

Faculty of Philosophy: Revised Assessment Easter Term 2020

Dear Philosophy students,

Warmest thanks for your patience and good-will at this difficult time, as we have been working with the University to develop alternative forms of assessment to replace the standard examinations in Philosophy, in the context of the current public health crisis. This message is to let you know about the revised assessment details for Philosophy. You will have recently heard from the Vice Chancellor, and the University's Education Quality and Policy Office, informing you of the principles that will determine assessment in Easter Term 2020, and saying that Faculties and Departments would shortly be communicating the details. Directors of Studies have received additional information and guidance, and they will be able to give you further advice if needed.

Note that where Philosophy Tripos students are taking a paper borrowed from another Faculty, it will be assessed according to the other Faculty's processes. Where students from another Faculty are borrowing a Philosophy paper, it will be assessed according to Philosophy's processes.

Part IA: All examinations are being set aside. Easter Term supervisions (normally 4 per student) will be re-purposed, either to work on new supervision essays, or on a dissertation, to be decided in consultation with your Director of Studies, and with formative feedback provided by supervisors. Students in Part IA will be allowed to proceed to Part IB without sitting any University examinations. (This replaces the normal Part IA assessment of four 3-hour subject papers plus a shorter Formal Methods Paper.)

Part IB: Four subject papers will be examined by submitted essays. No class list will be produced for Part IB, but each student will be given a mark for each paper, and these marks will be circulated to Colleges, as feedback for students and their Directors of Studies (and as an informal record of achievement if needed e.g. for writing references). Students who have chosen to substitute extended essays for a subject paper will continue to do so. The General Paper is being set aside. (This replaces the normal Part IB assessment of four 3-hour subject papers plus a General Paper.) Note that students doing the Psychology option will only submit essays for three Philosophy subject papers; they will have three marks recorded rather than four, since the Psychology assessment is being set aside, see section on borrowed papers below.

Part II: Four subject papers will be examined by submitted essays. A class list will be produced for Part II. Students who have chosen to substitute extended essays for a subject paper continue to do so. The General Paper is being set aside. Students who have opted to do a dissertation (and will therefore have five units of assessment rather than four) will be classed on the basis of their best four units of assessment. (This replaces the normal Part II assessment of four 3-hour subject papers plus a General Paper.)

Protocol for Submitted Essays: Part IB and Part II

Each student replaces a subject paper with three essays of between 1000 and 2000 words. It is envisaged that in most cases these essays will be polished versions of supervision essays from previous terms (but they need not be). The essay titles will be chosen by the student in consultation with the paper supervisor. The titles must relate to distinct topics (although not

necessarily distinct paragraphs) of the syllabus for the subject paper in question. Guidance will be provided to supervisors on suitable choices of title, and supervisors may consult the Chair of Examiners in case of doubt.

Supervisions for Part IB and Part II students during Easter Term will be re-purposed: their role will be to advise students on polishing or writing their submitted essays (rather than exam revision).

Students will submit their essays electronically. The final deadline for submitted essays will be the day on which the relevant subject paper examination was previously scheduled. You will receive further details about the essay submission process from the Chair of Examiners in due course.

Borrowed papers

As noted above, papers borrowed from another Faculty will be assessed according to the other Faculty's processes. Candidates taking the Part IB Psychology option will not be examined. Part IB Philosophy of Science candidates will do an open-book examination (with online release of papers and submission of scripts), which they will have 24 hours to answer, with a limit of 1500 words per question. Papers borrowed from Classics, both at Part IB and at Part II, will be examined by submitted essays in a similar manner to our own, except that (a) candidates will submit two essays of up to 3000 words each (rather than three of up to 2000 words each) and (b) candidates will not be offered a supervision on how to revise their essays before submission. For more information about these examinations please consult your supervisor for the relevant paper.

We appreciate what a challenging time this is for you and your families, and on the Faculty's behalf I want to express our concern, our thanks, and equally our confidence in you, and our pride in what you are doing. We are facing some extraordinary circumstances this year. The revised assessment reflects this, taking into account reduced resources, the risk of illness for students and academic staff (and our families), additional commitments, and the diverse needs and goals of students at different stages of their studies. These considerations have all informed the decision to set aside the examining for Part IA, and revise the assessment process for Parts IB and II.

Your Director of Studies will be able to answer further questions you may have, with additional help, if needed, from the Chair of Examiners, Prof. Michael Potter.

Prof. Rae Langton
Chair, Faculty of Philosophy

31st March 2020