Notices relating to changes to the form and conduct of examinations: guidance and information

The following guidance provides information on the following topics:
1. How to decide whether a Notice is necessary
2. How to determine when Notices should be published
3. How to decide what to include in a Notice
4. Comments on other routes of dissemination of information about examination requirements
5. House style and Reporter conventions
6. Examples of Notices

The guidance here may look extensive, but much of it consists of examples. The “headlines” to bear in mind are:
A. A Notice is required if the examination papers (or other requirements) have changed in any way since the last sitting of the examination.
B. Notices are intended to be read alongside the previous year’s examination papers and should only include the changes to those papers.
C. Notices have a short shelf life – if none is published in any one year, it is assumed that the previous year’s examination papers provide all that is necessary to prepare candidates for the examination.
D. You should cross-reference where possible to where more full examination requirements are provided (e.g. website, course handbook).
E. Generally, a Notice should be published with at least one full Term’s Notice to candidates and their College advisers (see the more detailed timetable).
F. There is specific guidance relating to language, style and formatting of Notices.

1. How to decide whether a Notice is necessary

You only need to publish a Notice in the Reporter if there have been changes introduced to the examination since the last sitting of the examination. In order to determine whether a Notice is required you will need access to the following documents and other information:

- a copy of the regulations for the examination. These can be found in Statutes and Ordinances (www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/): Prelim and Tripos examinations are found in Chapter IV; all other examinations, including MPhil examinations are found in Chapter VI;
- any Notices (published in Reporter) outlining changes to the above regulations for the forthcoming year. These would have been approved by the relevant Faculty Board and/or Degree Committee, but may not have yet been incorporated into Statutes and Ordinances (although the on-line version does index changes to regulations by term (see bottom of homepage for Statutes and Ordinances online);
- copies of last year’s examination papers;
- recommendations of the Board of Examiners and/or Teaching Committee following the previous examination setting. These would be obtained locally.

1 Please note that many examinations also have Supplementary Regulations (which often contain specific detail about the examinations): Supplementary Regulations appear at the end of the regulations for the examination or, in the case of Tripos, at the end of the Tripos regulations. For further guidance on Supplementary Regulations, see the Guide to Quality Assurance.
Using these documents, consider the following questions. If the answer to any of the following questions is “YES”, then a Notice will be required:

- If a student or Director of Studies looked at last year’s examination papers, would they be misled by them when preparing for future sittings of the same examination?
- Has a new paper been introduced into the examination (either an additional paper or a replacement)? (A Notice would have been published in Reporter regarding this.) Where a completely new paper is introduced, the full rubric for that paper will need to be published.
- Has the Faculty Board or Degree Committee approved changes to the structure of any of the examination papers following receipt of reports from the Examiners?
- Has the Faculty Board or Degree Committee approved changes to the way in which assessed work is to be prepared or submitted? (e.g. content of a portfolio of work, number of copies (and format) to be provided, dates of submission, word lengths)
- Looking at last year’s papers, has the newly-appointed Board of Examiners proposed changes to the structure of the paper? (e.g. number of sections in the paper, the number of questions that will be set, the number of questions to complete)

If you are in any doubt, please contact the Education Section for further advice.

2. How to determine when Notices should be published

Deadlines exist for the publication of Notices relating to changes to the form and conduct of examinations to ensure that all students and their advisers are informed of them in good time, and to ensure that any preparation for the examination is not unreasonably affected.

The majority of examination papers and submission of assessed work takes place in the Easter Term, although there are exceptions. Consequently, the bulk of the Notices are published in the December weekly editions of the Reporter. Other deadlines exist, however, for elements of the examination that take place outside of the Easter Term and you may need to publish a Notice according to other deadlines set out below. Once you have identified whether a change needs to be announced, use the following table to work out the timing of the Notice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For any part of an examination held during</th>
<th>Notice to be published by not later than the</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michaelmas Term and the Christmas Vacation</td>
<td>last day of the previous Full Easter Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lent Term and the Easter Vacation</td>
<td>13 October prior to the Lent Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter Term and the Long Vacation</td>
<td>last day of the previous Michaelmas Term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In any event, to allow for proofreading and checking, please ensure that draft Notices reach the Education Section as soon as possible before the deadline. We advise at least three weeks to allow us to clarify any potential errors or ambiguities with you.
3. **How to decide what to include in a Notice**

3a **What is the Notice for?**

Notices are intended for both students and for their College advisers. All Colleges receive copies of the *Reporter* for public consumption and Directors of Studies should be aware that this is a source of information about the University’s provision.

As students and College advisers tend to be associated with a single Faculty or Department, it is helpful if all of the changes associated with your examinations can be incorporated into a single Notice. Where you publish changes for more than one examination (either different Parts of the same Tripos, or Tripos and postgraduate examinations), it is helpful to provide a single Notice, rather than piecemeal information as and when changes comes to light, bearing in mind the deadlines of publication.

