

## Examination arrangements for 2021–2

The General Board Education Committee last week issued a revised Framework for Assessment of Courses in 2021–2. The significant change was that, following intervention from us and from other Faculties, they have introduced the possibility of examinations within a 5-hour window (the 6-hour window that we employed this year remains unavailable, chiefly because giving 50% extra time to candidates who require it for some reason turns 6-hours into 9-hours and 9-hours is thought to be a cruel and unusual punishment; 24-hour windows remain available...). Faculties deploying a 5-hour window are expected to impose a word-limit (as are those using a 24-hour window).

We have to let the University know our plans by 31 August. Following the discussions that have already taken place we propose:

### Part II

With the exception of A4, for which we should hold a 3-hour in-person examination, all papers should be examined as open-book examinations in a 5-hour window. There was some feeling among examiners that 6000 words (2000 words an essay) was too long, and may have reduced rather than improved the quality of answers, and we suggest reducing that to 5000 words (1666 words per essay).

Apart from caution about the possibility that there are still pandemic restrictions next May/June on numbers of bodies in a room, the motivation for staying online for Part II is that these are students who last took a 3-hour examination in which they needed to write by hand whenever they took their last school examination, and that it is preferable with these candidates to stick with the form of examination with which they are becoming familiar. We note also that examiners this year thought that open-book examinations produced more thoughtful revision – though also producing a little too much playing it safe (something supervisors and DoS's need to tackle in giving examination advice).

### Part IB

Language examinations (Papers 1–4 and 11–12) should be held in the traditional way as 3-hour in-person examinations. The format of the papers requiring unprepared translation from Latin and Greek will be the new format devised for examination in 2020 but not yet used.

Papers 7–10 should be held as open-book examinations within a 5-hour window with a word limit of 5000 words per paper (1666 words per essay where the examination requires 3 essays).

Papers 5 and 6 should, we think, be held as 3-hour in-person examinations in the examination hall. There was some disagreement between examiners of Papers 5 and 6 this year about whether the open book format was an advantage or not: although there were some gains from allowing candidates access to texts and scholarly aids, the format devised for these examinations was devised on the expectation that no such aids would be available, and these are perhaps the examinations most affected by candidates reproducing what commentaries etc. said, rather than applying themselves independently and imaginatively to the text.

### Part IA

All Part IA examinations should be in-person examinations in the examination hall. This recommendation is partly motivated by the degree to which Part IA is a check-up on

candidates' engagement with their target texts and partly by the thought that in order to leave our options open for 2022 and beyond it is important to make sure that candidates who will not have been examined in the standard way in their last two years at school should acquire experience of this form of examination, making it possible to deploy this form of examination in future years.

Prelim

Apart from the portfolio essays, all examinations to be in-person examinations.

We would be grateful if members of the Education Committee would indicate by 9.00 a.m. on Monday August 23 whether they are happy with these proposals, or would prefer a short online meeting to discuss them.

Robin and Renaud  
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