



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1B**

***Report on the Examination***

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# *Unit HIS1B*

## **Unit 1B: Britain, 1483–1529**

### **General Comments**

There was a very full range in the quality of response to this paper. The highest level responses were typified by exceptionally detailed, precise subject knowledge used in a supportive manner. At the lower end there remain candidates that might be stylistically sound in their responses, but who often lack any depth or precision to their knowledge. It was much less common for a response to be awarded at the lower levels simply because of a narrative approach. There were a number of sound responses that unfortunately strayed almost entirely outside of the chronological limits placed by the question – it is worth reminding candidates to take care when reading the question and to ensure that they are answering exactly what is required within the chronological period set.

There were relatively few issues of timing and the vast majority of candidates seemed able to complete their work in the time available. In addition, there were very few rubric infringements, although there were a handful of candidates – largely from the same Centre – that only answered two sub-sections of a question rather than two whole questions.

Centres have, in the main, taught the technique required to achieve the higher levels on the ‘Explain why...’ questions very well. Most candidates were able to offer a range of reasons for an event and most were at least aware of the need to link these factors together. The most commonly used form of linkage was prioritising of factors, or categorising as long-term/short-term; however there were still quite a number that were heavily assertive in this respect. Identifying and discussing a range of separate factors but then simply adding in the conclusion a single sentence beginning ‘the most important was’ cannot really be seen as anything but unsupported assertion. The very best answers, although admittedly rarely seen, were those that established an argument about linkage at the outset and maintained this throughout – this was most typically about why one factor was much more important than all of the rest. There were some very able candidates with excellent subject knowledge that were unable to access the higher levels simply because of a lack of effective linkage and therefore it might be a skill worthy of further practice and revision.

The longer essay style questions were generally done well. Stylistically, it is increasingly uncommon to see answers that are entirely narrative; in fact it was much more likely for examiners to read a highly argumentative piece that covered key points, but that unfortunately lacked almost any specific knowledge in support. Centres themselves are obviously preparing candidates well in essay technique, but this should be backed up by the candidate being able to deploy a good amount of specific historical knowledge.

All questions were answered by a good number of candidates, although more answered Question 1 and Question 2. All examiners remarked on the pleasure of marking some exceptionally well answered scripts. It was a joy to reflect on the popularity and continued success of the study of this period in centres.

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**Question 1**

- 01** This question was generally answered very well indeed as might be expected for a topic so central to the specification. Most candidates were able to offer a very impressive range of factors and some were also able to keep a reasoned line about the most significant. In addition, many responses identified long term and short term issues and in so doing forged an alternate route to the higher levels by proving links between factors. The most common error seen on this question was the temptation to explain why Richard III lost the throne, rather than why he was unsuccessful at Bosworth. There are some factors highly significant in the general political decline of Richard's reign, but that are not obviously linked to his defeat on the battlefield. Hence, candidates that suggested that Richard's very claim to the throne undermined his rule were only able to gain full credit if there was an explicit explanation about how this might have weakened him at Bosworth. Conversely, there were a number of responses that made it very clear that the uncertainties of Richard's reign meant it was much less likely that nobles would offer their support on the battlefield. At the higher levels, this type of response moved beyond the general, and offered specific examples of noble families wavering in their commitment. Pleasingly, knowledge of the events of the battle itself was generally also very good indeed. There were a number of responses that offered very detailed explanation of the flaws in Richard's military tactics, or indeed the extent to which he was subject to misfortune. Unfortunately there were also some responses that displayed good knowledge of events at the battle but that struggled to produce an explanation why Richard lost.
- 02** This question was generally answered well and there were some very impressive displays of knowledge combined with a firm focus on the set question. There was however the occasional response that failed to focus on the issue of royal authority and some candidates that seemed determined to answer a question different to the one set. In this respect candidates tended to take issue with the notion that royal authority had been consolidated at all and consequently spent most of the time looking for evidence to the contrary. The clear task set by the question was to consider reasons for the successful consolidation of authority and in this case balance might be offered by considering a range of factors other than the marriage to Elizabeth of York.

