2026-27 Examining Conventions for the degrees of MSt and MPhil in Slavonic Studies

1 Introduction

This document sets out the examination conventions applying to the MSt and MPhil in Slavonic Studies for the academic year 2026-27. The supervisory body for these courses is the Graduate Studies Committee in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages.

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

2 Rubrics for individual papers

All candidates for the MSt in Slavonic Studies and for the MPhil Qualifying Examination will be required to take ONE language from Schedule 1, **and** ONE subject from the methodological Schedule 2 **and** TWO further subjects from Schedules 2-7 of which not more than one may be from Schedule 2.

In their second year, all candidates for the MPhil in Slavonic Studies will be required to take TWO further subjects from the Schedules, excluding the MSt thesis, **and** write a dissertation of 20,000-25,000 words on a subject of their own choice. Candidates may not repeat subjects which they have taken for the MSt or for the Qualifying Examination, nor take more than one subject from Schedules from they have already taken two subjects for the MSt or for the Qualifying Examination.

Candidates may not take subjects which they have already studied in a first-degree course.

Except where stated below, assessment is by three-hour written examinations at the end of the year. Submitted work must demonstrate that candidates have specialist knowledge of the relevant language/s (e.g., by quoting primary and secondary sources in the original language/s) in one or more elements of the Masters programme.

The papers to be examined are:

i. Schedule 1: Unseen translation from a Slavonic language (all options)
Candidates must attempt BOTH passages.

ii. Schedule 2: Methodology

Cyrillic Palaeography: Candidates must answer Questions 1 and 2 and ONE other question. (Questions 1 and 2 require candidates to transcribe and to comment on the dating and geographical provenance of facsimile passages from manuscripts.)

Slavonic Languages / Slavonic Literature and Nation: Candidates are expected to attend relevant seminars in the term/s when the subject is taught. The essay submitted should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words, formatted and presented in a scholarly form. An electronic copy of the essay should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count

on the first page of their submission.

Slavonic Corpus Linguistics: Candidates are required to use electronic corpora for this subject. The essay submitted should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words, formatted and presented in a scholarly form. An electronic copy of the essay should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

Key Questions in Critical Thought: Candidates are expected to attend the relevant lectures in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms and to participate in the relevant seminars. The essay submitted should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words; it should be typed and include a bibliography of works consulted. An electronic copy of the essay should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

MSt. Essay of 5,000 to 7,000 words: The essay subject must fall within the areas of Slavonic languages and literature. It should be submitted in a scholarly form, acknowledging primary and secondary sources, making sensible use of the bibliographical resources available in Oxford, and with an appropriate critical apparatus. An electronic copy of the essay should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

iii. Schedule 3: Slavonic Philology in Context

Old Church Slavonic; History of Church Slavonic: Candidates must answer question 1 and TWO other questions. (Question 1 consists of passages set for translation and linguistic comment.)

Comparative Slavonic Philology: Candidates must answer THREE questions.

Byzantine Civilization and its Expansion, 913-1204: Candidates must answer THREE questions.

iv. Schedule 4: History of a Slavonic Language (all options).
Candidates must question 1 and TWO other questions. (Question 1 consists of passages set for translation and linguistic comment.)

v. Schedule 5: Structure and present state of a Slavonic language (all options)
Candidates must answer THREE questions.

vi. Schedule 6: Russian Literature, Culture and History
For each option, candidates submit either a portfolio of essays to total 5,000-7000 words, or they may submit a single long essay, provided that the total word count of the essay is 5,000-7000 words (the word count includes footnotes, but excludes bibliography). The essays must be typed; they need not be presented in the full scholarly form expected of a dissertation, but they should be followed by a list of primary and secondary literature used. An electronic copy of the essay should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

