**Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages**

**Examining Conventions (2022-23) for the degree of**

**MSt. and MPhil in Modern Languages**

## 1. Introduction

This document sets out the examination conventions applying to the MSt. and MPhil in Modern Languages for the academic year 2022-23. 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

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. **Portfolio essays**: For each special subject, 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.

ii. **Dissertation**: MSt. and 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. For the MSt. the length of the dissertation is 10,000-12,000 words and for the MPhil, 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.

iii. **Method Paper: 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.

iv. **Method Paper: Spaces of Comparison**: Candidates are expected to attend the Spaces of Comparison lectures in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms and to participate in the Spaces of Comparison 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.

v. **Method Paper: History of Ideas in Germany from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries**: Candidates are expected to attend relevant lectures and to participate in the seminars organised in Michaelmas and Hilary Term. 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.

vi. **Method Paper: Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities**: Candidates are expected to attend the Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities lectures in Michaelmas Term and to take a course of tutorials in the history of the book covering a range of topics relating to the language (or one of the languages) which they are studying. 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.

## 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

i. **Portfolio essays**: The essay submitted as part of the portfolio will have been written in the course of the student's work on the Special Subject, but may also be revised in the light of the supervisor's comments. A general norm might be for the supervisor to comment on a piece of work and for the student to incorporate the revisions into the finished essay without further input.

Whereas for the dissertation examiners will normally expect a combination of intellectual and scholarly skills, the portfolio essays may be more restricted in focus and scope; for example, a close reading of an important text or texts, or a lucid account of historical, theoretical or critical context may be sufficient for any one essay, though a range of skills should normally be displayed across the work submitted.

A passable essay will represent the work of a student of good 2:1 standard at the appropriate level of development; an essay given a Merit mark will show evidence of

independent critical thought and research beyond the reproduction of the relevant material; an essay given a Distinction mark will show clear evidence of an ability to analyse complex material, or interpret difficult texts in astute and insightful ways, in a manner that gives signs of potential for doctoral research. When assessing portfolio essays, examiners shall take account of the stage at which each essay was completed.

ii. **Dissertation**: A dissertation judged worthy of a Distinction will be expected to display a high level of proficiency in intellectual and scholarly skills which might include some of the following: nuanced close reading of complex literary texts; lucid, detailed accounts of historical and theoretical contexts for the object of enquiry; a readiness to analyse and engage with the views of earlier scholars and critics; a sound grasp of the linguistic, methodological or scholarly tools required for the successful completion of the dissertation. A dissertation judged worthy of Merit will show elements of distinction standard work, but strong individual insights might not be followed through or connected; the implications of insights might not be fully grasped or elaborated, suggesting the candidate does not yet demonstrate potential for doctoral research. A dissertation will normally be of passable standard if, despite showing little aptitude for advanced independent research, it nevertheless represents in the examiners' judgement a suitable level of attainment for a diligent and able student of good second-class standard within one year (or with the MPhil two years) of graduation. 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.

iii. **Key Questions in Critical Thought**: To be of passable standard, the essay should show an ability to understand and explicate complex theoretical issues and, where relevant, to compare different theories. To attain a Merit standard, an essay will show a greater control of ideas and their implications. To attain a Distinction standard, candidates will be expected also to draw upon wide independent reading and to adopt distinctive analytical and critical positions in respect of the topics they are discussing. This might entail a detailed reading and critique of the work of one theorist, a well-informed survey of different positions adopted in respect of a given theoretical issue, or a comparison of the work of two or more theorists working in related fields which lucidly accounts for the strengths and weaknesses of their respective views.

iv. **Spaces of Comparison**: To be of passable standard, the essay should show an ability to understand and explicate complex theoretical issues that are relevant to an area of comparative criticism discussed during the course. To attain a Merit standard, an essay will show a greater control of ideas and their implications. To attain a Distinction standard, candidates will be expected also to draw upon wide independent reading and to adopt distinctive analytical and critical positions in respect of the topics they are discussing. This might entail a detailed reading and critique of the work of one theorist, a well-informed survey of different positions adopted in respect of a given theoretical issue, or a discussion of approaches which lucidly accounts for their strengths and weaknesses. Candidates may include reference to practical comparative criticism on one or more works, or discuss approaches with reference to specific works of e.g. literature, film or music, but such works should not form the focus of the essay. Quotations in foreign languages should be given in the text in the original language. Translations into English should be provided in footnotes for all quotations in foreign languages. Such translations of

quotations provided in footnotes should not be included in the word count of this essay.

