



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2H

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2H

Unit 2H: Britain, 1902–1918: The Impact of New Liberalism

General Comments

There were only a minimal number of rubric infringements this year. Overall the candidature showed a wide knowledge base and this enabled candidates to exercise choice across the whole range of questions. A key issue that remains is that of enabling candidates to reach Level 4 in their responses to Questions 2 (03) and 3 (05). There were a number of examples of answers which develop as an extended list. The answers have, for example, at the beginning of paragraphs opening phrases such as ‘The first reason is . . .’ and ‘The second reason is . . .’ and so on. This does establish a range of factors but it generally mitigates against establishing the necessary linkage and development needed for entry into Level 4. Answers to Questions 2 (04) and 3 (06) suggest a growing ability to develop balanced and analytical responses. There seemed to be fewer examples of purely descriptive or narrative responses. Responses to the compulsory source based questions are improving in quality. Increasingly candidates are addressing the focus on ‘views’ in Question 1 (01) rather than merely offering descriptions of the source content. The use of wider knowledge bases is also apparent in responses to Question 1 (02).

Question 1

- 01** Although there were examples of candidates only being able to identify either similarities or differences in the views a large number of responses identified both and this enable them to move into Level 3. It was clear that there is an increasing awareness amongst centres and their candidates of the importance of developing both similarities and differences and bedding these in a knowledge base. The focus in the question is on comparing the views rather than simple specific detail which is then left unexplained. Weaker candidates tended to simply recite sections from the text of each source without any clear explanation. This lack of development inevitably restricted such responses to Level 2. Overall there was also a move away from reviewing each source individually and then bolting on some brief references to similarities and differences. There were far more examples of integrated responses with suggested greater understanding and focus. More good candidates could have entered Level 4 had they developed their answers with further own knowledge and explanation. This may be seen as an issue of examination technique rather than one of a lack of candidate knowledge and understanding. Careful and detailed reference to the Level 4 descriptors could prove to be a highly recommended and valuable exercise in preparation for future examinations in this paper.
- 02** Few answers failed to refer to both the sources and the candidates’ own knowledge. Few candidates had presented themselves for this examination left only with a dependency on the sources. Equally the majority of answers were able to refer to all three of the sources. Some very good answers not only obeyed the instructions in the question but also went on to suggest that the Labour Party’s political strength by 1914 was rather limited, the conclusion being that the alliance with the Liberals had only limited impact. Others considered the Labour party in terms of the Conservatives and their relative decline. There were some sound and developed analyses of the Lib-Lab Pact. Many answers considered the influence of the Labour Party on some Liberal social and employment legislation. Some viewed it as extensive while others commented on it very limited nature.

Overall many of the responses showed not only an ability to use historical sources effectively but also a sound knowledge and understanding base.

Question 2

- 03** Many candidates were able to offer a range of relevant and accurate reasons for the passage of the 1911 Parliament Act. This brought them into Level 3 comfortably. A majority of answers developed detail around the 1909 Budget and the importance of ensuring that the Conservative-dominated House of Lords would be unable to not only block financial bills but also any other social welfare legislation proposed by the Liberal government. Some very good answers were able to develop links between the factors. For example, some candidates suggested that the urgency to protect Liberal legislation was partly to challenge the institutionalised power of the Conservative Party but also to maintain the momentum of popularity for the Liberal Party in the face of a widening electorate and the growing support for the newly emerging Labour Party. Less developed responses were very much limited to the Budget and the undemocratic nature of the Lord's veto. Although many answers reached Level 3 there were clearly a number of well informed and able candidates who failed to develop their answers through a form of linkage that would extend them into Level 4. Such answers need to show some degree of structured prioritisation or connections between the reasons in order to exhibit the degree of understanding required for Level 4.
- 04** The most common approach to this question was that of outlining the content of reform measures related to children, the elderly and workers. Extensive detail was often presented dealing with the strengths and limitations of the measures. For example, the non-compulsory nature of some measures linked to children or the meagre amounts paid out in old age pensions. This detail was often valid but prone to a descriptive approach or very limited analytical depth. This balance but lack of depth often limited this type of response to Level 3. Better, and more analytical answers often went beyond this primary focus on the content of social reform measures and explored the wider context. Effective references were often made to New Liberalism and the quest for national efficiency. The reforms were judged in this context. Also the wider political situation was often examined in good answers. Such responses often explored the political motives underpinning the reforms, particularly the issues of strengthening the Liberal Party as a dominant political force. Challenges to both the Conservatives and the Labour Party were also raised as motivating factors and candidates went on to evaluate the success of the measures in terms of these political motives.

Question 3

- 05** As with Question 2 (03) there were many answers that reached Level 3. Many candidates were familiar with the political relationship between the Irish Nationalists and the Liberals and the element of dependency they shared. Candidates also linked this political dependency to the passage of the Parliament Act and the simple reality that this measure was not only possible in view of the constitutional changes but it was also a manageable compromise for the bulk of the Liberal Party. In this way candidates were able to connect the factors and enter into Level 4. Less developed answers tended to be limited to the idea of political dependency after the 1910 elections and that this measure was a necessary price the Liberals had to pay to maintain Nationalist support.
- 06** There were many examples of developed and balanced responses to this question. The great majority of responses supported the idea of Asquith's ambivalence and his tardiness in decision making. His 'wait and see' approach was picked up by many candidates and

used to support the premise in the question. Some answers drifted into narratives on the Curragh mutiny and the rise of militant nationalism and unionism in Ireland. In this case the balance tended to become more implicit rather than explicit. The best answers were those that not only selected relevant and balanced detail but were also able to analyse the relative importance of the evidence base and define a judgement in terms of the focus in the question. Only a small minority of answers drifted into irrelevancy by ignoring the dates in the question. Some of these referred to the development of Home rule over time, often going back to a point well before 1902. More commonly the irrelevancy resulted from stretching the conflict beyond 1914. There were examples of substantial detail being included on the 1916 uprising and the consequences up to 1918. This implied that these candidates had largely ignored the specifics in the question and were determined to write all they knew of the post-1912 Irish Question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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