



HUMAN, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE TRIPOS

POL PAPERS

PART II EXAMINERS' REPORTS

2017-2018

REPORT FROM THE SENIOR EXAMINER

This was my second year serving in the role of Senior Examiner for the Part II Politics Exam Board, which administers the Politics and International Relations and Politics and Sociology tracks within the HSPS Tripos at Parts IIA and IIB.

There were no major changes to procedures this year, though I was glad that, unlike last year, the three main HSPS Part II Exam Boards—Politics, Sociology, and Social Anthropology—all held their final meetings on the same day, which allowed each Board easier access to the various External Examiners than has been possible in the past, as they were all physically in Cambridge at roughly the same time. I hope this practice continues, and that the final meetings continue to take place on Thursday, which allows candidates to be notified of their results before the week-end.

There were, however, important changes of personnel. Professors Louise Fawcett and Matthew Festenstein bowed out as our External Examiners, after serving their three-year term, and were replaced by Professor Nic Cheeseman (Birmingham, political science) and Dr Julia Stapleton (Durham, political thought). Both External Examiners did a grand job, uncomplainingly dealing with the variety and quantity of material I invited them to inspect during their time in Cambridge, and I am very pleased that on completion of this year's business they immediately agreed to return for 2019. On the administrative side, there was both continuity and change. Last year, Patrycja Koziol was new in the role of undergraduate secretary, and was given crucial assistance from Helen Williams in the POLIS office, who had experience of some of the trickier aspects of the Examining process. Now that Miss Williams is working for the Cambridge Trusts, Ms Koziol shouldered more of the administrative burden herself—though with key bursts of assistance from her colleagues Yasmin Fouani-Eckstein and, especially, Cerys Thomas. As last year, my predecessor as Senior Examiner, Glen Rangwala was generous with his time, attention, and advice in the critical week beginning Monday 18 June.

Before then, almost everything ran reasonably smoothly. My father's sudden death at the end of January meant that I wasn't as engaged with the process of dealing with the draft

Examination papers as I should have liked to have been, but even without detailed guidance from me, the External Examiners returned judicious commentaries on the drafts in good time. The paper-setting meeting needed to be postponed for 24 hours, to avoid falling on a strike date, but still discharged its business efficiently. The strike also prompted Dr Stapleton to resign as External Examiner, following instruction from the Union, but she was willing to be reinstated when the vote was taken to suspend the industrial action, and that certainly made things easier when June came around. The office dealt admirably with the periods at the start of Lent Term and Easter Term around the deadlines for the submission of examined work—POL5 and other long essays, and Part IIB dissertations. One area where things could be tightened up, however, concerns official communication with the Board: it is an important point that all formal business needs to be directed at the Senior Examiner specifically, rather than at individual members of the Exam Board, let alone at Course Organisers. This mattered this year, insofar as one College's attempt to pursue an Alternative Mode of Assessment for one candidate foundered when it turned out that since I had never been copied into the relevant email correspondence that had been pinging around, no formal University process was ever in fact initiated until it was much too late.

The Examination period itself also ran tolerably smoothly. We had been able to arrange for the largest papers to take place earlier in the cycle than last year—when POL4 did not take place until June 9, causing difficulties in reporting all marks by the relevant deadline. It may be worth next year requesting that POL9 also take place earlier than was the case this year (4 June), as an extra weekend would be handy for the markers, given the number of scripts that they have to process. As in recent years, the marksheets automatically calculated each marker's mean mark and the standard deviation of their marks profile, instantly feeding significant statistical information back to them, making it easier to fit their marks to the agreed desiderata, which is to say, an average in the range 63-66 and a standard deviation of at least six. Not all markers met these norms—some remained slightly on the high side—but none were judged to warrant an intervention.

The serious problem we ran into came on the evening of Tuesday 19 June. With the External Examiners due to arrive the following morning, it was time to manufacture the provisional class lists that would guide activity in the closing stages of the Examining process. Unfortunately, the Excel macros that had worked very well last year could not be made to do their job, which caused a significant delay. Dr Rangwala very kindly wrote some formulae the following morning, which sorted the problem out, but the result was that the provisional class list could not be produced until Wednesday lunchtime, which meant that I and the office were running to catch up throughout the day. In the end the patience of the External Examiners and the dedication of the admin staff meant that everything that needed to be done in the end was done—but it was a hectic, tense, and occasionally stressful day, and it is sincerely to be hoped that there is no repeat next year.

Perhaps as a result of these difficult circumstances, a small number of clerical errors in the Examining process did emerge in the days following the publication of the class list, all of which were immediately corrected, with apologies extended to the students concerned. In one case—but thankfully only one case—this led to a candidate being reclassified with a First. One part of the Examining machinery in particular was the site of three separate errors, which is when marks are being communicated amongst different Exam Boards: two candidates'

marks were mixed up by Criminologists, then reported to Sociology and passed along to the Politics office; Politics garbled the reception of one candidate's marks from the History Examiners (this was the error that led to reclassing); and one mark was incorrectly reported by Politics to Sociology. I recommend that this aspect of the process receive especially vigilant attention next year, to avoid it happening again.

As last year, the only qualitative feedback that the Examiners supplied to candidates concerns the POL5 long essays from Politics and International Relations Part IIA. And, as last year, this seemed to be a generally worthwhile thing to be doing.

To summarise the overall results. At Part IIA Politics and International Relations, 85 candidates were classed: there were 18 Firsts (21%, one of which was a Starred First); 59 Upper Seconds (69%), six Lower Seconds (7%); and two Thirds (2%). At Part IIA Politics and Sociology 20 candidates were classed, with three Firsts (15%), and seventeen Upper Seconds (85%). At Part IIB Politics and International Relations 95 candidates were classed, with 14 Firsts (15%, of which one was a Starred First), 77 Upper Seconds (81%) and four Lower Seconds (4%). At Part IIB Politics and Sociology 21 candidates were classed, with seven Firsts (33%) and fourteen Upper Seconds (67%).

The Examiners continue to be concerned about matters relating to gender. The POL4 paper last year generated concern, concentrated on its political economy section, where there were significant disparities in marks, so we were pleased to see this year that there was no significant gender gap on this paper—in fact, women did marginally better than men. But although men and women were getting almost identical marks at Part IIA Politics and International Relations (65.5 for women and 65.4 for men), when the marks were aggregated, we nevertheless ended up with eight women getting Firsts and ten men, which may not look like a great difference, but given that the students at Part IIA consisted of 48 women and 37 men, that does mean that only 17% of women but 27% of men were receiving Firsts, which is a significant difference. The disparities are still more pronounced at Part IIB Politics and International Relations. This is a cohort where there were 42 women and 53 men, and where the women did significantly less well than the men. Although the gap that was visible in last year's dissertation marks was reversed (so now women scored 1.4 marks higher on average than men), the POL9 paper continued to show a substantial gap, with men scoring on average 65.2 and women 61.1, and a difference still showed up both in the average marks across all papers (66.8 for men, 65.2 for women), and in the overall classing, where ten men received Firsts (19%) but only four women (10%). I am grateful to Dr Rangwala for his continuing attention to the data, and I am sure that the Department, its Equality and Diversity Committee, and next year's Exam Board will want to reflect on these statistics and consider what measures, if any, might usefully be taken.

