## PBS Part IA Assessment & Classing Criteria

In Part IA students are assessed by four written examination papers. Some of the optional papers also have assignment components that contribute to your exam marks. This year, examinations will be on-line and each will be available for a total of 3 hours, except where extra time allowances have been formally agreed.

For students borrowing the PBS 1 paper from another tripos, it is important to note that the essays produced for that examination are expected to form a coherent narrative that effectively address the question. This mode of assessment may differ from other subjects, where brief notes, outlines, or short answers may be suitable.

### Marking Criteria for exam scripts

Papers borrowed from other Triposes have their own marking criteria, so students should check the necessary course websites for information on borrowed papers. The marking criteria for PBS papers are based on those used by the Faculty of Biology:

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| **First** | Work which is excellent both in the range and command of the material covered and the argument and analysis. Work that is excellent in its understanding of the subject; has engaged closely with the question; has shown some originality and treated the evidence critically; closely applies relevant material from an appropriate range of sources; and is well-planned and complete.  A first class mark may be awarded on more than one criterion: there may be a great deal of relevant information, displaying substantial knowledge and understanding; the arguments and presentation may be stylish; the approach may be original, critical or unorthodox. An upper first would be an outstanding performance, *meeting all, or virtually all*, of these criteria. A low first would meet at least *some* of these criteria. |
| **Upper Second** | Work that shows a good broad-based knowledge and understanding of the topic and the lecture material; a good application of the relevant material; is presented in an organised way; and is clearly argued and focused on the set question.  Answers at the top end of this class would often include relevant content beyond the taught material and would include some attempt to treat the evidence critically and to synthesise arguments. Answers at the lower end of this class would be competent, accurate in reproducing lecture material and show evidence of reading of the principal sources of published work on the subject. |
| **Lower Second** | Work that overall shows a reasonable competence in the understanding and presentation of the relevant material.  Answers at the top end of this class would show competent understanding of the basic lecture material or reasonable organisation and focus; an answer at the lower end would show gaps in understanding and coverage together with poor organisation and focus.  Certain types of uneven work would fall into this class; work that shows detailed factually-correct material that does not relate a broad knowledge of the topic to the specific question asked; competent understanding of the basic lecture material but lacks reasonable organisation and focus; clear organisation and some insight but with serious omissions of factual knowledge. |
| **Third** | At the upper end of the class, work that *only* shows competent knowledge of the basic, core material.  At the lower end of the class, work that shows some knowledge of the material but with serious deficiencies in understanding, coverage and organisation. This will include work that is unduly brief or largely misses the point of the question. |
| **Fail** | Work that is irrelevant, shows a considerable degree of ignorance or is short and superficial. |

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### PBS Classing Criteria

* The classing criteria for PBS are designed to ensure that all four papers of the examination are weighted equally.
* The Examiners responsible for each paper will award the candidate a mark which determines their class for that paper. Papers from other Triposes have their own marking criteria; for PBS papers the Faculty of Biology marking criteria is followed, listed on the previous page.

The following Class boundaries are applied to marks:

Class I 70

Class II.i 60

Class II.ii 50

Class III 40

Fail <40

* In order to achieve any overall class for Part IA PBS, a candidate must attain that target class, or higher, in at least two papers; and also must attain at least the next lower class, in all papers. Alternatively, a candidate must attain an average mark across all four papers that is equal to that target class, or higher. Candidates will be awarded the higher of the two classes.
* Candidates who fail one paper or more will be considered for failing, but examiners have discretion.
* For the purposes of ranking candidates within each overall class for the Tripos as a whole, each mark is scaled to give a rank mark. The mean of a candidate’s rank marks is used to determine their ranking within each class. Discretion will be exercised by the Examiners in considering the class of individual candidates at the boundaries.

As an illustration, to achieve a first, a candidate must receive marks of 60 or above (at least an upper second) in all papers, two of which are 70 or above. Similarly, to achieve an upper second, they must achieve at least 50 in all papers, and 60 or above in two papers.