

NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

PART II AND III

GUIDE FOR SENIOR EXAMINERS

This guide is intended to supplement the material distributed by the central bodies regarding the examinations.

To all intents and purposes, a Senior Examiner in either Part II or Part III of the Natural Sciences Tripos is, in effect, a “Chairman of Examiners” for that subject area and all responsibilities will be delegated from the Chairman of Examiners to you.

Some additional information is provided within, but you should refer mostly to documents that you will receive throughout the year.

If you have any comments for correction or enhancement of this guide, please contact the Secretary of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos.

A copy of this guide and related documents can be downloaded from the NST website:
<https://www.natsci.tripos.cam.ac.uk/exams/examiners>

A CamTools site for NST Part II & III Examiners can be found at: <https://camtools.cam.ac.uk/portal.html>

Additional information is available from the Student Registry website:
<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/studentregistry/examinations/>

CONTENTS

ON APPOINTMENT	3
Formal appointment letter	
Procedures and Policies	
Contact with subject Examiners and Assessors	
EXAMINERS' RESPONSIBILITIES	4
CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND SUBMISSION OF WORK FOR ASSESSMENT	5
Practical class arrangements	
Consideration of extenuating circumstances	
What if I suspect something is amiss in a submission of work?	6
BEFORE THE WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS	6
Candidate numbers	
DURING THE WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS	6
What if I suspect a candidate of “unfair practice” during the written examinations?	
THE FINAL EXAMINERS' MEETING	7
AFTER THE FINAL EXAMINERS' MEETING	7
The class list and College markbook	
Retention of data and other material	
Corrections and amendments to the class list	8
Examination Review Procedure for Undergraduate Examinations	
Examiners' reports	
Payment of Examiners' Fees and Expenses	

APPENDICES

- 1 Advice Regarding Writing on Examination Scripts**
- 2 Marking and classing criteria for Part II and III of the NST**
- 3 Useful contacts**
- 4 Material to be submitted after the final Examiners' meeting**

If you are a Part III Senior Examiner for a subject which also offers a Master of Advanced Study (M.A.St), you will need to be aware of the processes and ensure that other Examiners, Assessors and External Examiners are also aware.

Part III and MAST examination scripts will be marked as part of the same process and there will be one Examination Board for both Part III and MAST in each subject which will confirm results and sign the class lists. The class lists will however be separate; the Part III list will be classed following the normal NST criteria and the MAST class list will be an alphabetical list of successful candidates with (d) a distinguished performance and (c) a commendable performance against relevant names. A separate Mark Book and Grade Roster will also need to be provided to Student Records and the Mark Book copied to Colleges. Please consult your Departmental/Faculty guidance for further information.

ON APPOINTMENT

Formal appointment letter

You should have already been approached informally by your Faculty or Department over your willingness to act as Senior Examiner for a subject within Part II or III of the NST, and you will receive a formal letter of appointment from Educational & Student Policy confirming that the General Board has approved your appointment. You should check the details of your appointment are correct and return the letter of confirmation provided to Educational & Student Policy. If you are aware of any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the tenure of your appointment (such as being a Director of Studies or supervisor in any area relating to the examination), you should discuss these with the Chairman of Examiners.

Procedures and Policies

You should familiarise yourself with University and local procedures and arrangements for the examination and, if appropriate, consult last year's Senior Examiner for advice. You should gather together the following information for reference:

- the University regulations for the examination in your subject (see *Statutes and Ordinances* <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/> Chapter IV);
- the relevant course handbook(s) for the current year;
- any published Form and Conduct Notice, as approved by the Committee of Management for the NST;
- last year's subject examination papers.

Check to make sure that the published information about the examination is consistent with your planned assessment methods, marking schemes and examination paper formats: if it is not, you should contact the Secretary of the Committee of Management for the NST as a matter of urgency.