Looking ahead to next year, it will be important that the Department ensures that Ms Koziol has the administrative support she needs throughout the Exam period. And I think there is a good case for restoring the old practice of having a Deputy Chair of Examiners, with the expectation that that person will offer substantial assistance to the Chair during the key phase of the Examining period, running from the deadline for reporting marks at noon on Monday to the final Examiners' meeting on the Thursday.

Finally, I wish Dr Jeremy Green every success as he takes over as chair of the Exam Board for 2018-19.

Dr Christopher Brooke

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Examiner: Dr Julia Stapleton
University of Durham

This was my first year as external examiner with special responsibility for the political thought/political philosophy papers. I would first like to praise the work of the senior examiner, Dr Christopher Brooke, and the exams administrator, Patrycja Koziol, who coped admirably in the face of a succession of software and other problems in the two days before the exam board met. These were by no means trivial and it is a tribute to their resourcefulness and determination that the meeting was able to proceed smoothly with only a slight delay. They were highly organised for the external examiners' arrival despite these setbacks.

My impressions of both the process of marking and the actual marking itself are wholly positive. Comments on individual scripts were incisive and seemed well aligned with the marks awarded. The external examiners were shown samples of scripts in which the marks of the two internal examiners were very close, if not the same, emphasising the consistency of marking within papers; it was made clear that more such scripts could have been made available on request. Given the overall amount of scripts examined, only a small percentage remained with unresolved differences. Also praiseworthy is the practice of providing reports on the outcomes of each paper by the chief markers.

It was a pleasure to be involved in assessing submissions that had been identified as potential prize-winners. The quality of work produced in the department at the top end is impressive for its sophistication, reflecting not only the ability of candidates but also dedicated supervision.

The papers I reviewed emphasise that Cambridge students are exposed to the history of political thought and political philosophy at the broadest level; the examination answers testify to a wealth of evidence of teaching excellence.

Overall, the examinations were testing and the marking rigorous. Particularly exemplary is the retention of unseen examination as a leading mode of assessment in the final year, and one that requires three questions to be answered. Also impressive is the retention of double blind marking for all papers when most departments now operate a policy of 'moderation' at second marking level.

A discussion at the end of the meeting addressed the bunching of most of the degrees awarded in the 2:1 category. A greater willingness to use the full range of the marking scale would help to push some of these degrees into the classes either side. The dissertations we read when considering prizes were marked in the higher 70s, and they were outstanding. The regulations that require the mean mark for achieving a first class degree to be complemented by other criteria would provide some safeguard against degree inflation at this level.

Examiner: Prof. Nicholas Cheeseman
University of Birmingham

This was my first year as external examiner for the Cambridge Part II Politics Exam Board. It was an enjoyable and interesting process and I look forward to repeating the experience next year. In particular, I appreciated the concentrated nature of the external examining process at Cambridge. Having been a Chair of Exams at Oxford University, where we sent numerous packages to the externals – who were expected to mark and comment as we went along, and then to send the packages back – it struck me as a much simpler and more efficient.

That it was a positive experience also owed much to the hard work of Christopher Brooke, Senior Examiner, and Patrycja Koziol, Chief Clerk, who were thoughtful, supportive and good company throughout. Indeed, Christopher and Patrycja deserve great credit for remaining positive and calm despite a number of technical issues that made the process more complicated than it would otherwise have been. When I was Chair of Exams I had to cope with many things but never a power cut at a crucial moment! That the process was rigorous and thorough despite these challenges owes much to their professionalism, and that of other colleagues in the department. In particular, the discussions before and during the exam meeting demonstrated the great engagement and commitment of the faculty to making the examination process as fair and consistent as possible.

It may, though, be worth thinking about how aspects of data entry can be streamlined or managed in a way that brings less pressure on all concerned in the 24 hours before the exam meeting. This is a large and challenging process done under great time pressure and so the idea (which was discussed in the exam meeting) of providing more support to the Senior Examiner and Chief Clerk, for example by appointing a Deputy Examiner so that there are two more hands “on deck” during the busiest part of the process, seems to me to be a very good one.

The quality of the scripts and dissertations was, on the whole, impressive. The very best work was exceptional, and relatively few papers were disappointing. My sense is that this reflects a combination of smart students and good teaching. One element that I found particularly interesting and praiseworthy was the extent of “diversification” within individual courses/exam papers. Whereas many universities have created specific courses to teach topics such as post-colonial thought or African politics, here these topics and perspectives are integrated into what is often referred to as “more mainstream” debates. The result is a set of work that is thoughtful, original and refreshing. I have no doubt that this innovative approach will also benefit the students in their future work, and I think that in many ways this constitutes a model of best practice that others can learn from.

There was only one thing that I felt at times let students down that is worth commenting on here, which was a tendency to be particularly critical of the actions of the United Kingdom and United States without always backing their assertions up with solid evidence, as if they were self-evident. As a result, it was not always clear if these were moral claims or empirical

ones, and in some cases essays that employed this strategy lacked the rigour that is required for the highest marks.

Given the above comments, I do not have many recommendations for improvement. However, one thing that might be beneficial would be to create a little more time while the external examiners are in Cambridge for them to look across the range of marks, and the average performance, for different exam papers in order to calibrate between them. Doing this is good practice as it helps to identify any variation in marking and can give examiners a better sense of how the overall spread of marks comes together. Discussion of these issues was possible this year due to the diligence of the Senior Examiner, but it might be worth including it as an agenda item/specific topic for longer discussion in future years.

INTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

POL3: International Organisation

Examiner: Dr Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni

This year's POL3 exam was taken by 94 candidates. There were 28 agreed Firsts, 53 marks in the 2.1-range, and 13 2.2s. Only one candidate received a mark in the 3.0 range. Candidates were asked to answer two questions from a list of 13 with no restrictions of choice of questions. Questions were broadly thematic as opposed to narrowly focused on individual weekly topics. The most popular question was Question 8 which asked about the mechanisms through which international human rights treaties produce changes in domestic practices (answered by 37 candidates), followed by Question 6 which asked students to reflect on why the current US government appears skeptical of inter-governmental organizations (answered by 27 candidates). Question 12, which asked whether a system of collective security is compatible with a right to self-defense, attracted the fewest answers (answered by 4 candidates). However, answers to this question were of a high quality and received above average marks. With a few exceptions, most answers were of a pleasing standard and displayed clear evidence of wide-ranging reading around the relevant subjects. Marks giving for individual answers/questions ran from a low of 40 to a high of 84. The average mark across the 94 scripts was 66.

