



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1K

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1K

Unit 1K: Russia and Germany, 1871–1914

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

Overall judgement on the paper is difficult because of the small number of entries. However there was a wide-range of responses indicating that candidates were able to access the paper at many different levels. Most candidates showed a grasp of the question paper demands and were able to produce relevant responses. The best of these were clearly focused on the question demands and were supported with relevant knowledge, very good responses were also able to reach a supported judgement. Candidates who performed less effectively produced narrative and/or descriptive responses, many were relevant to the demands of the question but lacked a clear focus. Some candidates displayed inaccurate knowledge of the question demands, for example a focus on the wrong time period, or inaccuracy in the use of supporting information. Although this was not penalised in the mark scheme or in the marking of the papers it was difficult to reward candidates for writing about the wrong country or event.

Question 1

Candidates overwhelmingly opted to answer Question 1. Generally the demands of the question were well-understood.

- (a) Question 1(a) was answered well, most candidates were aware of the main challenges faced by Bismarck and were able to give some information about how these challenges were met. Candidates scoring at the higher levels were also able to give some assessment of how successful Bismarck was in coping with challenge. Lower level responses simply described the challenges and responses. A small number of candidates were confused about threats and responses, or confused Bismarck's responses with those of Alexander III.
- (b) This question caused few problems as most candidates were able to explain the growth of the SPD in this time period. Not many were able to make links or to prioritise factors.

Question 2

- (a) This question was generally well-answered although some students struggled to find enough factors to explain Alexander's policy of repression. Answers at the highest level linked and prioritised factors, e.g. *'Alexander was naturally inclined towards repression because of his own personality and his personal belief in the Autocracy, this tendency was increased by the role of Pobedonostev, his tutor and adviser, and by the death of his father'*.
- (b) This question was answered effectively, most candidates were able to find relevant supporting material and understood the demands of the question. Higher level answers were able to explain how the measures followed by Tsarist ministers (Witte and Stolypin) helped to increase Russia's economic prosperity in the time period, with an assessment of overall success. Lower level responses described the economic problems facing Russia and gave some relevant information about general reasons for increased prosperity.

Question 3

Question 3 was answered by few candidates and was generally the question on which they scored the least marks. Key to this was a failure to meet the demands of the questions and a lack of relevant supporting material.

- (a) Candidates provided only general and long-term reasons for Germany's support of Austria Hungary in the Balkans, there was virtually no reference to the Bosnian Crisis of 1908 at all.
- (b) The responses to this question were generally better with the higher scoring candidate able to assess the importance of developments in the Balkans against the importance of other factors. However candidates found it very difficult to focus on the question's time frame, and responses dealt primarily with factors many years before 1909, such as the 'War in Sight crisis'.

Overall candidates seemed to be much less confident in facing the demands of Question 3 and insecure in their knowledge of supporting material.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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