A much more common reason for candidates being awarded the lower levels was a failure to consider the dates set by the question. There were quite a number that embarked on a consideration of the whole of Henry VII's reign and thereby wrote a great amount of material that unfortunately could not be credited. On a similar theme, there were responses that resorted to overly general support – for example, most candidates were confident in suggesting that Henry VII used 'propaganda' in order to advance his authority, but then failed to identify any examples specific to the period given. These, however, were relatively infrequent examples seen amongst what was a well answered and confidently argued number of responses.

**Question 2**

- 03** This question worked very well indeed and highlighted no obvious concerns. Most candidates that chose to answer this obviously knew the treaty and were able to advance reasons that went beyond the generic. However, there was a minority that relied on tired generalisations, such as Henry wanted peace, but they then failed to even identify whom he wanted peace with or the countries that were signatories to the Treaty of Etaples.

- 04** This question caused more problems for candidates. Trade remains an area in which there is less secure knowledge – and even that is often limited to a passing acquaintance with the domestic cloth trade. It was quite rare, as on the previous occasions when trade has been set, for candidates to display a good understanding of the Hanseatic League, Antwerp and especially voyages of discovery which were themselves delineated by international treaty.

Aside from issues of subject knowledge, there were also a number of otherwise promising candidates that clearly misinterpreted the question. Rather than considering the role that international trade played in developing foreign relations, some candidates launched upon either a simple description of overseas trade, or a more detailed explanation of why overseas trade was important to Henry. Hence there were substantial and detailed answers explaining why Henry needed to expand trade because of the dependence of domestic workers on cloth, or indeed explained how Henry managed to gain tax revenue from trade, but failed to argue anything about the focus of the question which was of course foreign relations. The very good responses – of which there were some truly outstanding examples – argued that trade was important in Henry's relations with foreign powers but suggested that other factors were much more important. Commonly, the most important factor identified by most candidates was Henry's desire to root out potential usurpers and pretenders that might find support abroad. Candidates that were able to offer this sort of balance generally did well.

### **Question 3**

- 05** This question worked very well and proved an excellent indicator of the candidates that had spent time revising the topics in depth. It was very pleasing to note that almost all responses to this question displayed at least a sound standard of knowledge. At the lower end of the levels were the responses that resorted to the same sort of generalisation seen in Q03 where candidates gave very vague assertions about the need for peace and a desire not to spend money on war. These assertions, whilst correct, still need a good degree of specific support if they are to be credited as analysis. At the mid range, levels chronology did seem to challenge some who made extensive reference to the Field of the Cloth of Gold. However, it was clear that most candidates were able to establish a range of reasons for peace, with some good material specific to 1514.
- 06** There were some very pleasing responses to this question from candidates that managed to focus on international peace. However, as in previous exam series, a question on Wolsey prompted some very general responses that revolved around issues of the annulment and Wolsey's fall from power. Wolsey is a notable section of the specification and candidates would do well to revise the full range of issues, rather than hoping for a question on his ability to serve the king. Even at the mid level range, there was not really a convincing focus on promoting international peace; rather, candidates would tend to launch upon a survey of foreign policy in general during this period. If the higher levels are to be awarded then the response must of course firmly focus on the issue in the question – in this case peace. The balance most commonly offered was an analysis of war during the period and an assessment of the degree to which Wolsey was responsible for this. Some responses however became distracted and offered detailed assessment about why Wolsey wanted international peace – and this normally morphed into the reasons why Wolsey needed to serve the king, some of which included extensive biography. Yet, the idea of degree of success in promoting peace was the focus demanded. Similarly, candidates referred correctly to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, but it was the minority that could go beyond a description of events to explain its impact on international peace – more significantly perhaps there were quite a number unsure of whether Wolsey had

actually had a role to play in the planning and conduct of the event. However, those candidates that stuck firmly to the focus tended to utilise a very impressive range and depth of knowledge in response to this question.

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