This document has been developed with the approval of the Faculty Board of Theology and Religion.

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

1. Marking Conventions

Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70-100</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To pass the MSt examination, candidates must achieve at least 60 on all units and the dissertation. For a distinction in the MSt, candidates must achieve at least 70 on the dissertation, and an average of 70 over the other units and the dissertation, with no single units falling below 66.

Marks will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Each of the following counts as a ‘unit’:

- One unseen examination as required by the MSt regulations, but not a language qualifying examination;
- two essays of up to 5,000 words;
- a dissertation of 10,000-15,000 words.

2. Grade Descriptors

2.1 Essays/Examinations

70-100 Distinction

Distinction quality work will demonstrate:

- Superior argumentative structure, coherence and clarity in response to examination questions
- Excellent knowledge of relevant primary and/or secondary literature
- Excellent knowledge of and ability to apply relevant core concepts and methods of inquiry
- Superior evidence of application of critical evaluation and judgement, and some originality.

A mark of 70-74 will be awarded for scripts that that are at least very highly competent across these areas, and 75-79 if they excel in at least one of these areas and are at least very highly competent in other respects. When these qualities are evident throughout, the mark should be 80
or above. Where these qualities are evident throughout and the script displays original thought of near publishable standard, the mark should be 90 or above.

**60-69 Pass**

Pass quality work will demonstrate:

- Clear argumentative structure and coherence in response to examination questions
- Good knowledge of relevant primary and/or secondary literature
- Good knowledge of and ability to apply relevant core concepts and methods of inquiry
- Evidence of application of critical evaluation and judgement.

**0-59 Fail**

Failing work will:

- lack clarity of focus and argumentative coherence
- give little evidence of knowledge of relevant primary and/or secondary literature
- give little evidence of knowledge and application of core concepts and methods of inquiry
- make little attempt to apply critical evaluation and judgement.

### 2.2 Dissertations

**70-100 Distinction**

Distinction quality work will demonstrate:

- Very firm organisation of material; a strongly coherent and clear argumentative structure; delimitation of topic of study in a way which shows excellent understanding of what is appropriate to the field of inquiry.
- A superior level of knowledge, understanding and use of relevant primary and/or secondary literature.
- Excellent presentation of the material; high level of linguistic accuracy; full and correct use of scholarly apparatus.
- Superior evidence of research skills appropriate to the area of inquiry.

A mark of 70-74 will be awarded for scripts that that are at least very highly competent across these areas, and 75-79 if they excel in at least one of these areas and are at least very highly competent in other respects. When these qualities are evident throughout, the mark should be 80 or above. Where these qualities are evident throughout and the script displays original thought of near publishable standard, the mark should be 90 or above.

**60-69 Pass**

Pass quality work will demonstrate:

- Good organisation of material; coherent argumentative structure; delimitation of topic of
study in a way which shows understanding of what is appropriate to the field of inquiry.

- Good knowledge, understanding and use of relevant primary and/or secondary literature.
- Good presentation of the material; linguistic accuracy; correct use of scholarly apparatus.
- Evidence of research skills appropriate to the area of inquiry.

0-59 Fail

Failing work will:

- give little evidence of argumentative structure or ability to organise material
- demonstrate little attempt or awareness of how to delimit the topic of study in accordance with the demands of the discipline
- make poor use of relevant primary and/or secondary literature
- be poorly presented, with linguistic inaccuracies and incorrect use of scholarly apparatus
- show little evidence of research skills appropriate to the area of inquiry.

3. Additional Guidelines

3.1 Verification and reconciliation of marks

Each script will normally be marked by two markers. The marks must fall within the range of 0 to 100 inclusive. Examiners are encouraged to award high marks to good scripts. It is not permissible to exclude the use of certain marks (e.g. 69, 59).

Each initial marker must determine a mark for each script independently of the other marker. All such marks must be in the form of an integer. The initial markers must then confer in order to reduce or resolve differences. Conferring will not debar markers from re-reading where that may make it easier to reach an agreed mark. Marks assigned as a result of conferring or re-reading may not fall outside the range of the initial marks, except where the Board of Examiners is agreed that they should do so and can provide clear and defensible reasons for its decision.

In every case, the original marks from both markers must be entered onto a mark sheet available to all examiners, as well as the marks (if any) that result from conferring.

If conferring or re-reading (which markers may choose to do more than once) does not reduce the gap between a pair of marks to a point where a mark can be agreed between the markers, the script must be read by a third examiner, who may be the external examiner. Marks established as a result of third readings may not fall outside the range of the original marks, except where the Board of Examiners is agreed that they should do so and can provide clear and defensible reasons for its decision. In cases where the mark of the third reading falls within the range of the original marks, the mark of the third reading shall be taken to be the agreed mark. In cases where the mark of the third reading does not fall within the range of the original mark it shall be at the discretion of the Board what action to take.

3.2. Scaling
The Board of Examiners is permitted to scale marks if that is deemed justifiable and appropriate. However, the Board of Examiners is not in any way obligated to investigate or act upon significant discrepancies between markers. The Examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:

a) a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or

b) an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or

c) a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University’s standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that candidates’ marks are not advantaged or disadvantaged by any of these situations. In each case, examiners will establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling will only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed, and a complete run of marks for all papers is available.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, the examiners will review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes an appropriate performance within in each class. Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied will be included in the Examiners’ report and the algorithms used will be published for the information of all examiners and students.

3.3 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

A mark of zero shall be awarded for any part or parts of questions that have not been answered by a candidate, but which should have been answered. Where some attempt has been made, the maximum deduction that can be made for short weight should be equivalent to the proportion of the answer that is missing. Marks embodying a penalty for short weight should be flagged ‘SW’.

Where a candidate has failed to answer a compulsory question, or failed to answer the required number of questions in different sections, the complete script will be marked and the issue flagged. Where it is unambiguously clear that a rubric has not been obeyed, the mark should be lowered by at least 5 points. Marks embodying such a penalty should be flagged ‘RR’. The Board of Examiners will consider all such cases so that consistent penalties are applied.

3.4 Penalties

(a) Where a candidate presents an essay or dissertation which exceeds the word limit prescribed by the relevant statute, or regulation, the examiners, if they agree to proceed with the examination of the work, may reduce the mark by up to 10%.

(b) Where a candidate submits such an essay or dissertation, the title or subject matter of which differs from that which was approved by the supervisory body concerned, the examiners (if they agree to proceed with the examination of the work) may reduce the mark by up to 10%.
(c) Where a candidate submits an essay or dissertation late, the examiners may apply the following penalties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late submission</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to one day (submitted on the day but after the deadline)</td>
<td>-5 marks (-5 percentage points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each additional day (i.e., two days late = -6 marks, three days late = -7 marks, etc.; note that each weekend day counts as a full day for the purposes of mark deductions)</td>
<td>-1 mark (-1 percentage point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. deducted marks up to one week late</td>
<td>-11 marks (-11 percentage points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one week late</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Vivas

Each candidate will be required to present himself or herself for an oral (viva voce) examination unless individually dispensed by the examiners. This will take place within a few days of the written examination, and may include discussion of both the examination paper and any pre-submitted work.

3.6. Resits

Where an element, or elements, of an examination have been failed at the first attempt, students are entitled to one further attempt. Marks for any element that has been successfully completed at the first attempt may be carried forward, and therefore it will only be necessary for students to re-sit the failed element(s).

3.7. Factors Affecting Performance

Under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, information about unforeseen medical or other circumstances allegedly affecting a candidate's performance may be submitted by the candidate via their college. **It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that a submission is made.** Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission claiming that unforeseen factors may have had an impact on their performance, a subset of the Board will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. When reaching this decision, examiners will take into consideration the severity and relevance of the circumstances, and the strength of the evidence. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final Board of Examiners' meeting to adjudicate on the merits of candidates. Further information on the
procedure is provided in the *Policy and Guidance for Examiners, Annex C* and information for students is provided at: www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance.

3.8 Final Outcome Rules

The papers, the essays, and the dissertation are given equal weight in the calculation of a candidate’s average mark.

Before finally confirming its classifications, the Examining Board may take such steps as it considers appropriate to reconsider the cases of candidates whose marks are very close to a borderline, or in some way anomalous, and to satisfy themselves that the candidates concerned are correctly classified in accordance with the criteria specified in these Conventions.

In cases of difficulty or dispute the advice of external examiners must be given particular weight.

4. Examiners

**Internal Examiners 2016-17**
Prof. Anna Sapir Abulafia (Chair)
Dr Afifi Al-Akti
Dr Donovan Schaefer

**External Examiner**
Professor Douglas Hedley, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge

**Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual or external examiners.**

Examiners will bear in mind that their judgment of candidates’ performance shall take into account what may reasonably be expected after nine months of full-time study by a capable and diligent student who has not necessarily had any specialist training in the religious traditions studied on the MSt prior to starting the course.

Chair of Examiners: Anna Sapir Abulafia
Hilary Term 2017