Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division

Approved at the meeting of N/A

Title of Programme
Honour School of Biological Sciences

**Brief note about nature of change:** The regulations are being updated to accurately reflect long-standing practice, to allow for publication of supplementary subjects in the Course Handbook, to improve consistency and clarity, and are being restructured to enable publishing in a new web format.

**Effective date**
With immediate effect

**Location of change**

**Detail of change**
1) p.159-163

Replace the existing regulations with the regulations overleaf.

**Explanatory Notes**
The changes:
- clarify and make consistent information provided about the assessment of practical laboratory work and Quantitative Methods classes;
- update the regulations about examination of material in the Part II written examinations to reflect long-standing practice;
- allow for publication of Supplementary Subjects in the Final Honour School Handbook rather than the Gazette, in line with other Final Honour Schools in MPLS which offer Supplementary Subjects;
- restructure the regulations to enable them to be published in a new web format;
- make some other minor changes for consistency and clarity.
SPECIAL REGULATIONS FOR THE HONOUR SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

A

1. The subject of the Honour School of Biological Sciences shall be the study of Biological Sciences.

2. No candidate shall be admitted to examination in this school unless he or she has either passed or been exempted from the First Public Examination.

3. The examination in this school shall be under the supervision of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Board, which shall prescribe the necessary regulations.

4. The examination in Biological Sciences shall consist of Part I (taken at a time not less than two terms after passing the First Public Examination) and Part II (taken at a time not less than five terms after passing the First Public Examination).

5. The name of a candidate shall not be published in a Results List until he or she has completed all parts of the examination. The examiners shall give due consideration to the performance in all parts of the respective examinations.

6. Candidates will be expected to show knowledge based on practical work. This requirement shall normally be satisfied by the examiners' assessment of the practical laboratory work and Quantitative Methods classes work done by candidates in Part I based on attendance records and/or marks awarded.

7. Exceptionally, the examiners may require a candidate to submit all their practical notebooks.

8. Candidates whose overall practical performance is not deemed satisfactory by the examiners may have their degree class reduced. If the work is judged by the examiners to be insufficient to warrant the award of Honours they may either be deemed to have failed the examination, or may, at the discretion of the examiners, be awarded a Pass.

B

1. The subjects of the examination shall be those prescribed in the Regulations for Parts I and II.

2. The examiners will permit the use of any hand-held calculator subject to the conditions set out under the heading ‘Use of calculators in examinations’ in the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations.

3. Supplementary Subjects

(a) In addition, candidates may offer themselves for examination in one or more Supplementary Subjects.

(b) Candidates for Supplementary Subjects may offer themselves for examination in the academic year preceding that in which they take the Part II written examinations of the Final Honour School.
(c) Candidates awarded a pass in a Supplementary Subject examination may not retake the same Supplementary Subject examination.

(d) The Supplementary Subjects available in any year will be published, together with the term in which each subject will be examined, in the Final Honour School Handbook (Section 1) at the start of Michaelmas Term of the academic year in which the Supplementary Subjects may be taken.

PART I

1. The examination for Part I shall normally be taken at the start of Trinity Term of the candidate’s second year.

2. Further details of the requirements for Part I shall be set out in the Final Honour School Handbook (Section 1), which is published annually at the start of Michaelmas Term of the candidate’s second year.

4. Written papers

Assessment in Part I will consist of three written papers as follows. Knowledge of first year coursework will be assumed.

Paper 1: Evolution

Paper 2: Quantitative Methods

Paper 3: Essay Paper

In Paper 3, candidates will be required to answer four questions, with no more than one from each of the following themes: (i) Animal Behaviour; (ii) Adaptations to the Environment; (iii) Cell and Developmental Biology; (iv) Disease; (v) Ecology; (vi) Plants and People.

The written papers for Part I may be taken only once.

