Chaucer and his Literary Background

Candidates’ performance in this year’s examination was generally good. There was much evidence of real engagement with Chaucer’s writing, and with the sources that informed this writing. Several candidates produced very impressive answers on Chaucer’s uses of *Le Roman de la rose* or of the writings of Boccaccio, showing a detailed knowledge of these texts, and deep thought about how Chaucer engaged with them. Many candidates were able to direct their knowledge to the particular questions that they had chosen to answer; the very best did this while writing with clarity, and sometimes with elegance.

The majority of candidates produced taut, well-focused essays; some, however, allowed their answers to stretch to lengths that obscured the structure and argument of their responses. A few candidates revealed persistent misunderstandings of Chaucer’s Middle English; this was bound to bring down their marks. A more common problem was candidates’ punctuation. Essays that repeatedly used commas where full stops were necessary were hard to follow – and fell short of producing the scholarly impression that all candidates should seek to achieve. Some essays consisted of near-paraphrase of the material that they were discussing: structuring answers as responses to the questions that are being tackled should help candidates to produce writing that is analytical rather than merely descriptive. A few candidates did not engage closely or carefully enough with the questions to which they were ostensibly responding; a few commentaries did not deal enough with the details of the passage or passages that they were supposed to be handling.

It was apparent that many candidates had worked very hard at trying to understand Chaucer’s writings for themselves; this was perhaps particularly evident in some excellent answers on *Troilus and Criseyde*. Candidates who tried to substitute other people’s readings for their own fared less well; such candidates, however, were in the minority.

Shakespeare

All but three of the 34 questions on the paper were attempted. The exceptions were B 12, on the ‘flowers of fancy’ in Shakespeare, and questions 33 and 34, which were the last questions on the paper: 33 asked about surmised links between Shakespeare’s plays and specific stage conditions and playhouses of the period, while 34 invited candidates to consider links between the historical and contemporary, fact and fiction, belief and faith. These were fairly standard questions on Shakespeare and might well have attracted answers if they had not fortuitously sat in splendid isolation at the very end of the paper on a separate page.

The most popular questions were the threats to identity in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (A 1: 21 answers), the language of love in the plays and poems (B 15: 19 answers), the opening and closing of the European world (B 26: 19 answers), and the depiction of fear in *Macbeth* (A 7: 18 answers). The question about relations between men attracted eleven takers while several other questions were attempted by at least ten candidates each (B 15: the logic of passion; B 16: the role of theatre in the plays; B 18: rhetoric as a necessity; B 20: genre), while A 8 ((illusion and reality in *The Winter’s Tale*), B 23 (religious dilemmas), and B 25 (filming Shakespeare) were all done by eight candidates. Most of the remaining questions were attempted by at least two or more candidates.
The four passages for commentary in section A attracted 12 answers altogether: 4 on the Dream, 3 on 1 Henry IV, 4 on Macbeth, and only 1 on The Winter’s Tale. These answers were almost invariably lacklustre. Several papers were hugely long and diffuse (some in excess of 20 + pages), in spite of specific and repeated instructions by course teachers advising candidates that they should consider the six-hour paper as a three-hour examinations, but with six hours to hand to make best use of the open book. There was only one short work script while a handful of the weaker scripts reverted to telling the plots of plays.

While most scripts reflected the seminar provision on the course, the better ones struck out independently. Critics featured included Adelman, Bradley, Dollimore and Sinfield, Foucault, Greenblatt, G. Wilson Knight, Kahn, Kermode, Kott, Montrose, Said, Urkowitz, and Vickers. The examiners were impressed by the literary flair of a number of scripts and by the overall range of references to the Shakespeare canon. Answers were either based on, or referred extensively to, Antony and Cleopatra, As You Like It, Coriolanus, Cymbeline, Hamlet, Henry V, Henry VIII, Julius Caesar, King Lear, Lucrece, Much Ado, Othello, Pericles, Richard II, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet, Shrew, the Henry VI plays, The Merchant of Venice, the Sonnets, The Tempest, Timon, Titus Andronicus, Troilus, Twelfth Night, and Venus and Adonis.

The present format of the examination, with its links back to seminars, would seem to encourage a strict focus on two texts per answer. At times it felt as if the best candidates might have wanted to range more widely but doing so would probably not have been in their immediate best interest. As in past years the examiners were delighted by the sophistication of the best scripts but also by the solid quality of the more mid-range answers. The cohort as a whole reflected an impressive grounding in Shakespeare’s works, with many of them displaying a confident grasp of the chronological structure and sweep of the works as well as of their historical and political contexts. A regrettable aspect of the scripts was the sheer scale of spelling mistakes, right across the board.

