



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2C

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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

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Unit HIS2C

Unit 2C: The Reign of Henry IV of France, 1589–1610

General Comments

The standard of candidate responses entering for this alternative of the new specification was very encouraging. A small number of candidates achieved full marks for either the first part of each question or the second part of each question and at least one candidate gained full marks overall. The majority of candidates gained at least half marks on the first part and second part responses, indicating their understanding of the material and some ability to tailor their responses to the question. Answers to the first part of each question were slightly more variable as the use of source material in Question 1, whilst providing some support for answers, did require clear explanations of difference and reference to own knowledge. Most candidates chose to answer Question 3 as their second question; the focus of foreign policy in Question 2 may have seemed less accessible for some candidates. However, a good number of those who chose to answer Question 2 did respond well; in nearly half of candidates attempting the question gained a mark of 14 or more for the second part of each question and 10% gained a mark of 20 or more.

Question 1

Question 01

A number of candidates gained full marks on this question through their ability to identify a range of differences. However, not all answers appreciated the need to compare, and some simply paraphrased the sources, or were diverted into explaining 'why' the sources were different. Another tactic was to connect two separate paragraphs, each describing the content of one of the sources, with the comment. 'In contrast to Source A, Source B says...'. This is not enough to convince the examiners of clear understanding of the differences. To achieve Levels 3 and 4, comparisons needed to be direct and link their comparisons to specific issues such as the lawless behaviour of the nobles in contrast to the extent of their dependency on the government, and the action taken by the government to control them through funding of noble academies and imposing the death penalty for duelling. Few answers focused effectively on this latter issue which asserted the authority of the crown. In some instances, candidates also showed limited understanding of the focus on the accession, and failed to appreciate the challenge this posed to a new monarchy; often unnecessary details were offered about the reign itself; this information could not be rewarded. The background of the Wars of Religion were not always mentioned, e.g. in terms of length and severity, which suggested that nobles had become accustomed to a lack of central direction and assumed they could continue to pursue their own concerns. The fact that Henry IV was a relatively unknown quantity, a former Huguenot with a tenuous claim to the throne, could also have been effectively included.

Some answers did make references to specific instances of noble threat, e.g. the Biron and Bouillon revolts; this was acceptable but was more usefully explored in detail in Question 02. The issue of 'significant' threat compared with 'little danger' was the effective focus of many good responses. Some answers also understood that both sources actually concluded that nobles benefited from the actions of the monarchy and were therefore to be unlikely to be doing more than posturing to assert themselves at the start of a new reign.

Question 02

The biggest issue in relation to this question was that of the concept of 'importance' and the need to balance the factor in the question of 'Henry's treatment of the nobles' in relation to other factors. Some answers limited themselves only to the issue of the nobles. Some answers debated whether Henry's treatment of the nobles enabled him to establish his authority rather than how important the treatment was in relation to other factors. This was disappointing in view of the fact that the formulation for the questions has been circulated to centres and discussed in meetings. Unfortunately, as a consequence, some responses did not succeed in reaching an appropriate conclusion. Other weaker responses seemed to have limited knowledge of Henry's treatment of, and attitude to, the nobility.

The sources provided some material, e.g. the issues of 'domesticating' the nobility and introducing the death penalty in Source A, the use of nobles in government as seen in Source B, and the individual care and contact Henry had with his nobles as seen in Source C. Huguenot nobility in particular were allowed to remain armed and defensive for a period of time as a peacekeeping measure.

From own knowledge, answers did also consider other factors such as Henry's determination to strike out against those who challenged him, e.g. Biron; his own personality was also an asset – he was personable, spoke well, presented himself as a man who cared but who could also be ruthless, as seen in the case of the Biron conspiracy of 1601. Other factors often quoted were: Henry worked well with the political institutions and chose his ministers, such as Sully, with care; Sully was praised in depth for his work in restoring finance and the economy; Henry's speech at the Louvre regarding the Edict of Nantes was also referenced as showing Henry's authority. The fact that France was also almost at breaking point as a result of the collapse of order during the Wars of Religion is important; once Henry regained Paris, the rest of the country fell more into line and law and order began to return. The Edict of Nantes was often also quoted in this respect. Henry's concern to strengthen the borders of France and maintain peace with neighbouring states was occasionally quoted and could have been developed more.