This is the second year POL3 is offered in its present form, and this year's exam once again demonstrated the advantages of an exam format which allows students time and space to develop their arguments at length, and which encourages them to steer clear of simple summaries of weekly readings in favour of developing more independent, critical arguments. The strongest essays were elegantly written and clearly structured, demonstrated a sharp and detailed understanding of the theoretical issues at stake, and put forward a distinct argument supported both by references to secondary literature and by relevant empirical examples. Essays in this category clearly addressed the question at hand and provided a clear road-map so the reader could discern the argument from the outset. Top marks were generally not awarded to the longest essays, but to essays that advanced a distinct argument and structured the discussion accordingly.

Answers in the 2.1-range shared many of these qualities but often lacked a clear road-map and structure, or failed to ground discussion clearly in the relevant literature. Answers in the

lower 2.1-range frequently entailed very few references to assigned literature but instead offered a string of loosely integrated empirical observations. Often, candidates whose answers fell in this range appeared to have opted for greater quantity instead of taking time to plan and execute a considered answer. Another feature of many essays in the lower 2.1 range was lack of a clear conclusion. Students had been warned repeatedly against constructing vague answers which fail to reach a clear conclusion (along the lines of “perspective A would say this, perspective B would say that, in the end I feel it’s a bit of both”). While most heeded this advice, some of the weaker essays fell into the trap of quickly rehashing major schools of thought, then concluding that they are all partially right.

Some general observations and advice for students taking this course next year:

- 1) Students who read widely and used their knowledge of both theory and empirics to present clearly structured, reflective answers achieved by far the highest marks.
- 2) Those who read widely but failed to integrate theoretical ideas and empirical examples, or failed to give a clear structure to their argument received lower marks.
- 3) Those few who clearly had not done enough reading and who appeared to have focused their attention narrowly on one or two themes on the course syllabus received the lowest marks.

Students taking POL3 in the future should make sure that they take advantage of the flexible exam format to take time to carefully consider what questions to address and to plan their answers carefully – paying particular attention to achieving a clear structure of argument and reaching a strong conclusion. Over the course of the year, students should focus on developing an awareness of what sorts of questions, claims and issues are considered important in the field of international organization, and what kinds of evidence scholars tend to cite in defense of their arguments.

POL4: Comparative Politics
Examiner: Dr Jeremy Green

The POL4 exam was sat by 120 students this year. Questions 2 and 5 were the most popular within Section A of the paper. There were thirty answers for question 2 on the relationship between war and state development outside of Europe and thirty answers for question 5 on threats to authoritarian regime stability. Question 1, on Lachmann’s theory of state formation, received 22 answers. The remaining questions were considerably less popular, with 11 for question 3 on the prospects for state-building efforts by external actors, 8 answers for both question 4 on the prerequisites for democratisation and 7 on the efficacy of political parties as representative entities, 7 answers for question 9 on the relationship between the state and civil society and 5 for question 8 on the privileged position of business within politics. No student answered question 6 on the comparative strength of the executive branch in parliamentary and presidential systems.

For the remaining sections, 79 students answered questions from section B (question 10:56; question 11:23), 43 for section C (question 12:18; question 13:25), 35 for section D

(question 14:13; question 15:22), 28 for section E (question 16:18; question 17:10, and 54 for section F (question 18:30; question 19:24).

Students performed very strongly on the exam this year. 24 students attained a 1st class classification, 89 students achieved a 2:1. Only 7 students attained a 2:2 classification and there were no failing grades.

The better answers were consistently comparative, drawing inferences by reflecting on the similarities and divergence across cases. Across all of the sections, most answers provided a good range of empirical detail. Stronger answers combined empirical detail with conceptual precision and the ability to develop a consistent argument. While some students produced weaker answers by falling into a mechanistic exposition of existing perspectives within the literature, those who had a stronger performance were able to combine their knowledge of key literature and concepts with a systematic argument and critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of existing arguments. There were some really outstanding answers that combined a thorough application of the comparative method to detailed cases with a critical and theoretically rich engagement with existing perspectives in the literature.

In conclusion, this was a very strong performance overall that demonstrated a good level of attainment across the paper.

POL5: Conceptual Issues in Politics and International Relations

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Forty-four candidates took POL5 this year, of whom six received overall First-class marks, thirty-four Upper Seconds and three Lower Seconds, with one candidate failing the paper. The median mark for the paper was 66. With a large number of essays that candidates could attempt (46), and only a few attracting more than a handful of answers, it is difficult to make too many focused general comments about candidates' performance, beyond stressing that careful study of the marking criteria when assembling the final text of the essay is likely to pay dividends.

But some thoughts include these, that some essays remained overly dependent on particular sources, such as Evans & Tilley on class, Blyth on austerity, or Chang on capitalism; that those who thought money was decisive in US electoral politics might have reflected harder than they appear to have done on why Donald Trump's campaign in the end beat Hillary Clinton's much more lavishly-funded effort; that answers to the question about oil and global order suffered from an excessive and sometimes one-sided focus on the United States; that essays on some topics in comparative politics or international relations struggled when it came to the (admittedly difficult) work of generalising beyond individual case studies; or that comparisons between Britain and Germany in particular were not always especially well handled.

The great opportunity of a POL5 essay is the chance to go into a bit more depth than is possible in a regular supervision essay or exam answer, so it is a shame that a few candidates don't seize this chance, and still write essays that are a bit too driven by the superficial way in which issues (most prominently, Brexit, but also Artificial Intelligence and other tech stuff)

are presented by the mass media, rather than with sufficient attention to more thoughtful, scholarly contributions. And there is a tendency among a small number of candidates for their own political preferences to take up a bit too much space, with discussions of historical episodes in international political economy sliding into irrelevant (even if justified) attacks on today's austerity agenda, or an otherwise commendably critical perspective suddenly being dropped when the spotlight falls on Jeremy Corbyn or Bernie Sanders.

POL6: Statistics and Methods in Politics and International Relations

Examiner: Dr Aaron Rapport

This year, 22 candidates took the exam: 13 second-year students and 9 third-year students. As in the previous year, the exam consisted of a mandatory Question 1 consisting of several parts; and two optional questions of which candidates had to answer one. Of these optional questions, Question 2 on how to design a quantitative research project was much more popular with 19 answers. Question 3 pertained to the complications of employing "big data" in research.

4 candidates received a First class mark, 14 candidates a 2.1 mark (of which two had a mark of 69), and 2 candidates received 2.2 marks. Unfortunately, there were also one Third class mark and one Fail mark. Students who received First marks often received close to perfect scores on Question 1. Though this is unusual in POLIS examinations, the nature of POL6 is exceptional in that—specifically for Question 1—answers either are or are not objectively correct. The best answers to Question 1 showed an excellent understanding of statistical concepts and the models that were used in the question, and provided good and elaborate substantive interpretations of the presented statistical results. Weaker answers would provide incomplete interpretations of the quantitative results presented; for instance, discussing a coefficient's statistical significance but not its effect size on the outcome variable. Students also sometimes did not provide a rationale for hypotheses about relationships between different variables.