The following information is provided by the Committee of Management for the NST, which governs overall examination policy for the Tripos:

- the NST policy on writing on examination scripts (Appendix 1);
- the agreed marking and classing criteria (Appendix 2).

In addition, you should also obtain copies of local policies, including:

- the Faculty or Departmental Examinations Data Retention Policy;
- the Faculty or Departmental policy on writing on examination scripts;
- the Faculty or Departmental policy on script retention;
- the Faculty or Departmental policy for the writing and submission of Examiners' reports.

Your Departmental Administrator should be able to help you with these.

Contact with subject Examiners and Assessors

As Senior Examiner, you are responsible for convening meetings of the Examiners (and Assessors, if appropriate) in your subject area¹, and producing the class list for submission to the Registry (through the Student Registry). If you have not already been contacted by your Faculty or Department, you should contact them to receive a list of the Examiners and Assessors who have been appointed to your subject's examination. Educational & Student Policy should also hold that information, and you can contact the Secretary of the Committee of Management for the NST for details.

¹ The roles of Examiners and Assessors in the NST are explained in Statutes and Ordinances, Natural Sciences Tripos, regulations 10-14.

EXAMINERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Within Part II and Part III of the NST, all matters relating to the conduct and organisation of the examination, and the outcomes are delegated to the relevant Senior Examiner.

The **Examiners** in your subject are collectively responsible for:

- setting question papers and local marking schemes;
- attending examinations for the first 20 minutes (in each location where the paper is scheduled according to the timetable) to answer queries from candidates and being available by telephone for the remainder of their examination in case of a subsequent query; ensuring, with the help of the invigilators, that this information reaches all locations where the paper is scheduled;
- marking formal examination papers and other forms of assessment in accordance with NST policy and any additional criteria or marking scheme agreed between the Examiners;
- attending Examiners' meetings;
- determining a class list for examination candidates and drawing appropriate mark boundaries, according to NST policy;
- reviewing candidates' scripts as instructed by the Senior Examiner in relation to those cases submitted under the University's review procedures;
- Part III Interdisciplinary Courses.

As **Senior Examiner**, you are additionally responsible for:

- **briefing subject Examiners, External Examiners and Assessors on their remit and procedures to be followed, and providing them with appropriate documentation and information;**
- **convening meetings of the subject Examiners to devise question papers and marking schemes, to consider the examination performance of candidates, and to determine a class list;**
- **ensuring that information on candidates with SpLDs and colour blindness reaches relevant Examiners;**
- **delivering final copy of question papers to the Reprographic Centre by the required date;**
- **forwarding the classlist and University markbook to the Student Registry;**
- **checking the draft timetable sent by the Student Registry;**
- **ensuring the attendance of Examiners in examination halls and notifying the Student Registry who is expected when and where;**
- **arranging for an Examiner to be in attendance at the end of each main written examination, to find out immediately and at first hand which scripts will not be included in the first batch and why. This helps identify if any scripts are missing;**
- **co-ordinating the business of subject Examiners and liaising with and submitting information required by the Student Registry (including confirming the final timetable);**
- **notifying the Student Registry of any special requirements (such as graph paper, tables, formulae books *etc.*);**
- **resolving and ruling on any examination matter where there may be a difference of opinion amongst the Examiners;**
- **submitting a report on the subject meeting to the Chairman;**
- **when directed by the Chairman of Examiners, considering and reporting on appeal cases submitted under the University's review procedures, and providing the name of a deputy to deal with such matters in your absence;**
- **confirming payments and expenses claims of Examiners and Assessors to the Student Registry;**
- **You may be required to act as Senior Examiner for candidates taking Part II Physical Sciences.**

It is good practice to facilitate continuity of the examinations process by providing informed support to future Senior Examiners.