Question 2**Question 03**

The few answers seen to this question mostly tended to focus on Spain rather than any other issue, considering briefly the threat of Catholicism and the proximity of Spain to France and often in a descriptive format. Better responses showed a clear appreciation of the threat of encirclement by Catholic powers and particularly of the 'Spanish Road' which allowed the movement of Spanish troops to the Spanish Netherlands on the border between France and the Holy Roman Empire. The funding of troops by Philip II for the Catholic league was also noted, showing some understanding of tenuous links to the papacy and Rome. There was more limited understanding of the general attitude of other European states to France and issues regarding Cleves Julich, the Swiss cantons and the Duchy of Ferrara. However, explaining the tensions within France regarding the making of alliances with Protestant states such as the Dutch provinces was good. Awareness of the effects of the Wars of Religion and Henry's delicate situation in Europe as the first French monarch whose religious credentials were questionable, was surprisingly limited.

Overall, most responses were simply describing events, rather than offering explanations; such responses were unlikely to be rewarded beyond Level 2. Those who could explain the tension within France regarding the making of alliances with protestant states such as England, Germany and the Dutch provinces were more likely to score well.

Question 04

The limited number of answers to this question suggested that most candidates had little understanding and/or knowledge in depth. Of those who did attempt the question, many gave a simplistic account of foreign policy and links to religious motives were quite sparse. Encirclement and the concept of the 'Grand Design' were seen as important issues but were not well explained. One exceptional answer cited a range of factors which drove policy, e.g. religious issues as the motivation for war with Spain, the concern to acquire Protestant allies, Venice and the papal decrees of 1606, and Henry's involvement in the making of the Peace of Antwerp in the Netherlands and Henry's promotion of himself as peacemaker; the encirclement of France by Catholic powers.

Question 3**Question 05**

Many answers to this question were generalised. One major relevant factor frequently quoted was the impact of the Wars of Religion linked to blockades, high taxation, debasement of the coinage and resultant high prices and the difficulties of transportation. There were also the persistent effects of epidemics. In addition, there was a weakness/lack of support from previous governments; the weather was also sometimes cited. One very good response was able to package this into a consideration of the concept of an economic downturn in France and the growth of Mediterranean trade. Nevertheless, this left out the issue of population growth which was hindered by the effects of the wars and limited demand.

Question 06

The concept of 'ten years of peace' was largely ignored or quickly dismissed by most candidates. Answers would have benefited from a link to the causes of the peace, such as an end to the war with Spain in 1598, the end of internal wars in France about religion and the general freedom from fear of invasion or uprising. All of these factors gave some stability to both town and country, not to mention the government itself. The discerning student should also have been aware that peace brought a release of finance which enabled growth and in some cases experimentation. The more widely read might have been aware of the growing interest in agricultural development promoted by, for example, Olivier de Serres, who wrote a text in 1600 (*Theatre of Agriculture*) which became a best seller of the day. A consequence of omitting effective references to this aspect of the question was a reduction in the marks available.

In search of other factors, some answers offered useful issues such as the restoration of the monarchy under Henry IV and the work of Sully, the latter particularly in terms of the development of the infrastructure, such as canals. Individuals such as Laffermis were also quoted. There were some excellent accounts of the changes which evolved in agriculture, in particular, but also in the development of new industries such as silk, tapestries etc. which found buyers both at home and abroad. Improvements in communications, canals and roads, were also noted with the cessation of war and safety of travel. There were also some references to changes in taxation which benefited producers. Henry's support was also seen as a factor although not fully explored. Some also mentioned the Council of Commerce which, amongst other issues, promoted the growth of literature on farming and industry which in turn supported interest in new techniques and growth of the economy. The work of Sully was often mentioned and a list of his achievements, e.g. in finance and taxation, was often noted.

An issue which candidates need to be aware of in questions such as this is that of the difference between finance and the economy; too often these aspects are treated as if they are interchangeable

Conclusion

This is the first year of the new specification and some reflection on overall performance of candidates is possible. Most acquitted themselves well. However, some responses to the first part of each question were a little thin and did not always focus on explanations and this is something which centres may need to reinforce. The directive 'Explain why.' gives the impetus for this approach. A good list of explanations, approximately three or four, with some supporting material, showing the links between them should take a candidate into the top level. Overall, the responses to the longer essay questions were mostly effective and candidates have understood the need to consider the issue in the question from both points of view, identifying issues of agreement **and** aspects of disagreement. This does not have to be perfectly balanced in terms of the extent of writing, but does need to include a range of factors on both sides of the argument with a reasoned conclusion which takes into account the previous discussion.

The use of the sources in Question 1 has been effective overall; candidates have tried to reference them appropriately. Most answers to this question started with an analysis of the sources, which is one route. However, the best answers used the sources throughout; although this is quite a sophisticated skill its development will significantly enhance responses and lead to more attainment at the higher levels.

Although there are some negative issues raised in this report, the work produced by most candidates was of a good standard and knowledge was generally used effectively. It is hoped that the comments made will enable centres to maximise their students achievements, enabling them to reach their potential at this level.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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