Good answers for Question 2 were able to formulate a precise research question, derive testable hypotheses, discuss the data required to test these hypotheses, and provide an overview of the methodological challenges that would be involved in their proposed project. Weaker answers often failed to define key terms or esoteric statistical language, and/or did not provide a clear rationale for the proposed estimation technique they put forward. Students sometimes forgot to discuss methodological challenges that could arise, or gave this part of their answer only superficial attention. Though only a handful of students opted to answer Question 3, responses to this latter question were of about the same quality as a typical answer to Question 2. To be of top quality, essays on Question 3 had to address the general philosophy behind applying statistical analysis to social questions, as well as developments in computing power and data management techniques that made the use of big data feasible.

POL7: The History of Political Thought to c.1700

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Forty-two candidates sat the paper, slightly up on last year's thirty-eight. Six received an overall First-class mark, there were thirty-three Upper Seconds, and three Lower Seconds. The median mark was 65, and the mean 65.33.

The Plato question is perennially popular, attracting twenty answers this year, after which they lined up as follows: Machiavelli (14), Locke (12), Renaissance humanism (12), More (9), Hobbes (8), Aristotle (7), Athenian democracy (7), Augustine (6), sovereignty (6), mediaeval reception of classical thought (5), Romans (4), British revolutions (4), resistance theory (3), international law (3), toleration (3), early Christians (2), Aquinas (1), and *raison d'état* (1), with two of the mediaeval questions, on spiritual and temporal power and on Roman law, attracting no candidates.

The most general difficulty was an insufficiently close engagement with the relevant set texts. Examiners on this paper are used, for example, to essays on Augustine reading as if textbooks were among the main sources, rather than *City of God*, and to Aristotle answers offering too much general summary of his system before getting stuck in to the particular question that has been asked. But this year a version of this problem bedevilled the answers on Hobbes's *Leviathan*, too, with answers that weren't sufficiently able to support their arguments by showing close familiarity with the more puzzling or challenging relevant bits of his text. Other candidates threw away marks with insufficiently productive approaches to the questions (so discussing the mediaeval reception of classical thought in general, rather than specifically with reference to the question of human nature; and the question about what the Athenian critics of democracy shared attracted answers that focused either on what they didn't share, or on some very bland thoughts indeed, e.g. that they didn't like tyrants).

There are some welcome developments. Earlier iterations of this paper have seen candidates excessively dependent on the views of Bernard Williams concerning Plato, and of Quentin Skinner concerning, especially, Machiavelli and More. This tendency was not nearly so prominent this year, with Ferrari, Schofield, Ober, and, especially, Nehamas lining up as alternative interpreters of Plato with whom candidates engaged more or less productively. (There was one mention of Skinner that delighted the Examiners, however, in an essay which discussed his views as if he were actually a participant in the great constitutional debates of 1640!) And—pleasingly—there was next to no sign of essays on particular topics that read as if great chunks of lecture notes were being paraphrased or summarised this time around, with the candidates taking a diversity of approaches, strongly suggesting that they are really thinking for themselves as they construct their answers.

POL8: The History of Political Thought from 1700-1890

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Eighty-two candidates sat the paper this year. There were thirteen overall First-class marks, fifty-eight Upper Seconds, and eleven Lower Seconds. The median mark was 64, the mean a little higher (64.6). There were 151 answers on Section A questions, and 95 on Section B questions. Every question on the exam paper was attempted at least twice except for the

question on natural law, which attracted no answers. The popular answers were on Rousseau (as ever, 34), Wollstonecraft (25), gender (23), the French Revolution (19), Smith and Burke (both 14), nationalism (13), and Montesquieu (12). Mill's popularity on this paper continues to decline, with only nine takers this year (fewer than Constant, for example, who had ten). German authors were also not very popular this year, with eight on Kant, three on Hegel, five on Marx (though these were strong answers), and two on the German Romantics (ditto). Although authors and topics that concentrated on France were popular (counting Rousseau and Constant as French for the time being), making up just over a third of all answers, they were, at the margin, slightly weaker in quality than answers on other questions, and somewhat flat answers were disproportionately to be found amongst attempts to the questions on Rousseau, Constant, Tocqueville, and the French Revolution.

The fundamental things apply / As time goes by, and this remains as true as ever when it comes to POL8. Higher marks were awarded to candidates who focused on the question on the exam paper and reflected on what, exactly, was being asked about, rather than moving as swiftly as possible to generic discussion of the set authors' best-known views; who showed first-hand knowledge of the set texts, rather than relying on textbook summary or arm's-length engagement; who were able to bring in accurate reference to and sensible discussion of relevant secondary literature, where this was appropriate; who built an argument across the answer as a whole, rather than offering disjointed paragraphs with little connection between them; and who clearly allocated their time evenly across their three answers, rather than starting off with a longer and ending with a somewhat truncated piece. One satisfying aspect of this year's scripts is that vanishingly few answers read like summaries of lecture material. A very small number of essays, however, did read like answers to questions that had appeared on previous exam papers—about Rousseau on transparency, or Bentham on Blackstone, for example—that had been very lightly repurposed.

Turning to some of the individual questions, the stronger answers on Rousseau tended to have more concrete institutional detail (sometimes with explicit reference to Geneva, Poland, or Corsica), and worked out strong lines of argument to connect the two main set texts, rather than juxtaposing them and/or dealing mainly in abstractions. Wollstonecraft answers were sometimes let down by an insufficiently analytical attention to the distinction between rights and virtues. Responses to the question on Kant sometimes failed to hold their attention on the essay 'What is Enlightenment?', and spent too long distracted by chestnuts like the right to revolution or the relationship between his moral and his political thought. Bentham essays flourished to the extent that they thought about what 'official aptitude' might be. Answers on Hegel might have focused more on the idea of history as slaughterbench than they did. Those on Constant and Tocqueville too often read like essays from candidates who had not really moved on from Part I. Stronger essays on the latter incorporated discussion of the *Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, or contributions from secondary authors such as Cheryl Welch. Mill essays might have had more than they did on the notions of a duty to oneself and of accountability. Marx answers were generally good, and the stronger answers weren't just fixated on the "young Marx", but covered later texts including, in particular, the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

When it came too Section B, weaker answers on luxury rehearsed the standard Hontian discussion of the debate as it came down from Fénelon and mentioned cities a few times;

stronger answers showed that they had really got inside the spirit and detail of Mandeville's argument. Essays on the American Revolution were better to the extent candidates were aware of recent scholarly debate on the question of monarchy, e.g. Eric Nelson's recent contribution. Essays on the French Revolution sometimes appear to have been written by candidates who either hadn't really thought about privilege at all or were too focused on specifically monarchical privilege. On both of these topics, some essays were let down by insufficient grip on the general train of events during the Revolutions concerned. Better essays on women organised their answers around a central line of argument, rather than spending a paragraph on each set author and vaguely relating what they had to say to the question that had been asked. When it came to the questions on nationalism and empire, the more interesting answers grappled directly with the set texts, rather than offering detached summary. Weaker answers to the question on empire either offered a fairly general account of British liberal imperialism, into which the phrase "standard of civilisation" was slipped a few times, or offered uncritical summary of some commentator or other's views.

