

## 2023-24 Examining Conventions for the degree 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 2023-24. The supervisory body for this course 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 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 M.Phil. 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. Candidates may not take subjects which they have already studied in a first-degree course.

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, this may incorporate material used for the MSt. essay in their first year. 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 ONE and TWO and ONE other question. (Questions ONE and TWO require candidates to transcribe and to comment on the dating and geographical provenance of facsimile passages from

manuscripts.)

**Textual Criticism:** Candidates must answer THREE questions, ONE from section A and TWO from section B. (Section A consists of textual passages set for commentary.)

**Slavonic Languages / Slavonic Literature and Nation:** Candidates are expected to attend relevant seminars in the term 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 Inspira. 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 Inspira. 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 Inspira. 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 Inspira. 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 ONE and TWO other questions. (Question ONE 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 answer question ONE and TWO other questions (Question ONE 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, except for 'Russian Social and Political Thought, 1825-1917' (see below), 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 Inspira. Students must clearly state the word count on the first page of their submission.

**Russian Social and Political Thought, 1825-1917:** Candidates must answer THREE questions.

- vii. **Schedule 7: Central European Literature, Culture and History (all options):**  
Candidates must answer THREE questions

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 Inspira. 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

Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

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

### 3.2 Qualitative 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, engages decisively and imaginatively with the problem identified, demonstrates strong analytical and conceptual power, sustains a coherent argument, and deploys 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 contains 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 shows 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 shows 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**

Normally each submission will be marked by two markers. The marks will fall within the range of 0 to 100 inclusive.

All submitted work is independently (double-blind) marked by either two members of the panel of examiners, or specialist assessors appointed in the subject area. They will each fill in a coversheet with comments and an individual mark before arriving at an agreed

joint mark. Should there be disagreement of 10 marks or more between the two markers that cannot be resolved, the Chair of Examiners will adjudicate.

### 3.4 Scaling

Scaling is not used in the assessment of this course.

### 3.5 Short-weight convention

Failure to answer the required number of questions on a paper will be penalized by deduction of marks, and the maximum deduction is equal to the value of the unanswered question or questions. Significant short weight in individual answers and answers irrelevant to the questions set may also result in deduction of marks, by agreement between the markers.

### 3.6 Penalties for late or non-submission

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](#)).

<b>Late submission</b>	<b>Penalty</b>
After the deadline but submitted within the first 4 hours after the deadline	- 3 marks
After 4 hours from the deadline but submitted within the same day	- 2 marks
Each additional calendar day	-2 marks
Max. deducted marks up to 14 days late	-31 marks
More than 14 calendar days after the notice of non-submission	Fail

Failure to submit a required element of assessment will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit of the assessment will be capped at a pass.

### 3.7 Penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter

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

<b>Percentage by which the maximum word count is exceeded:</b>	<b>Penalty</b> (up to a maximum of -10)
Up to 5% over word limit	-1 mark
Up to 10% over	-2
Up to 15% over	-3
Each further 1-5% over	-1 further mark

Students are required to cite the number of words on the first page of each submission.

### 3.8 Penalties for poor academic practice

Candidates have been advised to consult the [university guidelines on plagiarism](#).

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 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, the Chair will refer the case to the Proctors.

## 4. Progression rules and final classifications

### 4.1 Progression rules

In the MPhil. course an average of 65, i.e. the equivalent of a merit, is required in the 1<sup>st</sup>-year Qualifying Examination for progression to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. A candidate who achieves an average of at least 50 but less than 65 in the Qualifying Examination for the M.Phil. course may be awarded the degree of MSt. In the calculation of averages a high mark on one or more papers is allowed to compensate for a fail mark on one or more papers.

Distinction in the M.Phil. entitles candidates who have been provisionally accepted for further research to transfer directly to D.Phil. 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 D.Phil. status, subject to the recommendation of the Board of Examiners

#### 4.2 Final outcome rules

In the final examinations for both the MSt. and the MPhil, an average of at least 50 is required for a pass, and an average of 65 for a merit. In the calculation of averages a high mark on one or more papers is allowed to compensate for a fail mark on one or more papers.

**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 examined papers.

#### 4.3 Use of vivas

All candidates must present themselves for viva voce examination unless dispensed by the examiners. The viva voce examination, if held, is seen as an opportunity to discuss the candidate's essay or dissertation and to explore topics of the papers chosen by the candidate in more depth. Performance in the viva may result in the slight raising of a mark where performance in the viva suggests a greater command of the material than was evident from the written work, and/or demonstrates the ability cogently to defend a position when questioned by the examiners, but not in the lowering of any of the marks awarded for the written papers, the essay or the dissertation.

#### 5. Resits

The provisions in the University's [Examination and assessment framework](#) for the year apply. Furthermore, if the examiners consider that the work done by a candidate in the final MPhil examination is not of sufficient merit to qualify for the MPhil but that his or her work in the 1st-year Qualifying Examination was of sufficient merit to qualify for the MSt., the candidate shall be given the option of being granted permission to supplicate for the Degree of Master of Studies.

Resubmitted work can be a reworked version of the original submission as well as a completely new submission.

#### 6. Consideration of mitigating circumstances

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.

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 and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence provided in support.

Examiners 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 banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. 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 External Examiner for 2023-24 is Dr Siggy Frank (University of Nottingham) and the Chair of Examiners is Professor Rajendra Chitnis. The internal Examiner is to be confirmed. Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.