vii. Schedule 7: Central European Literature, Culture and History (all options)
For each option, candidates submit either a portfolio of essays to total 5,000-7000 words, or they may submit a single long essay, provided that the total word count of the essay is 5,000-7000 words (the word count includes footnotes, but excludes bibliography). The essays must be typed; they need not be presented in the full scholarly form expected of a dissertation, but they should be followed by a list of primary and secondary literature used. An electronic copy of the

essay should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

viii. Dissertation

MPhil dissertations should be submitted in a scholarly form, acknowledging primary and secondary sources, making sensible use of the bibliographical resources available in Oxford, and with an appropriate critical apparatus. The length of the dissertation is 20,000-25,000 words. The approach which a candidate adopts will depend upon the subject that has been chosen. An electronic copy of the dissertation should be submitted via Inspera. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

3 Marking conventions

3.1 University scale for standardised expression of agreed final marks [EAF 11.1]

Individual course papers will be marked according to the following scale:

70 - 100	Distinction
65 – 69	Merit
50 - 64	Pass
0 - 49	Fail

3.2 Qualitative marking criteria for different types of assessment

Distinction (70 and above)

The translation paper shows an outstanding or very good competence in the newly acquired Slavonic language, with a secure and extensive command of vocabulary and of complex or otherwise more difficult grammatical structures and with few and minor problems in comprehension. It does not simply read smoothly, but renders the original in idiomatic and stylistically adequate English. Essay answers or submitted essays and theses display extensive, detailed and accurate knowledge of the subject area, familiarity with a good range of primary and secondary texts and an in-depth grasp of methodological issues and of the historical and / or theoretical background. The argument is focused and based on convincing evidence. It offers an insightful and well-structured answer to the specifics of the essay question. Its presentation is clear and scholarly.

Submitted essays and theses suggest that the candidate has clear potential for doctoral research, specifically:

85 and over: Translations are flawless, show an outstanding command of the source language, and render the original in readily publishable English style, skilfully reflecting the style of the source text, and overcoming all difficulties of cultural / linguistic transfer. Essays and theses display unusual originality, engage decisively and imaginatively with the problem identified, demonstrate strong analytical and conceptual power, sustain a coherent argument, and deploy evidence skilfully and effectively. Such work should be critically adventurous, clearly and engagingly written and presented in an impeccably lucid, correct and scholarly manner. The assessors should feel confident that work of this level might be published, with only minor revisions, in a good scholarly journal.

80-84: Translations fulfil the criteria stipulated above (85 and over), with only minor scope for improvement in style and overcoming particular difficulties of cultural / linguistic transfer. Essays and theses demonstrate all the qualities stipulated above, but which contain some relative weakness

in one of the areas of coverage, originality, deployment of evidence, presentation or style. Work at this level should be highly professional and show unequivocal potential for doctoral research.

75-79: Translations show a very good command of the newly acquired Slavonic language, with full understanding of all grammatical and syntactic structures and only very few lexical difficulties. They show clear sensitivity to the style of the source text and are written in natural and idiomatic English. Essays and theses demonstrate outstanding qualities of intellectual engagement with the material, coherence and control of argument, and impressive scope, but may show some relative weakness in coverage, originality, deployment of evidence, presentation or style. Work should suggest strong potential for doctoral research.

70-74 (low distinction): Translations fulfil the criteria stipulated above (75-79), with allowance for occasional minor problems of comprehension and lexical difficulties. Essays and theses show clear evidence of independent thought and research, and a firm command of the subject, with coherence of argument and clarity of presentation, such as to suggest that the candidate has potential for doctoral research.

Pass (50-69)

The translation paper shows a good or adequate competence in the newly acquired Slavonic language, even if there may still be limited problems of comprehension and translation into English. Essay answers or essays and theses respectively show at least basic knowledge of the subject area, including reasonable familiarity with primary and / or secondary texts, methodological questions and aspects of the theoretical or historical background pertaining to the subject area.