**Commentary and Analysis**

There was a significant range in the quality of work on the Commentary and Analysis exam this year, though almost all students demonstrated themselves capable of this sort of work. With the strongest answers, the students had clearly taken the time to formulate an argument – derived from an overall sense of the passages in question – before proceeding on to the discussion of details. They harnessed a competent critical vocabulary, perceptive close analysis, and measuredly bold claims in their responses. Weaker answers showed less ability to move past the obvious, to work against the grain of the texts in question, and tended towards a re-telling or paraphrasing of the text. Students should remember that formalist close reading that is unanchored from an overall argument about the piece(s) is not all that useful. That is, simply noticing technical effects doesn’t necessarily augment the overall quality of the analysis. Occasionally, students made poor guesses about the period, author, or even themes at play in the works, which sometimes led them into a chain reaction of poor intuitions and readings. Students should also take care to read the passages provided very carefully – at times, obvious elements of the texts were missed altogether.

**Renaissance Literature 1520-1674**

There were 20 candidates. The most popular questions were on dilemmas in revenge tragedies (8 answers) and Marlowe’s preoccupation with power (6 answers). The most popular set author was
Donne (13 answers). 5 candidates chose to answer 2 questions from Section A (set authors); among these the most popular combination was Spenser and Donne (3 scripts).

Among the weakest answers there was some worryingly thin work; in extreme cases the examiners could find little evidence that candidates had engaged with the course and were not merely relying on half-remembered materials from school. There were some rubric violations: candidates are reminded to familiarise themselves with the Examination Description well in advance of the exam, and to ensure that they comply with the rubric, as failure to do so incurs a penalty.

Although the question on dilemmas in revenge tragedies was popular, not all candidates used it well; the better answers took some time to define and consider specific dilemmas, rather than offering loose and generalised discussion. Overall, the better scripts showed breadth and depth in their knowledge of Renaissance literature, often making good use of historical contextualisation and a sense of significant critical debates. Such pleasing performances also paid attention to the question as asked, offered evidence of the candidate thinking on their feet, gave well organised answers, and were lucidly and stylishly written.

The Restoration and Eighteenth Century

There were 18 candidates, the majority of whom performed creditably. But while the examiners were favourably impressed by the quality of most scripts, we were concerned to observe how narrow a range of authors and topics was addressed even by some of the stronger candidates. All but five scripts included at least one Section B answer on a set text; and although this does not constitute a violation of the rubric for the paper, it often contributed to a sense of thinness. Rochester was by some distance the most popular subject (13 answers), followed by Richardson and Pope (both 10); only one candidate tackled Johnson & Boswell. Among writers and topics beyond the set texts, Fielding, Sterne, Restoration Comedy and The Spectator were the most popular. There was one answer on Behn, one on other women writers. Several writers lectured on in the course, received no treatment at all, including Dryden, Defoe, and Cowper.

The commentary exercise was generally well done, with most candidates judging well the necessary balance between close analysis of the passage and extrapolation from it into the work more widely and, in the most confident scripts, the cultural circumstances of the period as a whole. The weaker commentaries took the form of general essays on the text with little relation to the passage set. A minority of candidates were fundamentally hampered by an inability to situate the passage securely within the work. The extract from the Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot proved especially diagnostic, its intricate ironies allowing the stronger candidates to display their responsiveness whilst foxing the weaker ones.

Section B answers, when they were not on set texts, tended to stick closely to material taught in seminars. Only the most adventurous candidates gave evidence of independent reading, even to the extent of adding a second novel or play to the one prescribed for class. But the better scripts compensated by the sophistication of their thought or the dynamism of their argumentation. Rochester in particular drew some strikingly engaged responses, as too did Sterne. As in previous years, answers were penalised which, although accurate and well informed, failed to address the specifics of the question. A particular case in point was 15(a) which called for candidates to discuss what could be learned about Pamela by reading parodies of it: many answers to this question simply listed examples of parody in Shamela without considering how they might help us to read Richardson’s novel more penetratingly. Conversely, candidates who did make a genuine attempt to
address the terms of the question, even if their answers were disappointing, received credit from the examiners.

