

PBS Part IIA

In Part IIA students are assessed by written examination papers. Some of the optional papers also have assignment components that contribute to your exam marks. Copies of past exam papers are available on the PBS Part IIA Moodle site. Examinations are held at the end of the Easter term; a timetable will be released in April. Most course organisers offer revision lectures or seminars in the Easter term before exams.

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 exam scripts are as follows:

Class	Description
First (70+)	<p>Work, which is excellent in the range and command of the material covered. Work that is excellent in its understanding of the subject; that has engaged closely with the question; and that is well planned and complete.</p> <p>A first class mark may be awarded on more than one set of criteria: 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.</p>
Upper Second (60-69)	<p>Work that shows a good knowledge of the topic and the material covered in lectures; that is presented in an organised way; and clearly argued and focused on the set question.</p>
Lower Second (50-59)	<p>Work that overall shows a reasonable competence in the understanding and presentation of the relevant material.</p> <p>Certain types of uneven work would fall into this class: detailed factually-correct work that did not relate a broad knowledge of the topic to the specific question asked, or work with clear organisation and some insight but with serious omissions of factual knowledge.</p>
Third (40-49)	<p>At the upper end of the class, work that just shows competent knowledge of the basic, core material.</p> <p>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.</p>
Fail (<40)	<p>Work that is irrelevant, shows a considerable degree of ignorance or is short and superficial. Where the question is barely attempted.</p>

Classing Criteria

The Part IIA PBS examination contains a variety of different subjects, which use different criteria and marking schemes, and produce marks of different distributions. Therefore the classing criteria for PBS rank raw marks from each paper to ensure that all subjects are weighted equally:

- The Examiners responsible for each paper will award the candidate a mark which determines their class for that paper.
- 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 IIA 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.