POL9: Conceptual Issues and Texts in Politics and International Relations

Examiner: Dr Glen Rangwala

POL9 is a challenging paper, as everyone who takes or teaches for it is aware, but it is also a paper that often brings out some of the most innovative and intricate work that POLIS undergraduate students write during their time here. This year saw both a general improvement in the quality of essays, both in respect of those on gobbets and those in response to questions, and a significant number of top-quality essays. Of the 15 essays (out of 96 candidates) that received an average mark of 70 or higher, four of them received a mark of 80 or higher from one or both of their markers. There were only two overall marks below 50, both in the high 40s. The full range between those ends was used, with 28 scripts in the 65-69 range, 27 in the 60-64 range, and 24 in the 50-59 range.

There was a fairly good balance between those who took gobbets (41) and those who answered questions (55). Each of the 10 options was answered by at least 5 people. The most popular was question 6 (on economic inequalities), which drew 17 answers. Gobbet 1 (on human nature explanations: 13 responses) and question 7 (on foreign policy: 12 responses) also attracted a good number of essays. The large majority of the essays developed detailed and coherent arguments, with a good range of evidence and/or theoretical development carrying the essay forward. Only a small number were short, including the two which received marks lower than 50, both of which were the length expected of a one-hour exam essay, rather than the sort of work that can be produced in the three hours available to POL9 students for planning and writing.

In terms of the subject matter within the essays, there was a broad range of issues brought into the discussions, reflecting the diversity of topics taught in Part II POLIS. It was pleasing to see in some essays detailed arguments being made about particular countries and regions of the world, including the UK and Western Europe which in the past have been underrepresented in POL9 essays; and, in other essays, a close and critical engagement with key thinkers. Few students fell back on simple theoretical exposition or reliance on descriptive narratives. All the top essays had clear arguments to make, and many did so through engaging

with other compelling arguments in the academic literature but showing how those fall short of providing a fully plausible answer.

Two more general problems were as follows. With the questions, essays which did not develop sufficiently what key concepts in the questions do or may mean (e.g. 'national culture', 'prudence', 'domestic politics') often left the answers in a state of vagueness. And with the gobbets, some essays did not seem to think with the author enough about how their argument could be developed – it is barely a conclusive criticism to make that the author doesn't explain their terms or provide enough evidence, when only a paragraph is being quoted.

There were more specific issues or limitations with some questions. It was striking that only one of the 17 students who took the question on economic inequalities mentioned wealth or income inequalities between men and women. With the options that engage with issues of international relations, principally gobbet 3 and question 7, it was noticeable that quite a few essays did not seriously consider how international politics can be argued to have dynamics that are distinct from domestic politics – or just made a fleeting and dismissive reference to realism to cover that possibility. Gobbet 2 drew a number of answers which asserted that responsibility for security and non-discrimination should not lie with the state, without providing any sense of how otherwise violence and discrimination can be countered. Gobbet 4 elicited quite a few essays that simply recounted how a diverse selection of thinkers would set up the concept of freedom, contrasting them in turn with the approach of the passage but without evaluating those approaches.

In general, most of those taking POL9 seem to have assimilated the idea that this paper encourages you to draw in material that is part of other taught courses, and that the gobbets and questions are aligned with the papers taught by POLIS in Part II. A few essays still however display little indication of having studied in a systematic way the topic that is being discussed, particularly those making polemical arguments and which make no reference to academic literature. Using material that forms part of taught courses (or assessed work), often taking it from more than one paper, and developing it to a level of detail that answers in other examined papers do not allow due to time restraints, is a significant feature of how this paper is often best approached. It is perfectly legitimate to bring in other material as well, but students who do so should be confident that their understanding of that material is robust enough to withstand critical scrutiny.

POL10: The History of Political Thought from 1700-1890

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Seven candidates sat the paper, writing thirteen answers on Section A authors and eight on Section B topics. One candidate received a (low) First-class mark, one a (high) Lower-second class mark, the rest were all Upper Seconds. There were few significant disagreements amongst the markers, which were never greater than five points. Only two questions attracted more than two answers. There were five essays on Rousseau, which flourished to the extent that they focused sharply on the analytical separation between sovereignty and government, rather than restating more general aspects of his political thinking. There were three essays on the luxury debate, where candidates usually didn't quite say enough about

corruption *per se*, but seemed more comfortable talking about other negative consequences of luxurious consumption.

POL11: Political Philosophy and the History of Political Thought since c.1890

Examiner: Dr Duncan Kelly

55 students took this paper from Part IIb HSPS, and 13 from History. As remains customary, a separate report is provided for both constituencies. In HSPS, the most popular questions in Section A were on Nietzsche (13) and Hayek (12) and Weber (10). In the next Section B, punishment (19), democracy/representation (9) and politics/morality (9). Each question was attempted, but the least popular answers (with 1 answer each) were on British state theory, Lukács, and property. It might be worth noting that those who answered on the first two of those three singular topics, however, got first class marks. Overall, though, the examiners agreed 14 First class marks, 2 Lower Second class marks, and the remainder were upper second. All told, this was a very impressive overall series of scripts for such a broad-ranging paper. This year it was also pleasing to note that there were several more answers, and answers with really very strong detail and focus, on questions pertaining to feminist political theory, both generations of the Frankfurt School, American writings on democracy/welfare, and that candidates used the full range.

Once again, and in line with earlier reports such as that of the last year, those who achieved highest marks were able to distil a knowledge of the texts (showing they knew clearly how relevant books and arguments were put together), making it appropriate to the particular topic, and then expanding on that knowledge (especially in Section A) to explore the relevance of other texts and historical contexts to the interpretation of work involved in answering the question, and being comparative where necessary. Relying too much on lecture handouts and interpretations, or just one rather rigidly applied and pre-determined particular structure that is then made to fit an answer, is insufficient to do really well here. But doing really well is more than possible – the highest marks for this paper were really very high, between 76-86, showing the possibility of real rewards for engaging in detail with both texts, concepts and historically-informed explanation.

Those who did best with the Section B topics, were able to build on a broad base of knowledge in political theory, its history and its conceptual/normative claims, to answer more abstract questions. Equally, all the most successful candidates were able to present a *critical* discussion, one that shows a level of *engagement* with the material and its re-presentation, rather than just dropping names and articles in. This is crucial to reiterate, for it is very important that candidates recognize that what we are looking for is awareness of texts, a sense of their complexity (and where relevant, their contemporary relevance), but also a sense of their possible weaknesses, problems, and difficulties, and what knowing this might do to the interpretation of claims in political theory/philosophy. This might take the form of more adept or adroit use of secondary materials, the incorporation/awareness of historiographical debates and transitions, or political and/or internal/immanent critique, allowing students to engage with the questions being posed.

Those who made it into the first-class category in either or both sections were more able to do these sorts of things, whereas those who remained in the upper (and occasionally lower)

second class were less able to deploy their knowledge in such a critical fashion. Some scripts were genuinely brilliant, showing breadth and depth of knowledge at this level of work that remains astonishing and highly commendable, across the paper. This year, however, as in previous years, although the general spread of answers was diverse, followed the major topics discussed in the majority of lectures. The paper itself remains challenging for both Historians and HSPS students, but we hope rewarding, as seen in an exam that spans over a century of the most fractious and fraught theorizing about modern politics.