v. **History of Ideas in Germany from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries**: To be of passable standard, the essay should demonstrate independent reading beyond the texts and authors discussed in the seminars, and it should show an ability to explicate complex theoretical texts and place them in the appropriate historical and intellectual context. To attain a Merit standard, an essay will show a greater control of ideas and their implications. To attain a Distinction standard, candidates are expected also to adopt distinctive analytical and critical positions in relation to the texts they are discussing. This might entail a detailed reading and critique of the text or texts; a well-informed study of the reception or transmission of one or more works in relation to the history of ideas and/or critical practices; an account of how a particular text fits into a long-running critical debate; or a comparison of two or more texts which gives a lucid and critical account of their historical and intellectual framework.

vi. **Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities**: The essays presented may be restricted in scope, and account should be taken of the fact that the history of the book, for most candidates, will be a new venture. To obtain a pass in the examination, candidates should demonstrate that they have studied several aspects of the subject in some detail, and that they are able to do work of a good 2.1 standard at the appropriate level of development. To obtain a Merit, candidates will show more command of the material, a growing ability to contextualise insights in a larger context. To obtain a Distinction standard, they must show clear evidence of an ability to analyse complex material, to understand individual bibliographical questions in a broader context, and to discuss issues relating to the history of the book in astute and insightful ways, in a manner which gives signs of research potential.

### 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 and External Examiner will adjudicate.

### 3.4 Scaling

Scaling is not used in the assessment of this course.

### 3.5 Short-weight convention

There are no direct penalties for going under the word limit. However, work that is significantly under-length is likely to be inadequate in its coverage and content, and will be so marked. As a rough guideline, less than three-quarters of the maximum word limit is likely to be inadequate.

### 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.)

| **Late submission** | **Penalty** |
|---|---|
| After the deadline but submitted on the same day | - 5 marks<br>(-5 percentage points) |
| Each additional calendar day | -1 mark<br>(-1 percentage point) |
| Max. deducted marks up to 14 days late | -18 marks<br>(-18 percentage points) |
| 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:

| **Percentage by which the maximum word count is exceeded:** | **Penalty**<br><br>(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 at: https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/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 classification conventions

### 4.1 Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Pass, Fail

**85 and over**: work which displays 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**: work which demonstrates 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**: work which demonstrates 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: work which shows 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.

**65-69:** merit: work which shows 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: work which shows 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: work which shows basic competence in understanding the subject, mounting a broadly coherent argument, and adequate style and presentation, but only slight evidence of independent thought and research.

**49 or under: fail**: work which shows inadequate knowledge of primary texts; offers an analysis that is seriously flawed, or excessively derivative; shows a meagre knowledge and/or poor understanding of secondary literature; fails to present a coherent argument; or is notably poor in its style and/or presentation.

### 4.2 Final outcome rules

For both degrees an average of 50 is required to pass. An average of 65 is required for a merit. And an average of 70 is required for a distinction.

The overall weightings for dissertation and coursework within the MSt and MPhil programmes are as follows. For the MSt, the dissertation counts for 50% and coursework for 50% of the overall grade. For the MPhil, the dissertation counts for 55% and coursework for 45% of the overall grade. Marks awarded for the dissertation are counted twice towards the total mark.

For the MSt.: of the marks for the two Special Subjects and the Method essay, two will be carried forward to contribute to the total mark. Assuming all three pieces of work achieve a mark of at least 50 (the pass mark for the MSt.), the two highest marks will go forward. No candidate who has failed any of the components will be awarded the degree

For the MPhil: of the marks for the three Special Subjects and the Method essay, three will be carried forward to contribute to the total mark. Assuming all four pieces of work achieve a mark of at least 50 (the pass mark for the MPhil), the three highest marks will go forward. No candidate who has failed any of the components will be awarded the degree.

A candidate who fails the MPhil. may instead be awarded an MSt. by the examiners at their final meeting. The mechanism for considering an award for the MSt. is as follows:

All scripts will be re-read by internal examiners, grading them as either ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ for the MSt. The decision of the internal examiners will need to be ratified by the External Examiner.

### 4.3 Progression rules

Not applicable to this course.

### 4.4 Use of vivas

Vivas are not used in relation to this course.

## 5. Resits

Should a candidate fail any element of the examination, that element may be re-submitted once, and once only. Candidates may resubmit that element by noon on the final Monday of September following their first examination; the highest mark that may be awarded for resubmitted work is 50 (pass).

## 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 *Policy and Guidance for Examiners, Annex E* and information for students is provided at www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance.

## 7. Details of Examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners. The Examination Board for 2022-23 is:

| | |
|---|---|
| **French** | Professor Katherine Lunn-Rockliffe<br>Professor Helen Swift<br>Professor Caroline Warman |
| **German** | Professor Karen Leeder<br>Professor Charlie Louth |
| **Greek** | Professor Marc Lauxtermann |
| **Italian** | Professor Elena Lombardi |
| **Portuguese** | Professor Claire Williams |
| **Russian** | Professor Philip Bullock |
| **Spanish** | Professor María Blanco |
| **External** | Dr Douglas Smith, UC Dublin |
| **Chair** | Professor Caroline Warman |