The Romantic Period

Most of the examination work offered for Romantics this year was of a good standard, demonstrating meaningful engagement with the course, a solid understanding of Romantic literature and its context, and a sense of the relationships between works and authors in this period. Candidates wrote on a wide range of questions and authors. All questions in Section A (on the recommended authors) were attempted at least once: Keats was the most popular author, and there were a relatively small number of essays on Radcliffe, Scott, Shelley and Peacock. The only questions in Section B not attempted were question 14 (on Romantic irony) and question 24 (on manuscripts, private letters, etc.). The examiners were particularly impressed by the quality and range of work on Blake and on women’s writing, which, apart from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley, included essays on Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Dorothy Wordsworth, Joanna Baillie and Mary Robinson.

Several candidates chose to tackle questions that invited large-scale, thematic consideration (on the meaning of Revolution in the period, for example, or on the usefulness of ‘Romantic’ as a critical term) and were able to demonstrate an impressive synoptic range. Other answers for Section B were too thin, and candidates are reminded that questions in this part of the examinations paper should be answered with reference to two or more authors unless otherwise indicated. Failure to comply with this constitutes a rubric violation and will result in a candidate’s work being penalised. Some otherwise interesting and well-informed work did not gain the highest marks because it failed sufficiently to address the question. The standard and accuracy of quotation and specific textual knowledge also varied widely. Although quotation is not always necessary to support analysis in an examination detailed knowledge of particular texts is essential. Attempted quotations of lines of poetry that bear no relation to the metre of the original are particularly to be avoided.

The Victorian Period

26 candidates took this exam. They answered almost the full range of questions, which made for a pleasingly diverse spread of essays (although no candidate wrote about Robert Browning in Section A).

Throughout the paper, the work of the best candidates successfully combined an intimate knowledge of the texts being discussed, as demonstrated in perceptive close readings of carefully learned quotations, and some attention to the historical and literary-historical contexts in which these texts were produced. The stronger essays also engaged, if only in passing, with significant or especially relevant critical writing on the topic they addressed.

There were some impressively ambitious, wide-ranging and penetrating answers on Victorian poetry, especially Tennyson and Hopkins, though the weaker candidates discussed only a handful of shorter poems. The best answers on some of the great Victorian novels were those which demonstrated sharp analytical skills and a suppleness of thought, and therefore managed to avoid over-long accounts of the narrative.

Candidates should be careful to craft their answers to the demands of a particular question. At times essays felt pre-learnt, and as if hooked onto a question without real thought. Furthermore,
candidates need to be prepared to argue with a quotation offered for discussion. Some of these are intended to be provocative, but candidates tended to take them at face value.

Modern Literature I

Answers to this paper ranged widely in quality. The best scripts demonstrated real flair – keeping their chosen questions in view at all times and answering them in essays which combined originality and learning, thoughtfulness and style. Weaker scripts, by contrast, typically failed to engage with their chosen questions, sometimes veering off-topic from the outset or in other cases gradually losing sight of their initial purpose, whether from lack of planning or from a scarcity of knowledge relevant to the issues at hand. A large number of scripts limited themselves to thematic expositions of works within the terms favoured by the authors themselves.

Many of the answers in Section A drew on a disappointingly narrow sense of the set authors. A great number of answers on T.S. Eliot, in particular, focused almost exclusively on *The Waste Land*, and only a very few scripts were able to discuss his dramatic, literary critical or political writings. Only a handful of students demonstrated a fuller sense of the interconnections of his oeuvre. Answers on Joyce and Woolf, similarly, tended to focus on a small number of texts: students typically opted to write about *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* on the one hand, and *A Room of One’s Own*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* on the other. Those which ventured further afield, drawing on *Stephen Hero* and *Ulysses*, or on *The Voyage Out*, *The Waves*, *Orlando*, *Between the Acts*, often shone, engaging with the variety of the author’s works and making distinctions within the oeuvre. Relatively few candidates chose to answer the questions on Conrad, and again the stronger scripts tended to demonstrate more curiosity and knowledge; the weaker ones often limited themselves to predictable basic points about *Heart of Darkness*. Fewer students answered on Chaplin, but some of these wrote very well, demonstrating an ability to analyse films and deploying their knowledge of the shape of his career. Very few answers showed any acquaintance with the secondary literature on the set authors.

Among the more popular questions in Section B were those on the relationships between men and women, in response to a quotation by D.H. Lawrence, and on issues of race and propaganda, in answer to a question about the Harlem Renaissance (which prompted several knowledgeable essays). Students often drew in Section B on works by the set authors from Section A. Among the other authors most frequently discussed were Orwell, Hemingway, Waugh, Forster, Rhys, Bowen, Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Thomas Hardy, and Stevie Smith. In all parts of the exam, the best pieces read as a combination of knowledge widely sought and painstakingly acquired (manifest in the form of deftly and concisely deployed quotations from authors and literary critics) and of astuteness in the choice of authors whose works might most meaningfully and illuminatingly be combined.