POL12: The Politics of the Middle East

Examiner: Dr Glen Rangwala

POL12 this year featured 23 students who took the paper by examination and 8 who took it by long essays. Six students overall received a mark of 70 or above, and only one (taking the paper by long essays) received a mark lower than 59. That leaves 24 who received a mark in the 60-69 range, 14 of whom were in the 65-69 range. Put differently, almost two-thirds of students (20/31) received an overall mark of 65 or above.

This mark distribution reflects how essays and exams were generally of a quite high standard this year, more so than in previous years. The large majority of students wrote accurate, well-focused essays that engaged suitably with the academic literature and constructed a coherent argument.

With the assessed essays, the best essays were those which brought out a range of themes and theories, and demonstrated good knowledge of broader debates about the politics of the Middle East – but which then found a way to focus their essays on a particular situation, era or contrast. The less successful essays either kept too narrowly to specific descriptive accounts without framing it within a broader conception of what the question was asking; or, for other essays, didn't find a clear focus for the discussion, for example by not conveying a clear enough idea of what the question was asking. In 2018-19, the questions will be phrased more broadly than they were this year, so the first issue is less likely to arise, but the second issue becomes even more pertinent to consider.

For the exams, it was striking that students wrote with greater authority, subtlety and sense of judgement when they were addressing events and processes in the twentieth century than when they were writing about contemporary issues. This no doubt reflects the academic literature, for which there is an accumulated sense of debate for issues that are now older. But it does entail that students who choose to write about contemporary affairs – as we hope they do – should be looking more to develop a more rounded, multi-faceted appreciation of current debates, rather than accepting any one interpretation as valid. It was striking how students who wrote about imperial legacies and the force of Arab nationalism drew upon multiple sources, ideas, interpretations and theories, and formulated their own distinctive judgements on the back of them; while those who wrote about post-2015 refugees in the Middle East simply regurgitated the substance of two or three articles.

In terms of subject matter of exam answers, the most popular questions were on the drivers of sectarianism (q.12, 10 responses), the legacy of European rule (q.1, 9 responses) and Gulf crises (q.6, 8 responses). It was disappointing that only one student took the question on

gender struggles, although that student did it well: very few other exam essays brought in issues related explicitly to the politics of gender.

Those points aside, most students taking this paper by examination this year have a well-developed sense of how to write a good essay – and equally the pitfalls to avoid. Few students wrote descriptive narratives instead of structured arguments, for example. And the best scripts were able to develop critical insights into influential academic texts while not losing sight of the need to develop a coherent, sustained argument of their own. The large majority of scripts were able to relate general arguments well to specific national and regional contexts. Many of the more common problems in previous years weren't apparent in this set of scripts, and future students may want to look back at earlier examiners' reports to have a sense of the ways in which their less illustrious predecessors have sometimes struggled with the POL12 exam.

POL13: The Politics of Europe

Examiner: Dr Peter Sloman

A total of 33 students took POL13 in 2017-18, including 3 from the Politics and Sociology joint track, 1 from the Social Anthropology and Politics joint track, 2 from the Sociology track, and 3 from the Economics Tripos. 24 of the students took the paper by written exam, which this year was undivided, so students could choose to specialize in British Politics (15 students) or the Politics of the European Union (4 students), or to take supervisions in both (5 students).

As in previous years, the overall standard of answers in the written exam was relatively high but there were few really excellent scripts. It was good to see students take the opportunity to specialize in either the UK or the EU, and some of the best candidates exploited this opportunity by deepening their knowledge of the subject matter and building links between different topics. Weaker candidates attempted to reproduce lecture material or supervision essays in a more straightforward way, and were penalized accordingly; in particular, a number of candidates on the British Politics side struggled to cope with questions which approached the topics from an unfamiliar angle. The exam produced 4 first-class marks, 18 upper seconds, 1 lower second and 1 third-class mark. A small number of borderline cases were reviewed and confirmed by the external examiners.

Those students who did not write a Part IIB dissertation were given the option of taking POL13 by submitting two long essays of up to 5,000 words instead of sitting the written exam. 9 students took up this offer, of whom 1 received a first-class mark and the other 8 obtained upper seconds. The 18 essays divided evenly between British Politics and the Politics of the European Union, with the questions on EU foreign policy, asylum and immigration, and the Labour Party's relationship with its 'traditional' voters proving particularly popular. The best essays developed a clear and persuasive argument and were based on extensive research, but most gravitated towards the middle of the 2.1 band.

The more detailed comments which follow apply solely to the written exam, and to questions which attracted 3 or more answers.

British Politics questions

1. (7 answers) The 1945-64 period was a new topic this year and the question was relatively well answered, with one notable exception. 4 answers focussed on the Attlee governments and 3 on the Conservatives. The strongest candidates noticed that the question asked specifically about government policy as opposed to party politics, and provided a detailed analysis of how economic, social, and foreign policy developed over time, which went beyond the rather stale historical debate over 'consensus'.
2. (6 answers) This question approached the 1964-79 topic from a slightly unexpected direction, which asked candidates to think specifically about Labour's electoral strategy during the 1960s and 70s and the difficulties it faced in maintaining support in office. The best answers argued persuasively that the pursuit of demanding economic goals at a time of high voter expectations, relative economic decline, and partisan dealignment made it difficult for any government to win re-election, and highlighted the particular challenges created by Labour's links with the trade unions. One candidate offered an impressively detailed account of Wilson's personal appeal (including his holidays in the Scilly Isles and his taste for HP Sauce) and suggested that his cultivated ordinariness was increasingly anachronistic in an 'affluent' society.
3. (11 answers) This was the most popular question on the paper, perhaps because some candidates who had been scared off by the question on Harold Wilson saw it as an alternative way of using their 1970s material. Most candidates had interesting things to say about the nature of 'Thatcherism', its relationship with the broader Conservative tradition, and the ways in which Thatcher exploited the crises of the 1970s to forge a distinctive electoral appeal; Ewen Green, Colin Hay, and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite's work appears to have been particularly influential. However, several otherwise good answers were let down by a failure to consider the issues raised by the second part of the quotation: whether Thatcherism 'abolished the conditions of its own success' in office.
4. (6 answers) In previous years, questions on the New Labour topic have been very popular. This one was rather less so, perhaps because it invited candidates to move away from staple debates about New Labour's ideological character and consider the relationship between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. In general, candidates thought the 'TB-GB' psychodrama had little impact on policy or Labour's political fortunes. Better answers explored ideological differences between Blair and Brown and the problems created by Brown's dominance in the socio-economic sphere; weaker ones descended into polemic and anecdote.
5. (8 answers) Another popular question, which was answered relatively well. Candidates made interesting points about the impact of devolution, proportional representation, and social change on the party system and considered how the apparent resumption of two-party dominance in the 2017 general election should be interpreted; most stressed the unusual character of last year's campaign and the dangers of drawing conclusions from a single data point. Weaker candidates reproduced supervision

essays on electoral behaviour and struggled vainly to bring pre-packaged material on valence and spatial theories of voting round to the question.

