



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1060–1087

General Comments

This paper was better done than 2010 June paper. The length of answers was largely appropriate, although some are still writing far too much in response to Question 01. Very few failed to complete the paper. However, there are important issues which need to be addressed. Candidates' knowledge of actual events still seems limited and it is important to stress that this is a study of a period **in depth**. In reality, actual understanding of the period and the part played by important events, as well as aspects of society, are not being fully grasped. This leads to generalised assertion which does not gain more than Level 2, especially when it is usually expressed in vague and imprecise language which fails to show an adequate grasp of relevant concepts.

The continued increased use of personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' and assertive phrases such as 'in my opinion', few of which are supported by facts and relevant explanation, only serves to underline the lack of depth and grasp of relevant context. In addition, answers are poorly structured. Judgement is a requirement of 24-mark 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' in contradiction of the purpose for which it was set, which obviously closes off the higher levels.

An added feature to this year's lower level answers was the extreme use of hypothetical questions – in fact, a few answers consisted of little more. The candidate's purpose is to **answer** questions and not rely on the use of these as some sort of essay structure which frankly does not work.

Question 2 was far more popular than Question 3 with only a small minority preferring to answer the question on the church though it was done quite well on the whole.

It is important to remember that 'Explain why' questions require a range of reasons, supporting evidence and the identification of some link, order or the ability to demonstrate why one factor is more important than the others in order to reach the higher levels.

In essay questions – which includes Question 02 – candidates are expected to show an awareness of the question through the use of relevant material and explicit comment. Links need to be made which may take a variety of forms such as distinction between long and short term factors or results, themes or the relationship of factors. It is the overall awareness of these and the depth given to explain this that is important. In most answers the 'balance' required for the higher levels will be achieved by comparing material supporting the focus of the question or premise of the quotation, with other factors.

It is very important to consider what is meant by 'historical interpretation' as this appears to have become a new issue this year with candidates generalising about 'contemporary' and 'revisionist' historians with no obvious understanding of what this means – if anything – in the context of this period, and no knowledge of who any of these might actually be. Historical interpretations at this level can be taken to be an awareness that events, issues and

developments have more than one explanation or consequence; specific historiographical references are not required; they will be rewarded only when used well and appropriately which sadly, was on very few occasions. While historiography can be useful in the hands of knowledgeable candidates, clear analytical responses are always infinitely preferred

Question 1

- 01** Source comparison questions are there to examine the extent to which the views within the given sources agree or disagree on the topic of the actual question. Candidates had few difficulties in identifying the basic differences and similarities of view. Those who did not score highly were those who made a summary of each extract and only then identified the relevant points which was a substantial waste of time. A number also relied on identifying omissions ; ‘Source A does not mention the point made in Source B...’ which is not actually relevant and there are still those who look for differences of **fact** or turn the question into one relating to reliability which is not the purpose of the question. Such a focus is only relevant when explaining the reasons for differences within the views. There were also 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. ‘Own knowledge’ requires candidates to consider the issue in context, to display an understanding of why sources differ (or are similar) possibly with reference to provenance or type of source and use these in the actual question to possibly explain the reasons for similarity/difference. It is not additional factual information for its own sake. Failure to do this effectively led some candidates to provide material more suited to the following question. In order to reach the highest levels, they are expected to comment on the **degree** of similarity/difference between the views in a convincing answer.
- 02** Many candidates still make very little use of any ‘own knowledge’ at all in this question and rely 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 limits them to Level 2 or low Level 3 as the answers produced remain unconvincing and of insufficient depth. The sources provided arguments and some detail which candidates needed to extract and build on to provide a balanced view. Basic answers relied on paraphrase and misplaced source references which was underlined by a lack of secure knowledge. Better answers considered the key words to provide debate, identifying 1072 as a turning point. These answers showed a good level of understanding, providing precisely supported argument which led convincingly to their chosen view, rather than a summary.

Question 2

- 03** The best answers concentrated on the key words and relevant context, providing the linkage between the reasons which was needed for the highest level. Very few unfortunately fail to do this or rely on an assertion relating to ‘the most important reason’ without explaining **why** it is more important than the others. A surprising number did not do well on this question and seemed to know very little about Harold’s position in the kingdom by the end of 1065. Many of these took refuge in listing the available candidates for the throne which, it needs to be stressed, is only one reason and severely limited the available marks. There is still also the tendency to stress **how** rather than **why**, which limits candidates to Level 2 only.
- 04** This was a question relating to causation and many of the weaker answers failed to respond to this, lacking explicit links to why. What separated a good answer from the

merely average was the degree to which candidates considered the range of reasons and presented an effective and well supported debate, rather than just listing points. Better candidates identified the nature of the argument, appreciated the interpretation and balanced ideas of William's competence against the context of Harold's position. Such answers were well supported with precise detail and direct reference was made throughout to the key debate in the question, which enabled them to arrive at a secure judgement.

Question 3

- 05** Although this was not a popular question it was in fact better done than 03 and the best answers here could produce a range of both political and religious factors and link them effectively.
- 06** This question was perhaps not so well tackled. Weaker candidates attempted to shift the focus of the question from Lanfranc to William and assert that it was William who asserted his authority – this was not the point of the question. These did not seem to have any precise knowledge about Lanfranc's work in the Church after 1070 and offered little real assessment. However, there were some excellent answers seen which placed the Archbishop and his aims within the context of both William's and the papacy's approach at this time as well as effectively acknowledging Lanfranc's own views and ambitions, often too easily forgotten in his partnership with William.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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