



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1E

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit HIS1E

Unit 1E: Absolutist States: The Reign of Louis XIV, 1661–1715

General Comments

This was a very pleasing examination series as candidates have prepared well for this specification much in line with evidence seen in January.

There were very few rubric infringements, and the vast majority of candidates seemed very capable at managing their time effectively. There were a small number of responses in which the (a) question (01, 03, 05) was given little more than the cursory treatment of a short paragraph, and ones in which the response to (b) (02, 04, 06) was shorter than that to (a) – but these were the notable exceptions. In fact, the ability to argue a detailed, structured and substantiated case was clearly evident in the majority of responses with relatively few resorting to simple narrative. Most impressively, a large number of candidates were clearly aware of the precise demands of the (a) type questions and were able to give responses directed very tightly to providing reasons for an event rather than simple descriptions of the event itself.

No particular question was more or less popular than the others, which was perhaps slightly surprising considering the common belief that students are reluctant to answer questions on religion or on those that demand an understanding of the entire period. Of the questions, that on Colbert was answered with the least precision simply because of the challenge posed to candidates of differentiating between economic and financial factors. Indeed, considering the centrality of Colbert to this course, centres would be well-advised to ensure that their candidates are aware that lengthy material offered on tax reform, when the question actually asks about economic reforms, will rarely be credited with many marks.

Stylistically, candidates had also been prepared well. The majority offered at least three reasons for an event happening in response to the (a) question. If this was done in conjunction with an argued case – often arguing reasons why one factor might offer a more significant explanation than another – then the response was often credited with high marks. However, simply offering a list of reasons almost in bullet point form, or naming factors without providing some knowledge to explain why they were significant, did not often warrant high marks. The essay style response demanded for the (b) questions was largely done well. Candidates at least tried to offer some balance, which was needed if they were to access the highest levels. However, it should be noted that simply stating ‘there were other factors, including...’ without providing developing knowledge can rarely be counted as evidence of a balanced response. Likewise, a question stem that asks ‘How successful...’ is really searching for some sort of assessment, which of course requires an analysis of areas of failure as well. Ideally, an argument should be established in a short and powerful introduction with a couple of paragraphs that reinforce this argument and lead clearly to a reasoned conclusion. It should be noted that candidates have a limited time to complete this type of essay and so full detail is not expected, yet there should be specific evidence in order to support points made.

Question 1

- 01** Only a very small number of responses were seen from candidates that clearly did not know what the Reunions were, or indeed that offered generalised responses that could have been applied to any one of Louis XIV's foreign policy ventures. The better type of response tended to offer reasons that could be directed specifically to the Reunions themselves or, if factors such as Gloire were referred to, could provide evidence from the period to support their assertion. Most commonly, candidates did refer to the search for defensible frontiers and offered some explanation as to why this was particularly relevant during this period and in this geographical region. It was very pleasing that so many candidates were able to offer detail on the reunion chambers, and yet did not simply describe their actions. Almost all responses were able to offer a good range of factors in response to this question.
- 02** This was answered very well by the majority of candidates. There were certainly some who unfortunately misread the dates, and so embarked upon a lengthy appraisal of the War of Spanish Succession, for which they earned no credit at all. It is worth emphasising to candidates the need to read each question with precision and care. The better responses often spent a very brief period defining what Louis XIV's aims were, although the candidate that did this for more than a paragraph was in serious danger of losing any focus on the set question. The best responses identified either a theme, such as natural frontiers, or a war such as the Dutch, and maintained an argument throughout their response on why this was the most significant/greatest success; however this outstanding quality of response was rare. Of course, this sort of appraisal question requires some consideration of degree and the very best responses established at the outset how successful Louis, foreign policy was, and maintained this argument to a conclusion.

Question 2

- 03** There was some range of quality seen in response to this question. Some candidates had what can best be described as an outstanding level of knowledge directed specifically to trade and industry. These responses mentioned the lack of skills and the excessive concentration on outdated agricultural practices, or indeed the dominance of the Dutch in international trade and the weakness of domestic infrastructure. However, a good number of candidates failed to focus on trade and industry at all, instead spending quite some time on the failures of the French taxation system. Likewise, there were some that wrote in some length on the cost of Louis XIV's wars seemingly unaware of the focus set in the question of 1661. Whilst the inequitable financial system might well be linked to demands for improved industry, this link was also rarely identified, as many candidates seemed to lack the precision to differentiate between economic and financial factors. It is very much worth centres re-emphasising to their candidates the key definitions deployed.
- 04** It was a real shame to see obviously well-prepared candidates failing to achieve high levels on this question simply because of a misreading. Indeed, there were some genuinely excellent displays of detailed and precise knowledge on the French taxation system, yet some candidates mentioned nothing of Colbert's economic reforms. This is most definitely a point worth emphasising in centres. A question on Colbert will often ask for some precision in response, certainly given the sheer range of reforms that he implemented. Therefore it is vital for candidates to consider if they are being asked about Colbert's financial or about his economic reforms. Moreover, of all the questions on this paper, it was this question that seemed to elicit the greatest number of narrative responses – perhaps because candidates spend considerable time learning the nature of Colbert's reforms without considering the success or not of them. Candidates are

reminded that an exam question will never ask them to simply list reforms, but is much more likely to ask for some sort of evaluation linked to them.

Question 3

- 05** This question was answered well by the vast majority of candidates. Indeed, it is very pleasing to note that only a few responses were seen in which there was deviation away from the focus of toleration. It is clear that most centres provided a very good context to their students for the eventual religious persecution during Louis XIV's later years. It is very pleasing to note that many candidates were able to argue at some length about the economic benefits that the Huguenots brought, and indeed the influence of advisors such as Colbert in ensuring the continued toleration of the Huguenots. It was only the rare candidate that deviated from the focus to consider reasons for eventual persecution.
- 06** This was probably the best answered question of all on this paper. Many candidates were able to identify an impressive range of reasons why the Huguenots were eventually persecuted. More impressively still, almost all candidates considered the persecution of other religious minorities, most obviously the Jansenists and Quietists and were also able to prioritise reasons for their persecution and perhaps offer different motives for each group. Most commonly candidates identified the role of Madame de Maintenon and Louis XIV's coronation oath to extirpate heresy. However, a large number of responses took this further by considering long-term and short-term factors, suggesting a coronation oath could not on its own explain an increasing level of persecution throughout the reign. Others suggested a combination of domestic and foreign events, most commonly the Siege of Vienna and its link to Louis XIV's desire to be recognised as the most Christian king. Very impressive all-round.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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