AQA

ASSESSMENT and

QUALIFICATIONS

ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

History 1041
Specification

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the <u>new numbering system</u>

Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1060–1087

General Comments
This paper did not seem to be as well done as that in January, and the weaknesses remarked upon then did not seem to have been rectified but had in fact increased exponentially. On the whole, the grasp of chronology was poor throughout, which led to candidates making unnecessary errors and coming to unsupported conclusions. Context was also not fully grasped, possibly as a result of the same problem and the results of this were therefore similar, meaning that actual understanding of the period and the part played by important events, as well as aspects of society, are not being fully grasped. As a result, answers lack depth. This is further exacerbated by the increased use of personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' and assertive phrases such as 'in my opinion' and 'some historians', few of which are supported by facts and relevant explanation. In addition, answers are poorly structured. Judgement is a requirement of the second part of questions and statements are presented to be challenged. Therefore, conclusions are meant to answer the question, arising naturally from the arguments put forward. Instead, many candidates summarise what they have already written or even state 'I both agree and disagree with the statement' which closes off the higher levels.

Question 1

Question 01
There were a number of cases here where candidates failed to grasp the meaning of the actual question and saw it as an opportunity to test the sufficiency of the content of the sources against their own knowledge. As a result, comparison of views remained implicit, limiting them to Level 2. Also, while remarks were made relating to provenance, these also remained descriptive of the authors and were not linked in any way to the actual question. Candidates had to provide an explanation relating to how far this might have affected the views of the writer and link this to 'how far'. These answers tended to pick out basic differences only relating to the degree of leniency or violence and comments remained basic. Indeed, 'leniency' was rather overemphasised with many choosing to ignore William's treatment of Edric and his supporters mentioned in the source. The best answers had a real understanding of context and chronology and could explain that although the sources appeared to be taken from different time periods, 1069–1070 was a time of almost continuous rebellion and William's reactions were commensurate with the threat posed, rather than increasingly violent as is shown by his treatment of Hereward in 1071–1072.

Question 02
A surprising number of candidates made very little use of any 'own knowledge' at all in this question and relied almost entirely on the sources, using them as evidence within themselves rather than looking for ways to support or contradict what they said based on events at the time. This was in spite of already questioning aspects of their reliability, which seemed a rather contrary approach. This limited them to Level 2 or low Level 3 as the answers produced were unconvincing and of insufficient depth. The best answers provided appropriate detail, comparing the material relating to the focus of the question with other factors to construct a case. These answers showed a good level of understanding, providing precisely supported argument which led convincingly to their chosen view, rather than a summary. There were unfortunately too few of these answers.

Question 2

Although not quite as popular as Question 3, this was better done.

Question 03

Most candidates could present at least 2 or 3 factors to explain William's use of castles. However, many found themselves limited to low Level 3 due to a distinct lack of evidential support – use of material from Question 1 could not really be credited. Context was not always secure and those who waxed lyrical about the strings of (anonymous) castles in Wales were not sufficiently aware of relevant chronology to make an actual case. Also, few could provide the required link necessary for the higher levels. There were some very good answers seen which could provide precise supporting evidence and conclude with links such as the apparent change in usage, their role as outward signs of Norman domination or present a thematic division into political, social and economic functions. Such conclusions arose naturally from the case presented and were well supported by actual examples rather than being 'tacked on' at the end.

Question 04

Some candidates had problems accessing this question. As a suggestion, perhaps if 'government' is thought of as 'systems' and 'administration' as 'people', they may be able to organise responses more effectively. Some did deal with it well and provided explicit answers relating to both parts of the question – change and continuity. These were aware of the sophistication of the English system before the Conquest and how the Normans used this, bringing in their own systems only when necessary to cope with the mainly social changes enforced and gradually replacing English administrators as they died out or were of suspect loyalty. Doomsday book was often cited as a prime example of synthesis but given the chronology it was not really utilised by William; nor did it cover the entire country, as many asserted. However, while there were some who displayed a degree of effective knowledge, many of these were not really able to demonstrate linkage to reasons for change/continuity. This resulted in a 'list' approach, which limited them to low Level 3. There was also a surprising degree of inaccuracy, with claims that trial by ordeal was a method of punishment – in spite of its title, that the Normans introduced the jury system and muddling what actually was changed or kept. Some answers showed little focus on the actual question and spent too long writing about the nature of feudalism, which would have been acceptable if it had been linked to the growth and role of baronial sheriffs and the need to introduce feudal courts, rather than concentrating on its military aspects.

Question 3

This was slightly more popular than Question 2 but did not show the same range of response, as there were very few answers to this question that achieved highly.

Question 05

The best answers here could produce a range of both political and theological factors and link them effectively to William's ambition. Many however, took the opportunity to discuss the nature of William's claim to the throne and the disputed succession, which, with few links, limited them to Level 2.

Question 06

Some answers here showed explicit understanding of William's motives towards the Church and balanced principle with pragmatism and the need for control, but they were few and far between. Some candidates appeared quite knowledgeable on issues relating to reform, but this was often because they considered everything that William did as reform and so provided no evaluation. Knowledge has to be linked to reasons and implications. Others tried to turn the question into one of change/continuity which was not the focus; nor did they have sufficient

understanding of the actual nature of the Anglo Saxon Church to accomplish this. Many simply attempted to bypass William himself and simply provided a list of some of Lanfranc's reforms without explicit links. Another approach was to consider whether William was actually pious or not and while this approach could have been acceptable it was limited by lack of explicit links and precise knowledge, particularly on his relationship with the papacy.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.