6. (2 answers)
7. (5 answers – 4 to part (a) and 1 to part (b)) These answers were generally very well informed, with plenty of detail and a strong grasp of the constitutional issues involved.
8. (5 answers) The immigration policy topic attracted fewer takers than in previous years, and the answers were of variable quality. Most candidates thought that the tightening of immigration policy since the 1960s had been driven by electoral pressure and struggled to discern much evidence of principle. Candidates were sensitive to change over time, and some deployed empirical detail and the scholarly literature very effectively, but none had much to say about the ways in which policy was constrained by the UK's geopolitical commitments – i.e. the Commonwealth in the 1940s and 50s and EU membership since 1973.
9. (3 answers) The answers to the political economy question were all strong and carefully written. They agreed that Colin Hay's view of 'Anglo-liberal capitalism' was over-simplified, but disagreed about whether post-crisis policy had been gratuitously austere and regressive or constrained by political realities.

European Union questions

10. (1 answer)
11. (2 answer)
12. (1 answer)
13. (0 answers)
14. (4 answers) This question on EU foreign policy was fairly well answered, with the stronger candidates showing an impressive knowledge of the literature. Some answers were held back by a narrow focus on enlargement policy or a failure to consider recent institutional developments.
15. (5 answers) This question attracted some thoughtful and persuasive answers. Candidates made effective use of the literature to distinguish between the EU's formal or normative legitimacy (which they thought strong) and its political or social legitimacy in the eyes of European publics (which is much weaker), and offered a variety of explanations for the gap between them.
16. (2 answers)
17. (2 answers)
18. (2 answers)

POL14: US Foreign Policy
Examiner: Dr Aaron Rapport

31 candidates sat this paper, whereas the remainder of students in POL 14 were assessed via two long essays. Of those taking the exam, there were four agreed firsts, 23 marks of 2.i, and one mark of 2.ii. Three exams were sent to the external examiner to be reconciled. Candidates answered three questions from a list of 14. The essay questions were divided into two sections, and candidates were required to answer at least one question from each section. The first section drew questions from four parts of the paper: intellectual traditions shaping US foreign policy; domestic sources of policy; contemporary policy issues; and the nature and scope of US international power. The second section focused on US foreign relations with different regions of the world as well as the United Nations. The three essay topics most frequently selected were question 8 on whether US decline had been overstated (or underestimated); question 12 on whether US relations with African states could accurately be characterized as indifferent and neglectful; and question 14 on the nature of US diplomacy in the UN Security Council.

Candidates' performance was generally quite good. Essays typically demonstrated a firm grasp of the material presented in readings and lectures. The best single mark on any one essay was a 76, whereas the lowest mark was a 47. The average mark for an exam was 66. The best essays were able to go beyond what was literally stated in class materials and extrapolate to reach additional implications for policymaking, as well as spot connections between authors or contradictions that were not obvious. They recognised that there could be connections between different parts of the paper, rather than treating material from each section as if it was walled off from all the others. They also had the usual necessary ingredients for a solid essay: clear writing, sensible organisation, and adequate coverage of alternative points of view. They did not contain extraneous information that distracted from the main thrust of their argument. Answers in the high 2.i range often had several of the features of a first-degree essay, but might contain some inaccurate descriptions of historical facts or misconstrue certain elements of various authors' arguments. Essays in the lower 2.i range contained more of such inaccuracies, and did not back their arguments with the same extent of relevant evidence. Students in this range sometimes fell into one of the 'traps' they were warned about during revision: not writing a clear thesis, but instead 'sitting on the fence' between different perspectives; including information that did not seem to move the argument forward in any way; or failing to consider possible counter-arguments to the position they had taken. Essays below a 2.i were often quite brief, perhaps suggesting a time-management problem in the exam. They would also typically contain few if any references to materials covered throughout the paper, instead relying on clichés and vague assertions without providing evidentiary support. Overall, students need to be able to demonstrate an ability to connect some of the more abstract intellectual traditions and theoretical models covered during the paper with empirical examples; in other words, show that they can apply the theories they have been taught to practical policy matters.

Pol 15: The Politics of Africa
Examiner: Dr Justin Pearce

This year's POL15 paper was taken by thirteen candidates. Six of these opted to do the paper by long essay, leaving only seven who wrote the unseen exam.

The most popular question, chosen by five candidates, was question 2, 'What are the legacies of colonial rule in African politics today?' The next most popular question, written by four candidates, was question 4, 'How has ethnicity been used in African politics?'. The popularity of these questions seems to be because these questions involved dealing with themes that ran through the whole course, and could therefore be tackled from a number of different angles. Questions 1 (on Western representations of Africa), 6 (class as a basis of political mobilisation), 7 (on the consequences of the adoption of multi-party democracy) and 12 (on foreign intervention in conflict or post-conflict situations) were each tackled by two candidates. One candidate each tackled question 10 (What has been the impact of structural adjustment on corruption in African states?) and 13 (How are the developing relationships among African and non-western states having an impact on politics in Africa?)

The range of marks in the unseen exams was limited, with the highest mark being 71 and the lowest 64. Candidates were generally successful in formulating answers that reached across the course material, rather than attempting to answer questions on the basis of a single topic. Candidates had on the whole made an effort to master the details of case studies to illustrate their theoretical arguments. Occasionally answers were marred by factual inaccuracies: this is something that is too frequently disregarded by students who don't have a history background, but it is important to get right in order to make a convincing argument.

The strongest answers were those that went beyond pointing out variation between cases, to drawing comparative conclusions. While some candidates did this better than others, all of the candidates could have improved their marks by being bolder and more explicit about this, and giving more consistent attention to why different cases varied as a result of contingency. Attention to this shortcoming could have pushed some answers in the currently in the 68-69 range into the first-class range, and answers in the low seventies into the mid seventies. At the lower end of the scale, occasional divergence from the question topic cost students points on a number of occasions.

Among the six students who opted to do long essays the range of marks was wider, with the highest average across the two essays being 71 and the lowest 60. The highest mark for a single essay was 72.5. The strongest essays displayed an innovative approach to their respective questions, defining a pertinent theoretical question and answering it through close and to-the-point examination of case studies. The weakest essays appeared to reflect inadequate planning, which resulted in an absence of clarity about what the essay was trying to achieve, and a concomitant lack of coherence in the arguments.

POL16: Conflict and Peacebuilding
Examiner: Dr Devon Curtis

There were 45 candidates for this paper, with 7 candidates choosing to submit two 5000-word essays instead of sitting an exam. The long essays were done very well, and this was reflected in higher than average marks this year. The first essay assignment reflected the collaborative work that the students had done with students at the University of California-Berkeley, the University of Tokyo and the National University of Singapore. On this first essay, two students received first class marks from both examiners, and one student received a first

class mark from one examiner and a high 2.1 from the other. The other four students received 2.1 marks from both examiners. We were pleased to see that students were able to carefully assess policy responses to conflict and most answers showed a high level of nuance and sophistication in understanding the multiple causes of conflict. For the second essay assignment, students selected a question from a list of choices. Two students received first class marks from both examiners, one student received a first class mark from one examiner and a high 2.1 from the other, and all the other students received mid-to-high 2.1 marks.

