point. Where appropriate apparent tensions within the evidence considered will be identified and explained or resolved. Work will display a

				sophisticated awareness of the attitudes of the period, and will avoid reductive explanation.
I	70-79	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 clear.	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, also be original in the sense of putting forward persuasive and well-supported new ideas or making unexpected connections.	Work which displays an impressively wide range of knowledge, calling upon contemporary evidence where appropriate as well as the conclusions drawn from it by other writers. It will demonstrate a clear sense of chronological development. Awareness of argument and interpretation will be held in an appropriate balance with factual information, so that the work is neither too generalising nor too weighed down by detail. Writers will show the ability to evaluate the information at their disposal; where necessary, they will identify apparent contradiction and resolve them. They will also show an informed awareness of the attitudes of the period.
II.i	60-69	Work within this class can cover a broad range of achievement. It will display understanding of the question and will deploy a range of relevant evidence in answering it. At best it will be analytical, whilst leaving some room for further exploration of the implications of the issues under discussion, or for consideration of the full relevance of the evidence cited.	The work will display the ability to deploy ideas and information to create a sustained argument. The argument will be well-structured rather than emerging piecemeal or amounting merely to a list of points, but it will lack the conceptual grasp and analytical acuity of a first-class answer. Secondary literature will be used appropriately and purposefully, with an adequate awareness of its implications. Expression will be clear	The work will display ample knowledge of the subject and will strike a good balance between ideas and information. At its best, it will reveal a high density of knowledge and will deploy it effectively while avoiding anachronism.

			and capable, demonstrating a firm conceptual grasp, particularly towards the top end of the range.	
II.ii	50-59	Work which may make some relevant points but is inadequately focused on the specific question under discussion, leaving the reader to draw out the implications of what is being said. The structure of the answer is likely to be dictated by the information available to the writer, rather than by the requirements of the question under consideration. The implications of the question may have been overlooked or misunderstood.	Work in which the ideas and information at the writer's disposal are presented as an end in themselves, so that the argument emerges in a fragmentary or unfocused way, or is explicitly addressed only in the opening and closing paragraphs. There may be a tendency to state ideas rather than analyse them, or the argument may rest on unsupported claims. Linguistically as well as structurally the presentation of ideas may be rather clumsy, with points imperfectly explained. There is likely to be a sense of other people's ideas being repeated uncritically; and at worst the accretion of points may give rise to unreconciled contradictions, or raise issues which are not explored.	Work which displays a degree of knowledge sufficient to address the question only at a relatively generalising level, in which statements are supported by trite or imprecise evidence. There may be frequent indications of imperfect recollection or understanding, such 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.
III	40-49	Work which makes little sustained attempt to develop an argument in response to the question, or which does so at a superficial level. The presentation of what the writer is able to remember will, to a very marked extent, take precedence over the development of an argument in response to the question.	Work which makes only a rudimentary attempt to develop a sustained argument, with the question treated as a peg upon which to hang any available ideas. Argument is likely to take the form of bald assertions, which may themselves be trite or hackneyed, and which are not developed into a coherent line of thought. Structurally and linguistically the presentation may be muddled or unclear.	Work which demonstrates too little knowledge to provide an acceptable argument, or, at worst, to sustain a full length answer. The information adduced may be misremembered or vague, or may reveal actual misunderstanding. The views of other writers may be distorted

Marginal Fail	30-39	Work in which the majority of what is discussed is of limited relevance for the question, but which may show a skeletal grasp of its significance.	Work in which the assertions are poorly supported and the argument unclear, but which may exhibit a limited, but undeveloped, structure.	Work which demonstrates deficient, vague, distorted or inaccurate knowledge throughout, but which may show a grasp of some relevant evidence.
Clear Fail	20-29	Work in which most of the material presented is entirely irrelevant to the question, consisting in a presentation of what the writer is able to remember.	Work lacking in any clear argument structure, or in which there is a minimal attempt to arrange evidence in order to answer the question.	Work lacking in engagement with appropriate evidence, but which may contain just one or two relevant pieces of evidence
Serious Fail	1-19	Work in which there is no attempt at all to engage with the question. Towards the lower end of the scale, work where the answer is also extremely brief.	Work which is limited to listing unsupported points in a random and disorganised sequence, and where any evidence present is not connected to the question.	Work which fails to engage with relevant historical evidence at all, or in which all evidence given is factually incorrect
Outright Fail	0	No work offered.	No work offered.	No work offered.

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 written 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.
- d) In the case of candidates awarded a fail mark, whose scripts are then second marked by the Chair or another examiner, the comments of both examiners will be passed on, via Directors of Studies.

5. Final Meeting

- a) 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.
- b) 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.)
- c) In order to appear on the list of successful candidates three papers must be offered, one of these being Paper 1.
- d) The Board may wish to discuss exiguities, breaches of rubric and peculiarities with reference to section 1(b) above.
- e) A candidate with an agreed failure in one or more papers will not appear on the list of successful candidates.