



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2Q

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2Q

Unit 2Q: The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975

General Comments

There were very few examples of rubric infringements. The vast majority of candidates answered two questions, including the compulsory source-based question. Only a tiny minority failed to complete the examination. This clearly indicates good basic preparation and good time management. Although there were many examples of very good answers, and a much smaller number of underdeveloped responses, a large number of responses fell within Level 3. This applied to both the first part and the second part of questions. Candidates and centres are advised to revisit the generic level descriptors and identify the characteristics of each level and the nature of responses necessary to reach each level. The overall knowledge and understanding of candidates was good and it was evident that a significant number of candidates appreciated the importance of developing analytical and balanced responses which displayed clear signs of understanding through evaluation and the linkage between relevant factors. Most responses remained focused on the specifics of the question and there were relatively few examples of extensive irrelevancy. It was clear that the great majority of candidates came to the examination prepared, both in terms of knowledge and examination technique. The generic level descriptors in the mark schemes represent an essential guide on how this preparation could be further enhanced and built upon.

Question 1

Question 01

Very few candidates scored below Level 2 on this question. Those who did simply paraphrased the sources or made simple comparisons without any attempt to focus on the views in the sources. Large numbers of candidates were able to identify both differences and similarities although a number included only very limited, or no, knowledge of their own to support and develop these similarities and differences. Answers which only identified differences or similarities and omitted any own knowledge remained in Level 2. The best answers were those which displayed the candidates' ability to place the Tet Offensive in a wider context and those that were focused on explanation rather than simply including knowledge for its own sake.

Question 02

Relatively few candidates produced entirely source-dependent responses. It was clear that a significant number of candidates had made genuine attempts to evaluate the importance of Tet as a factor in the shift in US policy in Vietnam. A number of answers became a little too influenced by the sources, particularly Source B. These responses often emphasised the importance of Tet as a reason for US withdrawal but paid less attention to the importance of Tet in terms of the adoption of diplomacy as the route to withdrawal. Despite this, there were some excellent examples of focused understanding. Many candidates were able to argue that militarism still played a significant role in US strategy well into Nixon's administration. Many candidates placed Tet and its impact in the wider context of détente and Kissinger's linkage strategy. There were some impressive examples of candidates using wider contextual knowledge and understanding to good effect in this question. Equally many candidates were able to explore the importance of other factors beyond Tet. References were made to My Lai, the role of the media and the development of post-Tet protest. Many answers suggested that Nixon's militarism in Laos and Cambodia failed and this was the primary reason for the shift to diplomacy. These approaches gave those candidates who used them the opportunities to

develop evaluative and balanced responses and thereby display high levels of understanding and historical skills.

Question 2

Question 03

The response to this question was generally good. Most candidates were able to display a good range of factors explaining Diem's assassination and support these with developed knowledge of their own. Effective references were made to the corrupt nature of the regime and its poor relations with the Buddhist majority. Most answers referred to the growing alienation of the USA and the failure to develop internal reform designed to unite the South Vietnamese population and retain the support of the army. Although many candidates clearly had a sound knowledge base and the ability to explain the significance of this in terms of the question there was less evidence of an ability to draw links between the factors. Level 4 answers were characterised by evidence of prioritisation and an examination of the relationship between the factors. This approach enabled such answers to offer depth to the explanation.

Question 04

There were some good answers to this question. A significant number of candidates were able to link the desire for genuine independence and support for nationalism amongst the South Vietnamese people with support for the Vietcong. This enabled them to balance an ideological commitment against an alternative motive for support. There were some fairly sophisticated responses which suggested the apolitical mentality of most South Vietnamese peasants and the urgency of survival. Few candidates failed to consider the impact of the approach and attitudes of the USA. Weaker answers tended to recycle detail used in Question 03. Such responses narrowed the factors to a popular hatred of Diem. This implied that the attraction to communism was fixed by November 1963 and all subsequent events had no real significance. Despite this it was clear that very many candidates came to the examination well-prepared to address this question and many produced a good range of detail which showed explicit understanding and well-balanced argument.

Question 3

Question 05

The general observations made in Question 03 also apply to this question. A significant number of answers reached Level 3 but lacked sufficient linkage and precision in the supporting detail to take them into Level 4. Unlike Question 03, a number of candidates drifted into irrelevancy by referring to material outside the time parameters of the question. References to My Lai, for example, failed to gain reward. Despite this, most candidates displayed a sound knowledge of the nature and extent of the opposition and the reasons for it. The role of the media was explored by many and there were some good explanatory links made between opposition to the war and the civil rights movement. Relatively few candidates considered the variable nature of the opposition and the different motives that drove opposition. There tended to be a view held, or implied, that opposition was united through common motives.

Question 06

Responses to this question were slightly more variable to quality than those found for Question 04. Many candidates were able to identify a good range of factors such as Johnson's commitment to containment, the role of his advisers and his own arrogance through his certainty that US economic and military power would succeed, to refer to only some. Despite this only the best answers went on to develop a balanced analysis. Many candidates clearly had a sound knowledge base but were less confident in developing a sustained argument. Some candidates were able to confidently argue that Johnson had a strategy which underpinned his escalation. Escalation was a military means to a diplomatic end. Some good answers attempted to explore Johnson's thinking and moved away from the view that he was an

arrogant and malleable individual who simply allowed escalation to happen. Weaker responses recited a range of factors but made little or no attempt to link them and so did not weld the detail into a balanced argument.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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