HUMANITIES DIVISIONAL BOARD

Changes in the regulations governing the Preliminary Examination in Oriental Studies (Japanese): communication from the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies

Preliminary Examination in Oriental Studies (Japanese)

**Brief note about nature of the change:** To change the titles of two papers to reflect the fact that Classical Japanese will not be introduced in the first year of study

**With effect from 1 October 2014**

In *Examination Regulations*, 2013, p. 142, l. 11, delete ‘(i) Modern Japanese’ and substitute ‘(i) Modern Japanese I’


**Explanatory note**

This change constitutes a change to the fairly new course structure for the BA in Japanese, based on the experience of the implementation of the new course. There are several reasons for the proposal:

(1) Experience from teaching Classical Japanese in the first year of the course and examining it in FPE shows that the addition of Classical Japanese affects considerably the workload, and perceived workload, of the students. This has adverse effects on their overall learning of modern Japanese (the focus of the first year), on their command of the history and culture component of FPE, and indeed on their attitude towards Classical Japanese. Moreover, the teaching of Classical Japanese in the first year presents a particular challenge to students studying Japanese *ab initio*, for whom the study of modern Japanese itself is sufficiently challenging. All of this is unfortunate and can be avoided by excising Classical Japanese from the first-year syllabus.

(2) Experience from the first year-group to return from their year abroad in Japan suggests that the students retain little of the Classical Japanese they learned in their first year when they come back from Japan to begin their third year. This is entirely understandable as during their year in Japan they study and use only modern Japanese, but it also shows that there is little if any benefit to introducing Classical Japanese in the first year.

(3) Classical Japanese is compulsory, and constitutes an important element of the course in FHS. It is taught through lectures and tutorials to all students through the third and fourth years, so the subject is amply covered in the course.