3b **What level of detail should the Notice contain?**

Notices published in the *Reporter* should only contain the changes introduced to the examination since the last sitting of the examinat

When considering the examination, you should consider each element of the examination separately and determine which of these have had changes introduced. Although each element should be reviewed, only those where changes have been introduced should be incorporated into the Notice.

Once you have determined what the changes are, please note the following:

1. Each paper (or other element of the examination) should be indicated under a separate heading in the Notice.
2. It is helpful to phrase the Notice to highlight that a change is taking place – i.e. to state “Candidates shall answer three questions (instead of four) from Section A.” and not “Candidates shall answer three questions from Section A.”
3. This does mean that Notices can indeed be rather short – even saying simply something like: “The number of questions in Paper 2 shall be six instead of seven.”
4. The Notices published in *Reporter* are intended to be read alongside the previous year’s examination papers (or instructions). This is to ensure that, not only are the Notices kept as brief as possible, but also the reader’s attention is drawn specifically to the changes. Minor changes could be overlooked if full rubrics were included in Notices.
5. Full rubrics should not be reproduced unless a new paper is being introduced, where complete information will be required.

3c **How should the Notice be structured?**

You can get a good sense of how the Notice should appear by looking through previous editions of *Reporter*. The bulk of the Notices (referred to as FORM AND CONDUCT OF EXAMINATIONS in the Table of Contents) relate to Easter Term examinations and are usually published in the December weekly editions of *Reporter*.

There are some standard headers and footers that should be included in the Notice. Advice on text formatting is provided in section 5.
Header

This adopts standard phraseology in the proper format for the Reporter and indicates the examination and the sitting for which the changes take effect.

[[title of examination]], [[year of examination]] e.g. Music Tripos2015

The Faculty Board of [[xxxxxxx]] give notice that with effect from the examinations to be held in [[year]] the form of the examination for the following paper[[[(s)]]] for the [[title of examination]] will be changed as follows:

If the changes only affect one Part of a Tripos, this can be incorporated into the header e.g.:

Music Tripos Part IA 2015

The Faculty Board of Music give notice that with effect from the examinations to be held in 2015 the form of the examination for the following papers for Part IA of the Music Tripos will be changed as follows:

Main Body of Notice

(For Tripos examinations, where more than one Part has changes, the Notice should be broken down into subheadings.)

Footer 1

This standard phrase reminds readers that only changes to the examinations have been included. Several variations can be used:

All other papers remain unchanged.

or

All other parts of the examination remain unchanged.

or, (where an additional Notice is likely to be published for later parts of the examination),

Changes to other parts of the examination [[shall/may]] be published by the end of [[xxxxx]] Term.

Footer 2

The following phrases could be used to indicate where more complete details can be obtained:

Full details of the examination can be found at [[weblink]].

and/or

Full details of the examination can be obtained in the course handbook copies of which can be obtained from [[xxx]].
3d What should not be included?

The Notices outlined above specifically relate to minor changes to the form and conduct of examinations (or full elaboration of already-made changes to the regulations). Faculty Boards are also required to publish or otherwise notify students of other information relating to examinations and their conduct. These take two main forms, not to be confused with the content of Notices relating to changes to form and conduct:

**Faculty Board Notices on course information that changes on a regular basis:** For some examinations, the regulations stipulate that the details of the course and/or examination for a particular year will be determined and announced at set times (most typically in the Easter Term preceding the start of the course in question). These Notices would include details, for example, of titles of papers (which change annually), set texts, modes of assessment (where the regulations specifically indicate that these may vary); permissible combinations of papers for examination purposes. This information should usually be published separately to any Notice relating to change to the form and conduct of examinations.

**Marking and classing criteria, including marking schemes:** The General Board already stipulate that marking and classing criteria should be published on relevant Faculty and Departmental websites, with appropriate reference in other course literature. Consequently, there should be no need for their inclusion in published Notices. Faculty Boards are advised to communicate any changes to published marking and classing criteria to the Examiners (and to students) no later than the end of the Michaelmas Term. Where there are major changes to the weighting of papers, however, it may be considered appropriate to include this information.

4. Comments on other routes of dissemination of information about examination requirements

It should be stressed that Notices published in *Reporter* are the formal and required method of providing necessary information to all students. The University maintains that this single route of publication is sufficient to reach all students and their advisers, given the *Reporter*'s wide availability. Consequently, publication in the *Reporter* is one way of ensuring that the University has fulfilled its obligations of ensuring fairness and transparency of its examination processes. In addition, the distribution network of *Reporter* helps by ensuring that relevant information reaches a wide audience quickly.