Essay answers offer structured responses that directly address the selected topics; specifically:

- 65-69 (merit): Translations show a good command of the newly acquired Slavonic language and good overall comprehension of the source text in grammar, syntax and vocabulary. They read clearly and convincingly with few infelicities. Essays and theses show evidence of independent critical thought and research beyond the reproduction of relevant material, a firm command of the subject. Some local deficiencies in knowledge, coverage, coherence or form may be overlooked if the essay as a whole presents a convincing, informed and broadly coherent argument.
- 60-64 (high pass): Translations fulfil the criteria stipulated above (65-69), with allowance for a somewhat larger number of difficulties. Essays and theses show clear evidence of independent thought and research, a firm command of the subject. Some local deficiencies in argument or research may be overlooked if the essay as a whole presents a coherent argument and/or individual insights.
- 50-59 (pass): Translations show an adequate command of the newly acquired Slavonic language, with broad understanding of the source text overall, despite some misunderstandings or distortions, and infelicities or awkwardness in style. Essays and theses show basic competence in understanding the subject, mounting a broadly coherent argument, with adequate style and presentation, but only slight evidence of independent thought and research.
- Fail (49 or under): The translations show insufficient linguistic competence to understand and translate straightforward texts in the Slavonic language chosen by the candidate. Essay answers or essays and theses respectively display inadequate knowledge of the subject area and its theoretical and/or historical background, including the relevant secondary literature. The understanding of important source texts and issues pertaining to the subject area is poor, with analyses that are markedly weak and erroneous, excessively derivative, oversimplified or incoherent. Style and presentation are notably poor.

3.3 Verification and reconciliation of marks [EAF 11.2]

All submitted work is marked independently by two appropriately qualified members of staff ('double-blind' marked) from the panel of examiners or specialist assessors appointed in the subject area.

Each marker will complete a marksheet with their comments on the work and an individual mark, before meeting to agree on a final mark for the work. The marksheet should subsequently be completed to include: an explanation of how the final mark was arrived at, and how any discrepancies between the initial marks were resolved; and agreed feedback to the student for work examined by submission.

Should there be disagreement of 10 marks or more between the two markers that cannot be resolved, a third marker will be appointed (with the approval of the Chair of Examiners), and an explanation of how marks have been reconciled included at paper level. In exceptional circumstances the Chair of Examiners will adjudicate.

3.4 Scaling [EAF 11.9]

Scaling is not used in the assessment of this course.

3.5 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric in examinations

There are no direct penalties for submitting work of less than the minimum stated word count. However, work that is significantly under-length is likely to be inadequate in its coverage and content, in the context of the marking criteria described in section 3.2, and will be so marked. As a rough guideline, less than three-quarters of the maximum word limit is likely to be inadequate.

There are also no specific penalties for deficiencies in the written academic English (or any other language in which candidates have the permission to write their work) although any deficiency in accuracy or clarity of expression is likely to compromise the effectiveness of the essay in line with the criteria described in 3.2.

3.6 Penalties for late or non-submission of submitted work [EAF 8.2, ER 14]

The scale of penalties agreed by the Board of Examiners in relation to late submission of assessed items is set out below. Details of the circumstances in which such penalties might apply can be found in the Examination Regulations (Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 14).

Lateness	**Cumulative mark penalty**
After the deadline but submitted on the same day	-5 marks
Each additional calendar day	-1 mark
Max. deducted marks up to 14 days late	-18 marks
More than 14 calendar days after the deadline	Fail

Failure to submit a required element of assessment within 14 days of an approved deadline without permission will result in the failure of the assessment. Students are entitled to one resit attempt for

each failed assessment, and the mark for a resit of an assessment will be capped at the pass mark.

3.7 Penalties for over-length work [ER 16]

The Board has agreed the following tariff of marks which will be deducted for over-length work:

Percentage by which the maximum word count is exceeded:	**Cumulative mark penalty** (up to a maximum of –10)
Up to 5% over word limit	-1 mark
Up to 10% over	-2 marks
Up to 15% over	-3 marks
Each further 1% - 5% over	-1 further mark

Students are required to state the word count on the first page of all submissions.