Modern Literature II

The examiners were impressed with the overall standard of the answers submitted for this course, both in Section A, which asked questions about the set authors, and in Section B, which asked a selection of more general questions. Alfred Hitchcock proved the most popular of the set authors, but there were also a number of good answers on each of the other three (Elizabeth Bishop, Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett). Candidates showed that they were not only adept at discussing prose fiction, but were also sophisticated readers of poetry, film and drama.
Many of the answers on Hitchcock showed good technical knowledge of cinema, and provided really interesting and imaginative close readings of particular scenes. A number of candidates showed they were reading widely in poetry of the period: there were engaging answers on a range of poets, including Philip Larkin, Anne Carson, Geoffrey Hill and J. H. Prynne. In Section B, there were also a number of good answers on short story writing.

Some of the stronger candidates responded creatively and intelligently to the challenges of the period, and wrote very suggestively on postmodernism. But there was no dominant template for the answers – the examiners were impressed by the sheer variety of responses. Some candidates wrote on political and cultural questions such as immigration, exile, questions of race; other candidates gave very individual responses to some of the period’s most formally difficult and experimental writing. It was also notable that while some answers reflected a careful engagement with material that had been lectured on or taught in seminar courses, other candidates wrote on authors they had read and studied independently. The sheer range of material covered by the scripts was very impressive and made it very enjoyable to read students’ answers. Some of the weaker scripts did not show evidence of a great degree of reading: they might, for instance, give two out of three answers on set authors, or else base an answer on one or two short stories or poems. Stronger answers often gave intelligent responses to difficult individual works (such as Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow) or else discussed a range of shorter works.

**American Literature to 1890**

Answers were widely spread across the Commentary passages, though there were none on the passages from Dickinson and Whitman. The passage from Mary Rowlandson was the most popular. Commentaries generally demonstrated an ability to combine close reading with a critical argument and an understanding of historical and cultural contexts (such as the developing national identity in relation to cross-cultural encounters). All questions were answered except those on ‘figurations of Hell’, the American Revolution, Dickinson and James. Some candidates (too many) had not read and explored beyond the seminar texts, so answers on particular authors were sometimes rather narrowly focussed.

**London in Literature**

Overall, the examiners were pleased with the results of the London in Literature exam. A significant number of answers demonstrated an acute sensitivity to language, a broad knowledge of the texts, and often an imaginative and lively prose style. Overall, we were pleased to find frequently unexpected responses to the questions, an ability to deftly handle literary and historical contextual material, and a great deal of attentive close-reading.

The compulsory question, requiring commentary on one of the passages selected from the eight set texts, was often answered least well, delivering less incisive answers than the essay questions. The latter perhaps rescued candidates from the tendency, detectable in the commentary responses, to describe the passage in detail without substantial analysis of the text. A significant number of candidates failed to show in their answers that they had read and did know the work from which the passage they discussed was taken. For some, discussion of the passage appeared to be an exercise in commentary and analysis. The rubric for this question did specifically invite the candidates to ‘discuss one of the following passages in relation to the work from which it is taken and to your reading for the course more generally.’ The best answers were those that recognised in the urban particulars of the relevant passage features and patterns known from the work as a whole.
Candidates who were able to say where in the work (and in London) we were — and what might have gone before or come after the passage in question — were at an advantage. Nevertheless, there were some interesting responses to the passages, and particularly deft analyses were garnered by the Gay, Dickens and (less frequently) the Conrad extracts. The most popular commentary passage by some distance was the excerpt from John Gay’s Trivia, and the most successful responses showed a balance between sensitivity and alertness to the particulars of the passage and an awareness of a wider literary context.

The essay questions for London in Literature attracted some particularly wide-ranging and ambitious answers, giving a few of the more able candidates the chance to show off some complex ideas and sophisticated analysis. At times there was a disappointingly procrustean tendency to attach evidently prepared answers to ill-fitting questions, sometimes via a sleight of hand that resulted in an awkward argument. However, the examiners were struck by the engaged and confident tone of many of the essays, and were especially impressed by those willing to take a risk on some of the less frequently answered questions. The best essays marshalled a great deal of fruitful material in the service of a nuanced and subtle argument, whereas candidates who did less well tended to rely on description, with largely illustrative quotation rather than incisive analysis of the texts. A wide range of questions were attempted, and pleasingly diverse contexts were brought to bear on a similarly impressive range of texts, from De Quincey’s Confessions to Alan Moore’s To Hell, and on subjects from the imagined topographies of London in The Waste Land and Autumn Journal, to the significance of locality in recent London-based popular music.

