Briefing on Part II Examinations

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• Papers and skills
  – minor change to paper style
• How examiners work
• Marking & classing criteria
• Scaling
• Unfair means
• Questions about possible mistakes in exam
• Something happens – illness etc
• Web pages
• Questions?
Exam papers and skills

- Web page: [https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/exam_skills](https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/exam_skills)

Minor change to paper style: (letters) will be used for all parts of questions where a mark is available.

(a) What is your name? [4]

Now some more information will be given, but the letters will continue in sequence whether the parts are unrelated or not.

(b) What is 2+2? [3]

- Reentry points: try the next bit even if you get a part wrong or can’t do it!
  - blank answers get no marks, a few useful words do!

- Read whole question
  - hints usually come at the end

- Say what you are doing, or would do
  - don’t fudge answers – lose more marks that way!

- No marks for writing down irrelevant things…
How examiners work

• Web page: https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/exam_workings
• Who we are – 9 faculty members
• Setting, checking questions – happening around now
• Two external examiners, check papers when set and advise on where to draw the class boundaries, etc.
• Timetable
  – first exam in week 5 (21/5/2020?)
  – last exam around 2/6/2020 (papers not always in numerical order!)
  – marks released on 16/6/2020 (afternoon)
• Extreme time pressure on marking, ~20 minutes per paper
• How can candidates help the examiners?
  – handwriting, structure (use the new (a), (b),… labels)
  – if you change your mind, cross it out with a single line (in case it’s better than what you write afterwards!)
Marking & classing criteria

- Web page: [https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/current-courses/classing](https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/current-courses/classing)
- Explicitly make value judgements when marking
- Scaling – across range of papers, further work
- Accumulation of marks (/510)
  - excess units in any category: take best marks
- No carry-forward from Part I: Cambridge classes each part separately – about to change, but won’t affect you
- Normal distribution – certainty that top II.1 and bottom First won’t be far apart
- Borderline cases
  - external examiners
  - gaps
  - cohort data
Scaling

• Hope not to use scaling!
• We use it, if necessary
  – to achieve a sensible overall range of marks
  – between optional papers – Moore’s algorithm
• Key is cohort averages for a given paper, not individual averages, vs marks those students achieved in the core courses
• Marks you may be told about after the exam may not add up to your total (if they are unscaled)
Unfair means

• Reporter item about student caught with a mobile phone...
  – the Court of Discipline met to consider a charge … against an undergraduate member of the University

• Defendant was charged with an offence contrary to Regulation 6 of the General Regulations for Discipline, namely that they had used unfair means in a University examination by making use of their phone, during a toilet break…. Defendant pleaded guilty…. Witnesses were called and cross-examined.

• Court accepted the guilty plea and made clear to the Defendant the serious nature of the offence
  – ordered Defendant’s mark for the paper to be reduced to zero, noting that a more severe penalty was not warranted in this case because of the lack of clear evidence of premeditation
What if something in the paper looks wrong?

• **Errors in papers**
  – will happen
  – is it serious?
  – how sure are you?

• **Ask!**
  – your question will be written down and given to an examiner to consider
  – while waiting, carry on!
  – an examiner will give a response, either correcting the mistake, or saying that it is correct (in language that does not help you any more than if you had not asked the question)
  – examiners will not pay attention to who asked questions when marking
What if something goes wrong?

- **Illness/other “good cause”**
  - via college tutor
  - college applies to Examinations Allowances and Mitigation Committee (EAMC), who consult examiners

- **Options**
  - examiners disregard an element
  - DDH (Declared to have Deserved Honours)

- **Web page:**
  https://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/examination-reviews

- **Requests for reviews/re-marks?**
  - generally only accepted if there is reason to suspect something has gone badly wrong for the candidate
  - normally restricted to ensuring entire paper *has* been marked, and that marks are recorded correctly in the markbook
Web pages on exams

• Linked from main teaching pages
  – e.g. https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/

• Useful advice:
  https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/resources-links/examinations

• This has links to:
  – taking exams in physics:
    https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/exam_skills
  – examination questions:
    https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/students/teaching/exam_questions

• Questions?