The **Chairman of Examiners** is responsible for:

- ensuring that the College markbooks are collected and distributed;
- considering and reporting on appeal cases submitted under the University's review procedures;
- reporting on the examinations to the Committee of Management for the NST.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND SUBMISSION OF WORK FOR ASSESSMENT

Practical class arrangements

Health and Safety aspects of all practical examinations should be taken into account. It may be advisable to discuss arrangements with the Departmental Safety Officer or University Safety Office, especially in instances where improper procedures on the part of a candidate pose a significant risk. In the unlikely event that you intend to set questions in a practical examination involving the use of radioactive materials you should consult the relevant Departmental Radiation Officer.

You will be notified of any candidate who requires special consideration in the practical laboratory. The detailed arrangements require the approval of the Senior Examiner and will likely be handled by laboratory managers. The detailed arrangements should be discussed and agreed between the Department and the candidate's Director of Studies. Adjustments might include:

- altering the physical infrastructure of the laboratory (*e.g.* layout of benches, additional signage); preparing materials to aid candidates with particular disabilities (*e.g.* dyslexia, partial sight, colour-blindness);
- allowing additional time to complete and/or submit practical work for assessment;
- the use of specialist equipment or modifying existing equipment;
- adjustments to the labelling and use of operating equipment;
- taking additional precautions to minimise potential risks to the candidate and others in the laboratory;
- making arrangements for students to be accompanied by a reader or interpreter.

Further advice can be obtained from the Disability Resource Centre. (disability@admin.cam.ac.uk or (7)66302)

Marking and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

Examiners are required to mark all work in exactly the same way and in accordance with their agreed marking scheme. Examiners are *not* asked to judge how well a candidate might have performed had circumstances been different. The only exception to this policy relates to candidates with a diagnosed SpLD. The Senior Examiner will receive a list of such candidates and is responsible for forwarding this information to the relevant Examiner. In such instances, the University's policy is to request that minor errors of grammar and spelling are *not* penalised but that in all other respects Examiners should mark the work normally. A report on candidates who are colour blind and who may require adjustments to their written or practical examination will also be received and the Senior Examiner is authorised to identify appropriate adjustments in consultation with the College Director of Studies and any relevant technical staff.

[N.B. It is quite common to not be informed of dyslexic candidates until well into the Lent or Easter Term.]

Consideration of extenuating circumstances

You should make yourself aware of the Faculty or Departmental policy in this area, and of the deadlines candidates are expected to work to. You should ensure that candidates know where to submit their work and that arrangements are made to record the receipt of each candidate's work.

In the event of late submission of work, the Committee of Management of NST has agreed a policy of penalties. This policy may be found at <https://www.natsci.tripos.cam.ac.uk/exams/late>. In particular:

- For small pieces of work/continually assessed coursework, amounting to no more than 10% of the final examination mark for the subject (i.e. records of practical work, fieldwork and further work) zero marks should be awarded unless the late submission is supported by a letter from the student's Tutor/Director of Studies. The material should be marked as normal where a sufficient reason is produced and supported by the student's Tutor/Director of Studies; Course organisers will be the arbiters of such claims.
- For pieces of work for which the submission date is specified in Examination Regulations (Ordinances), the Council is the only body empowered to give leave for extension; in such cases the approved route is via the Secretary, Board of Examinations. Zero marks will be awarded for such pieces of work unless an extension has been agreed by the Board of Examinations in consultation with the Chair of Examiners. It is the view of the Committee of Management that this route is an appropriate one for requests for deferment of all coursework which contributes >10% of the final Tripos mark at Part II or Part III level.

What if I suspect something is amiss in a submission of work?

The (rare) circumstances in which you may wish to seek clarification of an aspect of submitted work include:

- ensuring that the work is complete and that sections have not been omitted in error;
- enabling the candidate to decipher an illegible passage when it would be excessive to require the whole assignment to be typed or rewritten legibly.

