

Part IA Examination Guidelines

Table of contents

- [Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors: key points for all Parts](#)
- [Guidelines for Examiners & Assessors: Part I information](#)
- [Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors: Part IA supplement](#)

Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors: key points for all Parts

1. Examiners and Assessors are required to adhere to the timetable and detailed instructions provided by the Chairman of Examiners.
2. Form and conduct notices that detail any changes to the examinations from the previous year are published annually in the [Cambridge University Reporter](#).
3. External Examiners have an important role to play in our examinations. In particular, Examiners should pay due attention to comments made on their draft question papers by the External Examiner.
4. The exam paper will show the approximate number of marks for each part of a question in the right margin, the mark to be level with the end of the paragraph(s) to which it refers.
5. Examiners must follow all aspects of agreed policies on security.
6. Symbols used in questions should be clearly defined except where the definitions are systematically provided in examination data books or data sheets.
7. **No comments whatsoever** should be made on the scripts.
8. Each Examiner should mark the scripts in accordance with the published Marking & Classing Criteria.
9. All aspects of the marking process must be fully auditable and defensible in case of an appeal. Examiners must mark the scripts in such a way that a third party (e.g. a checker, External Examiner or Chair of Examiners) can understand what process has been followed.
10. Where a candidate answers more than the required number of questions the Examiner should mark all the questions answered and then exclude from the marks recorded the question(s) scoring the lowest mark(s).

Useful links

- [Advice on examining \(staff only\)](#)
- [Marking & classing criteria](#)
- [Exam paper templates and style recommendations](#)
- [Data security & the production of exam papers](#)
- [Exam data retention policy](#)
- [Statement on Tripos transparency](#)
- [Script checking guidelines](#)
- [Regulations for the Engineering Tripos](#)
- [University guide to undergraduate examinations](#)
- [University guidance for staff on examinations](#)

Guidelines for Examiners & Assessors: Part I information

Summary of duties

Examiners and Assessors are appointed, on the nomination of the Faculty Board, by the General Board. Examiners who have taken part in an examination shall be present at the final Examiners' meeting unless they are prevented by grave cause and granted dispensation in advance by the Vice-Chancellor. Assessors set papers or parts of papers and advise Examiners on the performance of candidates in their subjects. Assessors may at the request of the Chairman be invited to attend meetings of Examiners for the purpose of consultation and advice, but shall not be entitled to vote.

Setting the paper

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1. Part I papers are set jointly by the Examiner and Assessor, with an agreed division of effort.
2. Examiners and Assessors must consult the Lecturer(s) at an early stage, and certainly before any questions are set, in order to check that their proposed questions are appropriate. The Lecturer(s) should outline the central elements of the course and may suggest specific topics for examining. The Examiner should check with the Lecturer(s) if any special data books are required.
3. It must not be assumed that the treatment of topics in the syllabus will be the same as in previous years. Examiners should consult the reports of their immediate predecessors to ascertain how candidates coped with individual questions and what topics and styles of questions were found to be most difficult.
4. As the standard of questions may vary from year to year, it is recommended that Examiners check that their setting and marking have not been either unduly severe or unduly lenient (for target averages see the supplements). This should ensure that, after following Faculty Board's guidelines on the proportions of students in the various classes, the marks at class boundaries will roughly coincide with the goals set out in the [Marking & Classing Criteria](#).
5. It is the responsibility of the Examiners to ensure that the papers are error-free. The Faculty Board recommends the use of a reading meeting and believes that at least two independent solutions to each question should be prepared. The Board of Examiners should decide whether or not an Examiner will be required to act as an additional 'second checker'.
6. Lecturers (as checkers) should provide **independent** cribs for the questions that relate to their part of the course by the specified deadline. These should be returned to the Examiner. The Lecturer should confirm directly to the Chairman that he/she has provided a full independent crib.
7. Lecturers should be informed of any subsequent changes to the questions and both Examiners and Lecturers (as checkers) should sign off on the final version of the paper.
8. Examiners, after necessary consultation with Assessors, should provide feedback to the External Examiner on receipt of comments on their paper.

Marking

1. Scripts should be marked using the following guidelines:
 - i. mark to whole numbers (do not use half marks);
 - ii. tick or mark every page;
 - iii. put sub-marks in the margin and circle the total at the end of the question;
 - iv. the sub-marks on the scripts must correlate with the breakdown on the paper;
 - v. record the marks on the front cover;
 - vi. keep the scripts in the correct order;
 - vii. be consistent in the marking;
 - viii. mark the first 30 scripts in pencil, check the averages, and adjust the marking scheme if necessary, remarking the first 30 scripts;
 - ix. try to ensure that the average for the paper lies within the recommended guidelines.
2. Examiners and Assessors must personally sign off a hard copy of their mark-book. In doing so, the marker is taking full responsibility for the accuracy of the mark transcription.

Solutions and reports

1. The Faculty Board requires every Examiner to provide a written report on the examination to be sent to the Chairman at the time the marks are handed in. A copy of the report is to be placed in the Examiner's file for the Examiner in the following year. Where the raw marks have been adjusted by the Examiner, the effect of the adjustment on those marks must be recorded in the report.
2. Examiners are required to provide solutions for their papers. The Faculty Board recommends to Examiners the practice of including in the solutions comments that may serve as a useful guide to future students. Specific comments may be added after each individual answer; alternatively the section of the Examiner's report that deals with individual questions could be reproduced on the last page of the solution.

Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors: Part IA supplement

Character of the examinations

The four papers should be set and marked in accordance with the view that the examination is to be a straightforward test of basic principles. The rubric for papers 1–4 should require candidates to answer **all**

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questions. Where appropriate a paper should be divided into two or three sections corresponding to the main subject areas examined in the paper. The number of questions in the section should reflect the number of lectures in the corresponding subject areas. The Chairman for Part IA has discretion to decide how the questions should be divided among the sections of each paper.

The Part IA examinations shall each comprise eight straightforward questions carrying 10 marks each, and four searching questions carrying 30 marks each. The straightforward questions should be labeled “short” on the exam paper, and should be set such that a fully correct solution could be obtained by an average candidate within 9 minutes, if that candidate has tackled the associated examples papers during the year. The searching questions should be labeled “long” and should begin with a straightforward part that introduces the topic of the question, with later parts requiring synthesis of knowledge or problem-solving in less familiar circumstances.

Target average

At the setting stage, Examiners should aim for a target average on the written paper of 60-65%. When coursework marks are included the overall average can be expected to increase by c.4%.

Additional information

- [Practical information about Part I exams](#)
- [Part IA Coursework and Exam Credit notice](#)

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