3.8. Penalties for poor academic practice [EAF 8.4.3]

Candidates are not permitted to use AI-generated content or AI tools in work submitted for assessment. Candidates are advised to consult the University guidelines on plagiarism and the Faculty's Guidance on AI.

If examiners suspect plagiarism and the material concerned accounts for no more than 10% of the whole piece of work, it is likely that this can be dealt with by the examiners as an instance of poor academic practice (e.g. web sources with no clear authors; incomplete or shoddy referencing). Markers will grade the work on its merits. The board of examiners will then use its judgement to deduct up to a maximum of ten points depending on the gravity and extent of the poor academic practice reported to the Chair of Examiners by the markers in question. If the consequence of the deduction would result in an overall Fail, the case will be referred to the Proctors.

If the material affected concerns more than 10% of the whole piece of work or more than poor academic practice, or where a candidate has previously had marks deducted for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism, the Chair will refer the case to the Proctors.

4 Progression rules and classification conventions

4.1 Progression rules

In the MPhil course an average of 65, i.e. the equivalent of a merit, is required in the 1st-year Qualifying Examination for progression to the 2nd year. A candidate who achieves an average of at least 50 but less than 65 in the Qualifying Examination for the MPhil. course may be given the option of being granted permission to supplicate for the Degree of Master of Studies.

Distinction in the MPhil entitles candidates who have been provisionally accepted for further research to transfer directly to DPhil status, with exemption from Probationer Research status. Distinction in the MSt entitles candidates who have been provisionally accepted for further research to transfer either to PRS or directly to DPhil status, subject to the recommendation of the Board of Examiners.

4.2 Final outcome rules

For both degrees an average of 50% or over is required to pass, and an average of at least 65% is required for a merit. No candidate who has failed any of the components of their course will be awarded the degree. For re-sits / re-submissions, see 5.

Distinction in the MSt is awarded to candidates with three marks of 70 or above plus one mark of 64 or above, or, alternatively, to candidates with two marks of 70 or above plus two marks of 67 or above.

Distinction in the MPhil is awarded to candidates with a mark of at least 70 in the dissertation and an average mark of at least 70 in the other papers.

Final marks of 0.5 or higher will be rounded up, and final marks of 0.4 or lower will be rounded down.

4.3 Use of vivas [EAF 10]

Vivas will not be used in this examination.

5 Resits [EAF 13]

Should a candidate fail any element of the examination, that element may be re-submitted, or re-sat as applicable, once, and once only. For re-submissions, candidates may re-submit that element by noon on the final Monday of September following their first examination. Re-submitted work may be a reworked version of the original submission or a completely new submission. Written examinations may be re-sat the next time they are offered, normally in the year following first examination. The highest mark that may be awarded for re-sat papers or for re-submitted work is 50% (i.e. it is capped at the pass mark). Candidates who have failed any element of assessment shall not be eligible for the award of merit or distinction.

6 Consideration of mitigating circumstances [EAF Annex E]

A candidate's final outcome will first be considered using the classification rules/final outcome rules as described above in section 4. The exam board will then consider any further information they have on individual circumstances.

Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, that unforeseen circumstances may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') will meet to discuss the individual applications. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, the strength of the evidence provided in support, and the extent of the impact. The Panel will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers.

The board of examiners will separately consider whether and how to adjust a candidate's results as a result of the mitigating circumstances, taking into account both the Panel's considerations of the notice(s) and the scripts/submissions and marks. Further information on the procedure is provided in the Examination and Assessment Framework (Annex E), and information for students is available on the problems completing your assessment web pages.

7 Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

The Examination Board for 2026-27 is:

Chair of Examiners	Margarita Vaysman
Internal examiner	Jan Fellerer
External	Dr Connor Doak, School of Modern Languages, University of Bristol

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.