



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1D

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1D

Unit 1D: Britain, 1603–1642

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 1

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 1 papers were noted:

- Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three, each consisting of a part (a) and a part (b), i.e. 4 sub-questions in total. Whether due to timing issues or to a misunderstanding of the rubric, a few candidates either answered all six sub-questions or answered only one question. The format of Unit 1 papers is significantly different from AQA's legacy units, so it is vital that all candidates are aware in advance of what they will be required to do.
- Timing issues caused other problems too. This is a one hour 15 minute paper, thus allowing roughly 12 minutes in which to complete the (a) questions and 25 minutes for the (b) questions. A number of candidates failed to complete the paper and in addition to those who attempted only one question, there were others who missed out a part-question or lapsed into notes. Selecting relevant material and maintaining a strong focus on the question is part of the skill being tested in this examination and candidates need to realise that they will penalise themselves heavily if they fail to tackle the two questions required, in full. Furthermore, since they are asked to write in continuous prose – which is the only way any sense of argument can be conveyed – notes will never score highly.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates had not studied, or revised, the full specification content for their chosen alternative. It must be emphasised that the three questions may be drawn from any part of that content. Without a secure understanding of the complete content, candidates will find it extremely difficult to perform well.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

This was the first examination of a new specification and new examining system and was therefore likely to pose especial difficulties both to candidates and examiners. Sixty candidates sat this examination four months into their Advances Subsidiary course and a significant number were not able to do themselves justice. Approximately one-third of candidates did not attempt, or attempted only briefly, the two questions required by this Paper. Inevitably attempting only half the examination resulted in low marks for many of these candidates. Given the distribution of marks i.e. 12 for question (a) and 24 for (b) not attempting one whole question deprived candidates immediately of 36 out of 72 marks whilst not attempting one of the (b) questions meant that almost one-third of the marks was lost straight away.

There were general weaknesses evident in several scripts. Candidates should avoid assertion e.g. 'I believe that...', 'It is my opinion that...', or 'It is obvious that...', in favour of reasoned argument clearly explained and supported by evidence. Candidates do better if they justify and support their views, e.g. 'There were several reasons for this...', 'This was important because...', or 'The evidence for this is...'. On the whole the past tense is more appropriate than the present tense when writing about events and people of the past. Technical terms

appropriate to this option should be used and spelt correctly e.g. ‘parliament’ not ‘parliment’, ‘wardships’ not ‘warships’. Names of persons ought to begin with a capital letter such as ‘Buckingham’ not ‘buckingham’. When making a final judgement at the end of their essays candidates should not merely assert their ‘opinion’ but justify, or at least explain, what led them to that conclusion.

Candidates need to have specific knowledge not merely generalised ideas. It is also better to write a concise but focused and knowledgeable answer than one which is over-long but actually says little. Candidates should also appreciate the need for balance in answering (b) questions. In assessing ‘How far..’ a full, balanced answer requires consideration of other factors. Similarly though, ‘How important...’ might be answered well by an in-depth and wide-ranging explanation of the importance of a given factor, and a consideration of the ways in which that factor was not always important or not always as important as something else.

In answering (a) questions candidates should focus on providing reasons not description. Facts should be used to support and illuminate reasons. Similarly in (b) questions facts should support arguments, not be a substitute for them. It is better for candidates to answer questions directly rather than indirectly. The examiner should not have to work out what reason or argument is being presented – the candidate’s answer should make that obvious.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates made a reasonable attempt at answering this question displaying at least some appropriate knowledge and understanding. Most were able to point to the Spanish war, inherited debt or James’s extravagance as being amongst the reasons for financial difficulties. Some showed knowledge of deeper reasons such as the effect of selling off Crown lands, fixed rents on Crown lands and the impact of inflation. Candidates approached the question either by giving four or five reasons in outline or two or three reasons in more depth. Unfortunately some answers were limited by chronological confusion, lack of depth of explanation and lack of range in the reasons provided.
- (b) Answers to Question 1(b) were disappointing. Few candidates seemed to have a firm grasp of the various disputes in James’s first parliament and of the factors causing these disputes. There was some knowledge of the Great Contract and of disputes over wardships, but few seemed to have heard of impositions. Nor did there seem any knowledge of constitutional clashes such as Godwin v Fortescue, Shirley or Bate’s case. There was some knowledge of religious disputes, though not in much depth, but very little knowledge about clashes over James’s proposed union between England or Scotland or his policy towards Spain. James’s first parliament warrants deeper study.

Question 2

- (a) Similarly with James’s third parliament in 1621–1622 in Question 2(a). Although most candidates had some knowledge about disputes over foreign policy in 1621 there was insufficient understanding of both the diplomatic and the constitutional aspects of this. Nor were most candidates able to discuss other causes of conflict in this parliament such as those to do with the granting of monopolies or the revival of impeachment by the House of Commons.

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- (b) Answers to Question 2(b) showed some knowledge and understanding of Buckingham's role in causing the breakdown of relations between Charles I and his early parliaments but not always in sufficient range or depth. There was also only limited understanding of the importance of other factors such as those to do with finance, religion and Charles I's attitudes, or of the actions of members of Parliament in leading to a breakdown of relations by 1629. There was a tendency to blame everything on Buckingham and not to at least consider that he might have been a useful scapegoat for the self-interest and failings of others.

Question 3

- (a) In Question 3(a) most candidates knew that the outbreak of the Scottish rebellion in the late 1630s was connected with the introduction of the new Prayer Book, but they were not always able to explain convincingly why this caused such unrest or refer to other factors which were partly responsible. They needed both more depth on the short-term causes but also an appreciation that the Covenanter revolt did not come out of nowhere and that there was a nationalist, as well as a religious element to it.
- (b) Answers to 3(b) were often good on linking the Irish Rebellion to the need to raise an army, which in turn raised the issue of command and trust of Charles I but again candidates were not always able to go much beyond this. Often candidates had a broad understanding of the factors causing divisions between radicals and constitutional royalists but they often needed a surer grasp of the chronology of 1640 to 1642 to justify their arguments. The early part of the Long Parliament is a complex period and the dating of events often needs to be known in terms of months as well as years if the complexity is to be untangled. Candidates might broadly think of three phases in the history of the Long Parliament during these years. These might be the period of broad unity amongst MPs as to what needed to be done to reverse the policies of the Personal Rule and curb what many MPs thought of as the excesses of royal power. This might be taken to last from November 1640 to the middle of 1641 and witnessed the removal of Laud and Strafford and the 'Legal Revolution' ending 'feudal taxation', abolishing the prerogative courts and regional councils and passing the Triennial Act. The second phase might be described as the period of division beginning perhaps with the doubts of MPs about the justice of Strafford's Attainder, but becoming deeper over issues such as the Root and Branch bill, reaction to the Irish Rebellion, the Grand Remonstrance and the trustworthiness of the king. Finally, in the first half of 1642 the drift towards civil war continued with Charles's botched arrest of Pym, the king's departure for York, the Militia Ordinance, the Nineteen Propositions, the issuing of commissions of array, and the threats of sequestration. Candidates might consider both Charles's responsibility but also that of Pym and his colleagues, as well as the impact of other events, in bringing about division and ultimately civil war. The Irish Rebellion certainly inflamed passions and raised important constitutional and political issues, but there were also other causes of these controversial issues together with the personalities and actions of key individuals.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.