5. Practical Coursework

All candidates shall be assessed as to their practical ability through their performance in three practical blocks and in Quantitative Methods classes. The following provisions apply:

(a) The Chair of the Steering Committee, or a deputy, shall make available to the examiners, at the end of the first week of the term in which the written examinations in Part II are held, records showing the extent to which each candidate has completed the prescribed coursework to a satisfactory standard.

(b) The examiners may require a candidate to submit all their practical notebooks. Such candidates will be named in a list posted by the day of the first written paper in Part II of the examination. Each notebook submitted shall be accompanied by a certificate signed by the candidate indicating that the notebook is the candidate’s own work.
(c) In assessing the record of coursework undertaken, the examiners shall have regard to the attendance record of the candidates at the classes provided, and to the marks awarded for the classes provided.

6. The examiners will issue a list of candidates deemed to have completed Part I of the examination, in the form of the completion of the three written papers, and satisfactory performance in the three practical blocks and Quantitative Methods classes.

7. Under exceptional circumstances, candidates who have not been able to complete sufficient practicals may be allowed to fulfill the practical requirement in their third year.

PART II

1. The examination for Part II shall normally be taken during Trinity Term of the candidate’s third year.

2. In Part II, a candidate who obtains only a pass, or fails to satisfy the examiners, may enter again for Part II of the examination on one, but no more than one, subsequent occasion.

3. Further details of the requirements for Part II shall be set out in the Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments and in the Final Honour School Handbook (Section 2). The Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments are published annually at the start of Michaelmas Term of the candidate’s second year. The Final Honour School Handbook (Section 2) is published annually at the end of Hilary Term of the candidate’s second year.

4. In Part II, Candidates will select from a number of Options, and complete a Research Project and two Course Assignments. The Options may be varied from time to time by the Biological Science Steering Committee, and such variations shall be notified by publication in the Final Honour School Handbook (Section 2) by the end of Week 8 of Hilary Term of the academic year preceding the first examination of the changed options. Each candidate will be expected to have studied at least six Options in order to address the requirements of Paper 6, and to have prepared sufficient of those Options in depth to be able to address the requirements of Papers 5 and 7.

5. Assessment in Part II will consist of four written papers, each of three hours’ duration, submission of a research project dissertation, and two course assignments, one of which will be examined as an oral presentation.

6. Written papers

Four written papers, each of three hours, will be set during Trinity Term of the third year. The papers will be as follows:

Paper 4: General Paper

Paper 5: Long Essay Paper

Paper 6: Short Essay Paper
Paper 7: Data Interpretation Paper

In the General Paper, candidates will be required to answer two questions and will be expected to bring together knowledge of different areas of Biology covered in the Course. In the Long Essay Paper, candidates will be required to answer three questions, with no more than one from any specific Option. In the Short Essay Paper, candidates will be required to answer six questions, with no more than one from any specific Option. In the Data Interpretation Paper, candidates will be required to answer four questions.

7. Project dissertation

(i) Form and subject of the project

The project shall consist in original experiments, fieldwork or computer-based research project in any area of biology done by the candidate alone or in collaboration with others (where such collaboration is, for instance, needed to produce results in the time available). When choosing a research project, candidates must bear in mind the prohibition on duplicating material in different parts of the examination.

(ii) Registration

Candidates must register the provisional title of their project and the name of their supervisor to the Examinations Co-ordinator no later than noon on Friday of Week 8 of Hilary Term of their second year. Candidates must submit their completed safety registration form to the appropriate Departmental Safety Officer by the same deadline.

(iii) Residence

Candidates undertaking project work outside of Oxford will be permitted by the Chair of the Teaching Steering Committee, subject to the written approval also of the Senior Tutor of the candidate’s college, to spend a maximum of two weeks outside of Oxford during Trinity Term of their second year working at a supervised field site or another university/institution in the UK or overseas, in accordance with clause 2.8 of the First and Second Public Examination regulations pertaining to residence. Candidates will still be liable for their College battels, if applicable, during this time.

