HUMANITIES DIVISIONAL BOARD

Graduate Studies Committee

Changes in special regulations governing the Master of Studies in Philosophy of Physics: communication from the Board of the Faculty of Philosophy

Subject to the approval of the Humanities Divisional Board, which is now sought, and Education Committee, the following changes in special regulations are proposed:

Humanities Divisional Board

Master of Studies in Philosophy of Physics

Brief note about the nature of the change

Major changes to the structure of teaching and assessment of the MSt in Philosophy of Physics, following suggestions from the External Examiner.

With effect from 1 October 2013

1. In Examination Regulations, 2012, p. 653, delete ll. 25-42 and substitute:

‘4. Candidate will be examined by submitting:
   (i) Two essays of no more than 5,000 words each on topics within the philosophy of physics. At most one essay may fall under each of the following subjects: (a) the philosophy of quantum theory; (b) the philosophy of space, time and symmetry; (c) the philosophy of statistical mechanics and thermodynamics; (d) other topics in the philosophy of physics.
   (ii) One essay of no more than 5,000 words on a topic in the philosophy of science (to be understood as excluding topics specifically in the philosophy of physics as specified under 4. (i) above).
   (iii) One essay of no more than 5,000 words, falling under one of the following subjects: (a) Metaphysics and the Theory of Knowledge; (b) Philosophy of Mind and Action; (c) Philosophical Logic and the Philosophy of Language; (d) Philosophy of Mathematics.

5. Topics for all essays will be chosen by the candidates.

6. Two printed copies of each of the essays in Philosophy of Physics must be delivered to the Examinations Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BC, by 10am on Wednesday of Week 0 of Trinity Term in the year that the examination is to be taken. Two printed copies of each of the other two essays must be delivered to the same address by 10am on Friday of Week 9 of Trinity Term in the year that the examination is to be taken. Essays must be typed or printed.’


Explanatory Note

(i) Following the External Examiner’s suggestion to revisit the idea of providing supervisory feedback on essays prior to their submission, the course team looked at the course structure and assessment pattern as a whole. The course was deemed unjustifiably out of line with the new-style BPhil in Philosophy and the MSt in Ancient Philosophy, in that it sets essay questions and does not allow for supervisory feedback on essays. Hence, this examination regulation change, to be implemented from the next academic year onwards, will allow students to set their own essay topics (subject to the proviso that
the two Philosophy of Physics essays are not both on the same general area of Philosophy of Physics) and to seek essay guidance/feedback from their supervisor.

(ii) The change will not affect any current MSt in Philosophy of Physics students.

(iii) The structural and assessments changes will be resource neutral. Staff will no longer have to set and agree papers, but they can now be approached by students to read and comment on one draft of each submitted essay.