In most cases, you should be able to obtain clarification without contacting the candidate, but you may require a candidate to attend an interview. Interviews should be treated with utmost seriousness and candidates should be invited to attend via their Senior Tutor and the Chairman of Examiners kept informed. Candidates should only be invited for interview after their final examination but as soon as possible before the final subject Examiners' meeting. In the event that a student cannot be interviewed prior to agreeing the marks at the subject level, subject Examiners must mark the candidate on the basis of the work submitted. Under no circumstances should a candidate's name be omitted from the marksheet (or ultimately the class list) whilst awaiting the outcome of an interview.

If a candidate is instead suspected of “unfair practice”, you should report it directly to the Chairman of Examiners who will refer the matter to the Senior Proctor and the Secretary of the Board of Examinations. The Senior Proctor is responsible for determining how to proceed, which might involve referring the evidence to the University Advocate with a view to bringing the case before the Court of Discipline. All cases of suspected plagiarism should be reported to the Chairman of Examiners and Secretary to the Board of Examinations in accordance with the guidance note on Plagiarism <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/>

BEFORE THE WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

In April, you will receive information from the Student Registry addressed to Chairmen of Examiners (for all undergraduate examinations) and Senior Examiners in the NST. All of the information is relevant to your examinations and you are expected to react appropriately to the instructions and advice.

Candidate numbers

You should receive directly from the Student Registry (in April or early May) an Excel file containing the candidate numbers, University Student Numbers, **and names** for students taking the Natural Sciences Tripos **and** your subject. Please note that you may have additional candidates on this list, taking other Part II subjects within the NST (including Biological and Biomedical Sciences, and Physical Sciences). It should be clear from the lists provided which candidates are associated with the various Part II subjects.

You should ensure that only those people who need the names in advance are given them (*i.e.* those responsible for entering marks for continuous assessment). If that is not you, resist the temptation to read the file!

DURING THE WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

What if I suspect a candidate of “unfair practice” during the written examinations?

These circumstances are treated with the utmost seriousness by the University. In most instances, where a candidate is suspected of unfair practice during the examination, the Invigilator will have reported the matter. Where an Examiner suspects unfair practice, he or she should take no action themselves, but should mark the script(s) on the basis of the work presented and report the matter to the Chairman.

Where a case is subject to further investigation, the Examiners should mark the candidate's work as presented and arrange to class the candidate on the basis of the work submitted. In no circumstances should the candidate's name be omitted from the marksheet (or ultimately the class list).

The Chairman will report all cases of suspected unfair practice, including suspected plagiarism, to the Senior Proctor and the Secretary of the Board of Examinations. The Senior Proctor is responsible for determining how to proceed, which might involve referring the evidence to the University Advocate with a view to bringing the case

before the Court of Discipline. All cases of suspected plagiarism should be reported to the Chairman of Examiners and Secretary to the Board of Examinations in accordance with the guidance note on Plagiarism <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/>

THE FINAL EXAMINERS' MEETING

All Examiners must be present at the final meeting unless special dispensation has been obtained from the Vice-Chancellor; applications should be submitted via Education & Student Policy (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/examiners/dispensation.html>). Such requests are only granted in exceptional circumstances and dispensation must be approved before the Examiners' meeting takes place. The first stage of the process is agreeing the absence with the Senior Examiner. If an Examiner is absent you should continue with the proceedings and record their absence or late arrival in the minutes of the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, you should ensure that all marks have been recorded correctly into the markbook(s). At the meeting, a formal record should be taken, which should include:

- attendance and any dispensations for absences;
- any incidents that occurred during the examinations;
- the arrangements for marking and classing with reference to agreed criteria, noting any divergence and the reasons;
- any discussion of marginal candidates;
- any decisions relating to any representations relating to the conduct of the examination – a brief note explaining the reasons for the decision should be included.

A copy of this information in the form of a report (which you may be required to submit to your Faculty or Department) should be communicated to the Chairman of Examiners highlighting any issues for NST.

