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ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

History 1041
Specification

Unit HIS2R

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the new numbering system

Unit HIS2R

Unit 2R: A Sixties Social Revolution? British Society, 1959–1975

General Comments

This summer's examination saw another enthusiastic cohort of students engaging with the material of the unit. The first source-based question, based on views of young people and the impact of the mass media, produced some trenchant responses on the vitality of youth in comparison with the stale attitude of the older generation, while Question 06 on race relations also became a vehicle for some heart-felt commentaries on the failings of the 'multicultural society', sometimes containing as many references to the present day, as to 1975. It was certainly good to see so much passion for this unit's themes, although candidates do need to be aware of the need to distance themselves from the events of the past, even if they are studying fairly recent past. Whilst some of the issues of the 1960s continue to have resonance today, it is important that candidates approach this unit as they would any other period of history and that when they make judgements, they base these on hard historical fact. Sadly, there were occasions when this simple principle seemed to get forgotten in the determination to air 'views'. Nevertheless, the overall response to the questions posed this summer was most encouraging. Very few failed to complete the paper or to demonstrate some basic understanding of the period. The many who were able to draw on clear and specific examples to support their ideas often performed very well indeed, while the outstanding shone through their wealth of detail and their depth of understanding of issues such as cultural change and racial harmony.

Question 1

Question 01
It was pleasing to note that a large number of candidates avoided the temptation to write out what one of the sources said, before making any comparison with the other. However, there are still those who waste time telling the examiner that 'Source A is an extract from…' which is clearly unnecessary, unless this fact is a prelude to a pertinent point on provenance or the type of source in comparison with the other. Most candidates found more than one difference between the two extracts and a good number also commented on similarity, although those who deemed them similar because they were both written in 1964, or both mentioned the Beatles, were not addressing a similarity of 'view' as asked for by the question. Some candidates struggled to provide appropriate contextual 'own knowledge', a few resorting to a stand-alone account of Beatlemania or youth fashion. References to provenance were sometimes made relevant, but they needed to used to explain the difference in the views to be credit-worthy. The most effective comments, explained why Paul Johnson referred to 'chain store make-up' and 'mass-produced clothes' and why Bill Deedes thought divisions of class were disappearing and young people becoming a 'new social force'. Such 'own knowledge' was used both to explain the views and to comment on the differences between those views. Finally, those reaching the highest marks, usually provided a short conclusion in which they stressed the degree of difference and (usually) how the two sources might be reconciled. Those who tried to suggest that one was 'better' or 'more truthful' or that one or both were 'biased' missed the point of the question.

Question 02
Candidates varied in the way in which they tackled this question. A few tried to answer the question solely from the information provided in the sources and whilst this could carry them some way, a full answer needed not only some specific own knowledge but also some thought and judgement about what created cultural change in the decade. The most successful candidates considered various aspects of the mass media, usually embracing television, with references to Sources B and C, magazines and radio (both mentioned in Source C) and sometimes books, newspapers, posters and hoardings and other arts. Links to cultural change brought in advertising, fashion, music and developed the themes of Source A, sometimes contrasted with Source B to suggest both positive and negative cultural change. Some showed balanced evaluation by considering the ways in which the various media proved successful in promoting cultural change, and ways in which they did not. Others chose to balance the contribution of the mass media against other factors bringing about cultural change and themes as diverse as affluence, education, transport changes, science and immigration were tackled and evaluated. Less successful answers were one-sided – looking at the contribution of the media but without analysing its degree of importance, whilst the weakest candidates failed to respond meaningfully to the terms 'mass media' or 'cultural change'. Such candidates often referred to fashion, or music as aspects of the media in themselves and the focus of their answers was on examples of changes – as in the raising of hemlines or the appearance of pop groups – rather than on what this meant for society as a whole.

Question 2

Question 03
With the exception of those candidates who thought that the Labour Party had been in power until 1959 and were then ousted by a resurgent Conservative Party rising on a tide of revulsion against nationalisation, most candidates showed a good understanding of the factors at play here. Most stressed the importance of affluence, and those that were able to link other factors to this, or to balance the Conservatives' advantages against Labour's weaknesses, were able to reach the highest marks. Sadly there were some who possessed an excellent knowledge of reasons for the Conservative success but presented them as an unrelated list. Candidates may need reminding that links and connections between factors need to be present for an award at Level 4 and that a conclusion is often an effective way of showing some judgement, provided that judgement is supported by what has gone before.

Question 04
There was scarcely a candidate who was unable to say something about the 'Establishment' and most were able to use the Profumo case as an example of its detrimental effects on the Conservative Party's electoral performance in 1964. A few confused Home and Heath (and even Heath and Wilson), but the majority offered a sound range of reasons as to why the Conservatives were defeated, usually stressing the importance of the campaign run by 'Huddersfield Harold' and the attractions of 'the white heat of technology' which the Labour Party promised. Good candidates did not, however, allow themselves to become too far side-tracked away from the importance of the 'Establishment' , some arguing for its primacy, others suggesting that its only importance was as a context to an election based on personalities and policies.

Question 3

Question 05
The better and weaker candidates were divided here on their recognition of the significance of the date '1962'. This was, of course, the year when immigration numbers hit an all-time high, and although candidates were not required to supply details of the ending of free immigration for members of the Commonwealth that year, an awareness of this circumstance would have helped the focus of answers. The best candidates referred to the problems of free immigration; issues of discrimination – in particular the Notting Hill Riots of 1958 and the Kelso Cochrane case of 1959; problems with employment and housing; the part played by pressure groups and arguments over the 'type' of immigrants. (The frequently mentioned 'Rivers of Blood' speech from Powell (1968) and Peter Griffiths' racist election campaign in Smethick (1964) were often cited, but out of context here). The emphasis did, of course, need to be on why immigration concerned the government and the best candidates were aware that in opinion polls, 90% of the population favoured some curbs being placed on 'black' immigration, making this an important political issue. As in Question 03 a conclusion linking the factors to the government's position was often an effective means of propelling an answer into the top mark level.

Question 06
Responses to this question were the only slightly disappointing aspect of this summer's paper. A good number of candidates did not know what the Race Relations Acts were, and whilst it was not essential to be able to cite their specific terms (although most of the better candidates did), the acts were too often confused with those limiting immigration to Britain. Most candidates argued that the acts were not successful – whatever their knowledge of the terms – and provided a reasonably balanced account of the state of British society in 1975, with its elements of assimilation and emerging multiculturalism set alongside incidents of race riots and the popularity of Enoch Powell's overtly racist views. Once again, the best answers astounded with their wealth of detail, reference to individual achievements and balanced and thoughtful commentary on the degree to which any legislation might bring about racial harmony. Sadly, however, the number of those showing such insight was relatively small.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the
Results statistics page of the AQA Website.