(iv) Examination

Candidates shall submit to the examiners a dissertation based on their project according to guidelines that will be published in the Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments in the academic year preceding the examination. The project dissertation shall be of not more than 7,000 words, excluding any tables, figures, or references, and must be prefaced by an Abstract of not more than 250 words, to be included within the word limit.

(v) Submission and assessment of project-based written work

The project report (two copies) must be legibly typed or word-processed (double line spacing to be used throughout) on one side only of A4 paper, held firmly in a stiff cover, and submitted on or before 12 noon on the Monday of Week 2 of Hilary Full Term of the academic year in which Part II of
the examination is taken. It must be addressed to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, for
the Chair of Examiners for the Final Honour School of Biological Sciences. Each project report shall
be accompanied by a certificate signed by the candidate indicating that the project report is the
candidate’s own work. This certificate shall be submitted separately in a sealed envelope addressed
to the Chair of Examiners. No report will be accepted if it has already been submitted, wholly or
substantially, for another Honour School or degree of this University, or for a degree of any other
institution.

In all cases, the examiners shall obtain and consider a written report from each supervisor indicating
the extent of the input made by the candidate to the outcome of the project and also any
unforeseen difficulties associated with the project (e.g. unexpected technical issues or problems in
the availability of materials, equipment, or literature or other published data). Material in a
candidate’s dissertation must not duplicate material that has been included in the submitted course
assignments.

8. Course assignments

(i) Form and subject of the Course assignments

Each candidate must complete two course assignments. One assignment shall be examined by
means of a written essay, and one shall be examined by means of an oral presentation as set out
below. The precise format of the course assignment may vary between Options and will be specified
by the Biological Sciences Steering Committee.

The written essay shall be of not more than 3,000 words, excluding any tables, figures, or references,
and must be prefaced by an Abstract of not more than 250 words, to be included within the word
limit. All sources used in the essay must be fully documented. The written essay (two copies) must
be legibly typed or word-processed on one side only of A4 paper, held firmly in a stiff cover. The oral
presentation shall be a maximum of fifteen minutes in duration, followed by ten minutes of
questions. The oral presentation should use appropriate audio-visual aids as specified in the
Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments. Candidates shall also submit an Abstract of the oral
presentation of not more than 500 words. The Abstract (two copies) must be legibly typed or word-
processed on one side only of A4 paper.

Candidates may discuss the proposed topic for both the written essay and the oral presentation, the
sources available, and the method of presentation with an adviser. The adviser for the written essay
must also read and comment on a first draft. Candidates shall not deal with substantially the same
material in their course assignments as is covered in their project report.

(ii) Registration

Each assignment will be on a topic proposed by the student and approved by the Chair of the
Biological Sciences Steering Committee. The approval of assignments shall be given not later than
Friday of the seventh week of the Michaelmas Full Term of the academic year in which the
examination is taken.

(iii) Authorship
For each assignment, candidates must sign a certificate stating that the assignment is their own work. This certificate must be submitted at the same time as the essay and abstract in a sealed envelope addressed to the Chair of Examiners.

(iv) Submission

The written course assignment (two copies), the abstract for the oral presentation (two copies) and the sealed envelope containing the certificate of authorship, should be submitted in an envelope clearly labelled with the candidate’s number by noon on Friday of 0th week of the Trinity Term of the academic year in which the examination is taken. The envelope should be addressed to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford for the Chair of the Examiners in the Final Honour School of Biological Sciences. Assignments previously submitted for the Honour School of Biological Sciences may be resubmitted. No assignment will be accepted if it has already been submitted, wholly or substantially, for another degree in the University or elsewhere; and each certificate must also contain a confirmation that the assignment has not already been so submitted. Each essay and each abstract shall clearly indicate on the first page the part of the examination and the subject under which the assignment is submitted. Further guidance on the essay and oral presentation will be published in the Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments.