Comments on the examination

1. General comments

These comments are made in relation to unapproved scores.

33 candidates sat the examination. The average mark was 58.50%. The top mark was 92%, the bottom mark was 34%. 7 candidates scored under 50%.

All but 1 candidate answered question 1 (av. 63.34%); 14 candidates answered question 2 (av. 43.22%); 15 answered question 3 (av. 42.50%); 30 answered question 4 (av. 68%); and 8 answered question 5 (av. 49.38%). In several cases, parts were not attempted, which would clearly lead to depressed scores. Also, there were several vague, general, over-brief answers that did not persuade that the candidates really understood points at issue. Marks were lost by some, due to not answering all (especially discussion) parts of questions.

2. Specific comments (not all parts merited comment)

Question 1

a) Several candidates could not classify appropriately and apparently were not able to differentiate a syntactic (structural) ambiguity from a lexical ambiguity.

b) Some candidates could only give one example, when two were asked for

i) Most answers were reasonably good.

ii) This part was less well answered, particularly the aspect of small gain in performance.

b) Several candidates simply stated that a treebank could be used to construct a PCFG, without any further detail, thus were essentially just repeating the question.

e) Several answers were quite general, correctly stating that the head is the most important element in a construction, but failing to explain how this notion is exploited in a lexicalized PCFG. Some failed to give examples (intended to allow the examiner to judge if the concept was properly understood).

f) i) was generally well answered.

ii) was answered poorly by several as either they used the same example sentence as in (i) rather than the given sentence for (ii), or they drew a tree with no further comment, i.e. no explanation of steps. Those that referred to the grammar and explained how a top down depth-first parse would deal with backtracking did well, as did those who adopted a top down breadth-first strategy.

iii) Generally well answered, but with evidence of brain-dumping, particularly by those who had done less well in f (ii): they were able to list backtracking as an issue for a top down parser, but had not been able to use that knowledge in answering f (ii).

iv) Variably answered, with several candidates failing to note predictions on [1,1].

Question 2

c) Variably answered. Some gave a BIO representation, whereas a template-based representation was called for.

d) i) Some candidates confused training with testing, thus gave the same answer for both types of output requested.

ii) Several candidates did not explain that the last label on each line refers to the gold standard label, which is a key piece of information for training purposes.

iv) Poorly answered by several, who were convinced of the sufficiency of gazetteer lookup for NER. This was probably due to ignoring the role of the final label as the gold standard label and assuming it too was coming from the gazetteer. This question part was based on lab and coursework thus one might have expected a firmer understanding.

v) Several simply reproduced the first 12 lines.

Question 3

a) Variably answered, with several proposed solutions failing to spot the need to generalize over the entity types Organisation and Person.

b) Several candidates thought it appropriate, having pipelined several components to add annotation to enrich the original document, to then remove all annotations at a later stage, a somewhat strange decision. Others did not indicate how the evaluation step could be achieved.

c) Several answers described the type of faceted search available on e-commerce Web sites, which bore little relation to topics of the course, and did not consider how faceted search would or could operate within a semantic search perspective.

Question 4

a) Some candidates were unable to give any appropriate examples.

c) The main feature referred to was part of speech and little attention was paid to others by several answers.

d) Although limitations were dealt with reasonably, techniques to overcome limitations were less well handled.
e) Several candidates limited themselves to giving definitions, without considering the other aspects of the question.

f) Calculations were in general well tackled. Credit was given for part work and for manipulation of formulae even though an error (including e.g., failing to apply log2) may have been introduced that prevented arriving at the perfect result. In several answers, a value that had been calculated correctly earlier and assigned to a variable was substituted with a different value in a later calculation using that variable. This was taken as a slip and full credit given. Also taken as a slip were cases where e.g., a scientific notation that was being correctly calculated and used (as in 5 x 10-5) was later expressed with the wrong number of zeroes. In general, if solid understanding was being shown, this was given credit.

Question 5

b) There were some over-brief (given the marks available) and general answers to this discussion-type question, and these did not appear to be well-related to aspects of the unit.