Of the 38 candidates who did the exam option, 3 candidates received first class marks on the examination, 27 candidates received a 2.1 and one candidate received a 2.2. What was striking in this cohort was the number of scripts in the 68-69 range. There were 16 candidates that received an overall mark of 68 or 69.

Most candidates were able to critically assess the arguments in the literature and many of the best answers successfully evaluated different perspectives and developed effective arguments. We were pleased to see that many students wrote intelligently about the conceptual material, and were able to illustrate their points through empirical examples. Several of the best answers questioned some of the basic assumptions in the policy literature, and did so through reference to primary texts and case study examples. Weaker exam answers at the lower end of the 2.1 scale and 2.2s were vague, failed to refer to literature or did not succeed in making coherent arguments.

Every exam question was attempted by at least one candidate. Q1 was the least popular question, attempted by only one candidate who provided a rather circular argument, but with some good ideas. The most popular questions were Q4 and Q7, each attempted by 17 students. The quality of the answers to Q4 was highly variable and the marks ranged from 58 to 74. Answers on the lower end of the spectrum tended to only focus on one part of the question, either identity mobilisation or the advantages and disadvantages of power-sharing, without linking the two. Many answers to Q7 were competently argued. The answers focusing on humanitarian assistance were generally better than the ones on peacekeeping or on post-conflict governance arrangements. Weaker answers deviated from the question or simply provided a balance sheet of the positive and negative features of intervention. Candidates had the most difficulty with Q10. Six candidates attempted that question but most did not explain what they meant by 'local peacebuilding' and instead provided a general critique of liberal economic policies. Q3 had marks ranging from 57 to 74. Out of the 9 candidates attempting that question, many of them received low 2.1 marks because they focused only on whether globalisation and/or development caused conflict, without answering the methodological question of how this can be determined. On the other hand, answers to Q2 tended to be very strong, with several thoughtful and compelling arguments. Likewise, the answers to Q6 were generally competent, with most candidates intelligently analysing the limitations of existing frameworks to respond to refugees and internally displaced people. Answers to Q5 were mixed. There were some excellent answers that skilfully engaged with the terms of the question. Weaker answers were normative rather than analytical, or deviated from the specific question asked. A few candidates struggled to answer Q8 and either focused on peace negotiations or on justice. Most candidates on this question, however, provided clear arguments that connected the two, and used evidence effectively. The answers to Q9 were adequate, but only one received a first class mark on this question.

We were pleased that the two case study questions (Q11-12) were generally very well done, showing that many students had mastered the case study detail and were able to proficiently relate this material to wider themes.

The examiners were generally very pleased with the candidates' knowledge of the literature and their ability to present coherent, convincing, well-substantiated arguments.

POL 17: Politics of Asia

Examiner: Dr Tomas Larsson

There were nine candidates for POL17. Two candidates received agreed first-class marks, five candidates received agreed high second-class marks, and two candidates received agreed low second-class marks. The agreed marks ranged between 71 and 62.

All exam scripts showed evidence of sustained engagement across the year's topics, wide reading and careful consideration of the broader issues in Asian and comparative politics that the course seeks to cover. Candidates answered all of the twelve possible questions, with five candidates answering Q3, four candidates answering Q9, three candidates answering Q2, and two students answering Q1, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q10, and Q12.

The best answers provided a clear argument in response to the question, supported that argument with reference to a number of empirical cases, and reflected upon the implications of this data for the larger concepts in play in the question. The very best of these answers were original, confidently argued, and well structured, with some reference to the debates among scholars of comparative and Asian politics. The weaker range of answers either provided empirical material without clear argument or analysis, or analysis unsupported by detailed empirical evidence from the relevant countries. A number of the weaker essays did not engage with the key terms of the questions in a sufficiently explicit manner.

Candidates who took time to construct a clearly organised answer, articulating their use of evidence in terms of their major arguments, consistently did well.

POL18: Politics and Gender

Examiner: Dr Jude Browne

Twenty students sat this paper. The average mark for this paper was 66.7 and the standard deviation was 6.9. Six students gained an average mark of 70 or over and with one exception (with an average of 51), the remaining students gained average marks between 60 and 69.

There were 11 questions overall. The most popular questions were Q. 1 on the topic of essentialism in political representation (9 answers); Q. 4 which requires the students to reflect on what gender means in the context of rights and whether gender specific rights can be justified in the context of human rights discourses (17 answer); and Q. 6 which asks students to reflect on gender in the context of war-making (9 answers). The only question with no takers was Q. 2 on identity.

The strongest answers tended to provide theoretical discussions that included well rounded critique combined with real-world and innovative examples that the students had thought of themselves. In these answers it was very encouraging to see that students had understood that seemingly simple questions require complex answers if they are to be convincing. The weaker answers tended to provide little sceptical reflection of the positions adopted and/or lacked any practical examples to demonstrate their arguments. Overall though a good set of results.

POL19: The Politics of the International Economy

Examiner: Prof. Helen Thompson

There were 24 candidates for the paper this year. Two candidates received a first class mark, twenty- one an upper second, and one a lower second. The majority of the upper second marks were at the higher end of the range.

In general, the scripts for the paper this year were of good quality. There were some exceptional answers on individual questions. The answers on the inter-war years were particularly good. The best answers combined analytical rigour with empirical detail.

The less good answers to individual questions either depended too much on exposition of the literature without engaging with whether the arguments presented are persuasive or not, or missed out something that was important to the substance of a question. The weaker answers on the 2008 financial crisis rather ignored the centrality to the banking crisis of bank funding problems. The weaker answers on China ignored the implications of One Belt, One Road for the international economic and political order. On the questions about causality, the weaker scripts were imprecise about what a particular explanation could and could not explain. By contrast, the best answers engaged in some reflection about the analytical problems of making arguments about causality.

POL20: The politics of the future, 1880-2080

Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

This was a new course, 'The Politics of the Future', which was examined by two long essays. Sixteen candidates took the paper, there were five First-class marks overall and eleven Upper Seconds, and the mean overall mark was a shade over 67—though this raw average conceals a significant point about the distribution of the marks, which is that the first batch of essays (average mark: c. 69) was rated significantly higher by the Examiners than the second (average mark: c. 65). It may be that this owed to the fact that students coming into this course with a background in political thought from Part I and Part IIA were more comfortable writing in a more historical mode about the Victorian and Edwardian periods than they were at engaging with more contemporary political themes (though sometimes the H. G. Wellsian keyword 'kinetic' was not explained sufficiently clearly). It may also owe something to the fact that more of the second long essays were written with something of a literary-theoretical inflection, which made for suggestive but less frequently for sinewy argument; the essays that received Lower Second-class marks, for example, were variously criticised for being overwritten, pretentious, or insufficiently sharply focused on the question that had been posed.