Old Icelandic Literature

The translations from set texts were done with some accuracy but with limited range of Modern English terms while being literal at the expense of rendering the Old Icelandic idiomatically. The other questions, commentary and essay, had an argument as well as attention to metre and imagery, and delivered a perceptive analysis. One of these questions made good use of modern critics and presented an interesting case partly based on family dynamics. There was evidence of mature and insightful responses to a respectable variety of demanding medieval literature.

Old English Literature I

Candidates engaged well with all three parts of the paper (translation, commentary and essay). The best translations were those which conformed to modern English idiom but avoided paraphrasing too freely. Incisive analysis of the language and coherent structure characterised the best commentaries. The essays were well informed and often perceptive in their treatment of the topics.

Old English Literature II

Seven candidates sat this exam. A range of questions were attempted in all three sections of this paper. Essays were written on the prefaces of Alfred and Aelfric, Judith, the Battle of Maldon, Aetheltryth and Wulfstan.

Translations were generally of a good standard, although sometimes marks were lost for inaccurate grammatical forms and paraphrasing. Candidates are reminded that they should attempt the required four translations. In question 2, Genesis B and Wulfstan were highly popular choices for commentaries. The strongest of these demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the passages,
paying close attention to the effect of the language as well as points of thematic interest. Sometimes commentaries suffered from informal or colloquial phrasing and a lack of precision in the points being made. The best essays were those that demonstrated original approaches to the topic, supported by clear structures and close attention to textual evidence. Less strong essays tended to be descriptive rather than analytical, and to make generalised comments without sufficient supporting evidence. Some candidates took the opportunity to make use of interdisciplinary material in their essays.

**Middle English Literature I**

This year’s examination produced some good responses. Candidates should ensure, however, that in commentaries they always explore the significance of the details that they register, and that they exclude from their essays material that is not strictly or clearly relevant to the questions that they are answering. They should strive to avoid wild or unconvincing ideas. They should ensure also that they follow the rubric to the paper, which prescribes that candidates should write just one commentary, and two essays.

**Middle English Literature II**

The candidates who sat this year’s examination performed well. All of the scripts were of a good standard and candidates demonstrated a solid knowledge of the texts and some appreciation of their wider themes and context. The more successful of these responses were those which could formulate this knowledge into a clear line of discussion that was well informed and engaged in detail with the question. The standard of the commentaries was good overall and all candidates were able to comment on the significance of the selected passage(s). However, a number of commentaries could have been improved by a more detailed engagement with the extract on a critical level; indeed, a greater consideration of the language, style, and form of the passage(s) under discussion would have been welcome in some cases. Candidates who chose to compare two extracts in the commentary often produced some imaginative responses, although they should be reminded of the benefits of discussing the two extracts as a pair, rather than in turn, to ensure that the links between the two passages can be fully explored and appreciated. The responses to the essay questions were also pleasing, with candidates answering on a wide range of texts covered during the course. Occasional weaknesses included a failure to engage in detail with the subtleties of the question and a need for a sharper, more analytical focus to the discussion. The very best answers often tackled the questions in an original and thoughtful manner, producing tightly-focused responses that were well informed and demonstrated a sensitive appreciation of the literature and the period as a whole.

**Modern English Language**

This year there were nine candidates for the Modern English Language paper.

There were 14 questions on this examination paper this year. There was a very satisfying spread of answers: only two questions (question 2 on the past tense and the present perfect and question 9 on sense relations) were not attempted. Question 1 was the most popular. This involved analysing the structure of a sentence using a tree diagram. Other popular questions were 10 (on movement) and 14 (on the structure of selected phrases).

The most competent answers achieved very high marks. This demonstrates that candidates prepared well for this examination. This is to be commended because it resulted in a demonstration
of a solid understanding of the topics being discussed. The less good answers involved minor errors and a lack of precision in their use of terminology. There were also a few occasions on which candidates used illustrative examples that were more complicated than was necessary for the task at hand.

**History of the English Language**

There were 10 candidates this year.

