Title of Programme/ Name of Regulation
Honour School Biological Sciences

Brief note about nature of change: amendment to assessment from a Research Project to a Research Grant Proposal

Location of change
In Examination Regulations 2018
https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=hsofbiolscie&srchYear=2018&srchTerm=1&year=2018&term=1

Effective date
For students starting FHS Part I in MT2019 and FHS Part II in MT 2020 only

Detail of change
Amend citation reference 1.35 as follows (new text underlined, deleted text struck through):

[1.35] 4. In Part II, candidates will select from a number of Options, and complete a Project Grant Proposal Research Project and two Course Assignments. The Options may be varied from time to time by the Biological Sciences 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.

Amend citation reference 1.36 as follows (new text underlined, deleted text struck through):
5. Assessment in Part II will consist of four written papers, each of three hours' duration, submission of a Project Grant Proposal Research Project dissertation, and two Course Assignments, one of which will be examined as an Oral Presentation.

Amend citation references 1.44, 1.45, 1.46, 1.47, 1.49, 1.50, 1.52, 1.53, 1.54 and 1.55 as follows (new text underlined, deleted text struck through):

7. Project Grant Proposal Project dissertation

(i) Form and subject of the project grant proposal

The project shall consist of 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). The project grant proposal requires students to write a grant proposal to undertake a 3 year research project. This should include a set of aims and objectives, supported by a background literature survey to present the current state-of-play related to the proposal. The research programme should detail the methodology proposed to address the main aims and objectives. Additional documentation is required that presents a timeline for the research, a justification of the resources requested, a management plan for the data collected, and an ethics statement if appropriate. When choosing a Project Grant Proposal 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 Grant Proposal 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 Director of Undergraduate Teaching for Biological Sciences, 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 General Regulations for 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 Research Grant Proposal dissertation based on their project according to guidelines published by Chair’s Circular that will be published in the Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments in the academic year preceding the examination. The main text of the grant proposal does not have a word limit, but must not exceed 5 pages in length, in-line with typical research proposals to the main UK Research Councils. The proposal can include diagrams and
images, provided it remains within the page limit. 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.

[1.53] (iv) Submission and assessment of Research Grant Proposal project-based written work

[1.54] The Research Grant Proposal project report must be word-processed (double line spacing to be used throughout, A4 paper format) 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. The Research Grant Proposal project report must be uploaded to the Assignments section of the Biological Sciences WebLearn site. Each Research Grant Proposal project report must be certified as the candidate’s own work by following instructions provided by the WebLearn site. The procedure is described in the Guidelines on Projects and Course Assignments. No report will be accepted if it already has been submitted, wholly or substantially, for another Honour School or degree of this University, or for a degree of any other institution.

[1.55] 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 Research Grant Proposal project report and also any unforeseen difficulties associated with the Research Grant Proposal project report (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.

Explanatory Notes

The Covid Pandemic prevented any lab or field-based work from being undertaken for the FHS Cohort 2019-21. A version of the Research Grant Proposal was already under discussion as a method of assessment for the MBiol Course, so it was felt that this would allow the cohort to continue with their Project plans in some form, as paperwork for the provisional Research Projects had already been submitted by the cohort in HT 2019.