Nevertheless, the General Board recommend that a number of routes for the dissemination of information are used, including email lists, websites and course handbooks where appropriate. These other methods allow the information to be provided in alternative formats and in a more complete form or wider context, but do not replace publication of an appropriate Notice.

5. House style and *Reporter* conventions

*Reporter* has a house style and a number of conventions should be adopted when compiling text for Notices. The following tips should help to avoid the need for redrafting any Notices provided to the Education Section or the *Reporter* office.

**Text formatting**

- All text should be **Times Roman**.
- The title of the Notice (the examination(s) and year) should be **bold and font size 14**.
- The subtitle (i.e. a Part of a Tripos) should be **bold and font size 11**. All other subtitles (e.g. for a single paper) should simply be font size 11 and *italicized* (but not bold).
• All other text should be font size 11.

Other conventions

• Separate Notices should be produced for each examination: Preliminary examinations, Tripos examinations and MPhil examinations should come as separate Notices (although they tend to be published alongside one another).

• Always use the third person, and those sitting the examination should be referred to as “candidates” (not “students”). For example, state “Candidates shall answer questions from all sections” and not “You should answer questions from each section.”

• Always use the correct (and full) titles for courses, examinations and papers (as stated in Statutes and Ordinances. If there are local, or shorthand, equivalents, please do not use them in the formal Notice.

• For Parts of Triposes: The capital letters in “IA” and “IB” (for example) are small caps.

• When referring to a particular section of a paper, it may be capitalized; in other instances, it should not be. For example, “Section A contains five questions. All other sections contain four questions.”

6. Examples of Notices

Please note that these are illustrative and are all adapted from previous Notices. You could look in the Reporter for other examples: use the on-line search with “form and conduct”:

http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/cgi-bin/search.cgi

Natural Sciences Tripos, 2015

The Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos give notice that, with effect from the examinations to be held in 2015, the form and conduct of certain of the examinations for the Natural Sciences Tripos will be changed as follows:

Part IA

Mathematics

The examination will consist of two three-hour written papers plus an assessed computer exercise. Each of the written papers will consist of two Sections, A and B, with the rubric:

Candidates may attempt all questions from Section A and at most five questions from Section B. Section A on both papers will consist of up to 20 short answer questions. Section B on both papers will consist of 10 questions. Section A of each paper will carry a total of 20 marks. Each question in Section B will carry 20 marks.

Part IB

Pharmacology

In addition to the write-ups, candidates are required to submit a poster (two copies) describing project work conducted during the Lent Term. Write-ups and projects must be submitted by the last Monday of Full Lent Term. The poster submission and write-up will be assessed by the Examiners as part of the Practical Examination, and will count for 5% of the total mark for Natural Sciences Tripos, Part IB, Pharmacology.

All other papers remain unchanged. Full details of the examination can be found by following the appropriate links from http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/natscitripos(links.html
Philosophy Tripos, 2015

The Faculty Board of Philosophy give notice that, with effect from the examinations to be held in 2015, the form of the examinations for certain papers for the Philosophy Tripos will be changed as follows:

Part IA

*Paper 4. Set text or texts*

The paper will be divided into three sections, one on each of the set authors, and candidates are asked to answer three questions out of at least twelve set, which must be chosen from at least two sections.

Part IB

*Paper 8. Experimental psychology*

The weighting of Paper 8 has been changed. The weighting of Paper 8, for those who offer it, is double that of other papers. Candidates offering Paper 8 will continue to be exempt from taking the Essay Paper, Paper 9.

Theological and Religious Studies Tripos, 2015

The Faculty Board of Divinity give notice that, with effect from the examinations to be held in 2015, the form of the examinations for certain papers for the Theological and Religious Studies Tripos will be changed as follows:

Part I

*Paper A1a. Elementary Hebrew*

Candidates will be required to translate two out of three passages from Hebrew, giving linguistic comment where instructed, to point one passage from Genesis 37, 40, and 41, to answer two grammatical questions, and to translate five sentences from English into Hebrew (square script not modern cursive). The grammatical questions will consist of (i) six words for parsing; (ii) a question requiring candidates to write out certain forms of (a) a verb and (b) a noun. The sentences for translation will be designed to test knowledge of common grammatical constructions and will be based on the prescribed text. The translation from Hebrew will carry 50% of the marks, the translation into Hebrew 20%, and the remaining questions 10% each.

*Paper A4. Christianity and the transformation of culture*

The examination paper will consist of a three-hour written examination, containing eighteen questions. The paper will be divided into three sections: (a) The evangelical revival and its consequences; (b) The modern missionary movement; and (c) The social gospel and kingdom theology. Candidates will be required to answer four questions and must select them from all three sections.

*Paper A5. Who is Jesus Christ?*

The examination will consist of a three-hour written paper. Candidates will be required to answer four questions from a choice of at least twelve.

All other papers remain unchanged. Full details of the examination can be obtained from the Faculty office.