There was a reasonable spread of answers, with around two thirds of the questions attempted. Question 8 was the most popular, on what historians of the language can learn from dictionaries. It was attempted by five candidates. Other popular questions were on the interaction between English and other languages, the relationship between language and nationalism, spelling reform and slang. Candidates also answered competently on Shakespeare’s Original Pronunciation (demonstrating that they had attended David Crystal’s UCL talk on OP), word meaning, religious disputes and their influence on English, regularisation in English, and the question of whether the English language began in 1066. The quality of the answers was very high with candidates displaying wide reading as well as a solid knowledge of the topics they wrote about. As always, the best answers were those that went beyond the material discussed in class, illustrated with good examples. Weaker answers did not all focus clearly on the questions, and some oversimplified points that could have been explained in more depth.

**Literary Linguistics**

There were 3 candidates this year.

In the work of these candidates there was evidence of some close analysis, and signs that the candidates had digested critical material from the course well (making good reference to the relevant linguistic authorities and using critical terminology appropriately).

In a few cases some (parts of) the essays were hampered by repetition, bland summary of plot and character, and they were also let down a bit by poor organisation, phrasing, and presentation.

**Literary Representation and the History of Homosexuality**

The essays submitted were of a high standard and many were outstanding. Examiners several times praised the combination of research and stylistic vigour. One essay, for instance, was ‘impressive in managing to keep its own voice and lines of discussion to the fore, while marshalling a very large range of primary and secondary material’; another was ‘lucid, thoughtful, polemical, showing evidence of wide-ranging research’; a third was ‘very well researched, featuring fascinating historical materials and illustrations’. Essays were praised for ‘showing a great deal of thoughtful engagement with the topic’, for being ‘lively and pleasingly original’, ‘engaged and engaging’, and ‘assertive, lively and forceful’. Some of the submitted work was ‘very mature’ and showed ‘real scholarly potential’. More than one candidate made good use of original research into unpublished archival and manuscript materials, both as evidence of the genesis of literary works and of social and biographical contexts. Other work was notably enterprising and scrupulous in its deployment of online resources, including visual images, film and the written word. A number of students were able to integrate ‘sophisticated critical terminology’ with ‘sensitive close readings’. Some of the strongest pieces
managed not only to deploy critical authorities but to canvas debates and disagreements within recent criticism in the formulation of their own approach.

The less successful essays were nonetheless all of a creditable standard. The main failings that examiners specified were ‘insufficient analysis of central terms’, the rehearsal of ‘critical commonplace’, and an unwillingness to go beyond ‘basic appreciation’. Examiners pointed to instances of superficial readings, poor expression, and insufficient attention to questions of genre. Most of the essays were lucidly structured, but some were repetitive.

Essay topics included a wide variety of genres including graphic novels and video-based art practice as well as poetry, prose, critical theory, and drama. There was for instance work on Marlowe and the Renaissance, on female friendship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and on nineteenth-century poetry. The majority of essays, however, focussed on works from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. There was a good deal of work on both British and American literature, and on both male and female authors.

**BASc First-Year Spring Course Assessment**

‘Introduction to English Literature’ ENGL1004, Spring 2014

**Assessment**

Candidates were required to submit two pieces of course work, each consisting of 2500 words by 28 April 2014. These essays were double blind marked by members of the English Department. The candidates had attended a one-term course of 10 two-hour seminars given by different members of the English Department. Each seminar focused on a text also studied by the Department’s first-year BA students. These ranged from an Old-English text (*Beowulf*), a Middle-English text (*Sir Gawain*) and 6 Narrative texts (*Paradise Lost, The Rape of the Lock, The Prelude, The Mill on the Floss, The Waste Land and Disgrace*).

Candidates were given a list of essay questions in advance and required to pick two: one from Section A (questions on named texts) and one from Section B (questions inviting comparative answer of any two texts from the course).

**Examiners’ Report**

Almost all candidates submitted work by the deadline. Generally work was well presented in terms of layout, but several candidates were insecure on the convention of citing texts in their bibliography and footnotes – something that can be quickly addressed in Introductory English Course in 2015. The standard of work varied considerably. Excellent work showed an impressive grasp of a range of secondary reading and was written with fluency and accuracy. Several students demonstrated a sound knowledge of the texts, together with evidence of some secondary reading. Weaker candidates had read little other than the text itself and this inevitably resulted in a far more limited discussion.

The candidates who scored 60 or more were, examiners felt, able to express their ideas with a fluency and skill which would enable them to access further courses in the English Department in their second year.