University guidelines for the conduct and recording of Examiners' meetings can be found at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/studentregistry/staff/exams/examiners/index.html>

AFTER THE FINAL EXAMINERS' MEETING

The class list and College markbook

You are responsible for compiling the final class list and supporting information, including the official University markbook (Grade Roster) that is either uploaded electronically to CamSIS or submitted to the Student Registry. Further information is given in the Guidance Note on drawing up the class list and mark book (circulated in April). In addition, it may be necessary to submit marks to other Senior Examiners, whose examinations may "borrow" questions or papers: specifically, marks for candidates taking Part II Biological and Biomedical Sciences [a Major Subject] should be transmitted to the office of the Faculty of Biology; marks for candidates taking Part II Physical Sciences [a Half Subject] should be transmitted to the Secretary of the Committee of Management for the NST, and marks from the Interdisciplinary Papers at Part III should be sent to the relevant Senior Examiner in the candidate's Department.

The Board of Examinations recommend that where a candidate fails, the Chair / Senior should communicate this to the Senior Tutor prior to classes being released on CamSIS or published at the Senate-House.

In addition to the production of a University markbook – the Grade Roster (according to a specified electronic template, and for use in official transcripts), Senior Examiners are required to submit a **College markbook**, for transmission to the Senior Tutors of Colleges. Please note that the format and detail contained within the College markbook may be different to the University Grade Roster: the College markbook may well contain additional information which you would like candidates to know (for example, marks by question or module, rather than by paper). Copies of the final markbook will be sent to Colleges on behalf of the Senior Examiners and retained indefinitely by the Secretary of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos. Please can Examiners supply the College markbook in excel format.

Appendix 4 provides a composite of *all* material that needs to be delivered subsequent to the marks being agreed and has the relevant contact information.

Retention of examination data and other material

You are also responsible for all examinations data in the subject until **one month after the publication of the class-list**, *i.e.* the deadline for appeals by candidates. After that time, no records should be retained by you or any other Examiners and any data should be handed over in accordance with the relevant Departmental Examinations Data Retention Policy.

Corrections and amendments to the class list

If you become aware of an error in your marks which affect the published class list, you should contact the Chairman of Examiners who, in turn, will contact the Secretary of the Board of Examinations. Prior to publication in the Reporter, providing the change is not substantive, all that is usually necessary is the submission of a corrected list and details of relevant changes to the marks recorded in the Grade Roster to the Student Registry. Once the Class List is published in the Reporter any change requires the publication of a Notice in a subsequent edition of the Reporter.

Amendments to the class list may also be made as a consequence of a recommendation by the Applications Committee, or as the consequence of the outcome of a review: such amendments are always published in the *Reporter*.

Examination Review Procedure for Undergraduate Examinations

There is a formal appeals procedure for all Tripos examinations which is administered by the Board of Examinations (stages i and ii) and the Deputy Academic Secretary (stage iii). The stages in the procedure are as follows:

- (i) representations received prior to signing the class list (Regulation 5);
- (ii) representations received within one month of signing the class list (Regulation 6);
- (iii) representations relating to the response from the Chairman of Examiners (Regulation 7).

The full procedure is outlined in *Statutes and Ordinances* and you will be contacted if you need to be involved. Stage ii of this process would normally take place within a month of the Final Examiners' Meeting and you should provide contact details for this period.

Examiners' reports

All Senior Examiners of **biological subjects** are required to submit a report on their examinations for the Faculty Board. You can submit a copy of this report to the Chairman of Examiners highlighting any issues that you feel should be brought to the attention of the Committee of Management for the NST.

Payment of Examiners' Fees and Expenses

Some internal Examiners and Assessors (NUTO's) are eligible to receive fees for undertaking their duties. The Student Registry Fees and Funding Team is responsible for paying such fees to Examiners and Senior Examiners are responsible for completing and returning the Claim Form (available from <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/examiners/index.html>) so that these payments can proceed. Payments (fees and expenses) for External Examiners are processed by Educational & Student Policy on receipt of their Report.