



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2Q

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Unit HIS2Q

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

General Comments

There were only a tiny number of rubric infringements or examples of where candidates were unable to attempt all the required questions. As always, centres are encouraged to review the generic level descriptors which form the cornerstone of the marking. Candidate familiarity with these and their application through practice answers is essential. One issue is worthy of note here and it is referred to in a little more detail within this report. There is an increasing tendency for candidates to approach answers to Questions 04 and 06 in a similar way they may use to answer Questions 03 and 05. Some candidates see 03 and 05 as the development of an extended list of reasons. They are aware that this could enable them to reach level 3 within a four level mark range. This same approach is then used to answer the 24 mark question. This is holding some well informed candidates down in the mark range.

Question 1

- 01** Relatively few answers failed to establish both similarities and differences between the views in the sources. There were a number of candidates who allowed their answers to be driven entirely by the sources and placed little or no focus on the importance of using their own knowledge. This inevitably had a limiting effect on the marks such answers could achieve. The best responses were those that focused on a comparison of the views and used detail from the sources to support these whilst at the same time expanding the use of their own knowledge to reinforce these references to the sources. Relatively few answers approached this question by simply describing the content of each source and adding nothing further by way of explanation. Such an approach is particularly prone to achieving a relatively low level of reward.
- 02** Very few answers failed to use both the sources and own knowledge. Those that did were confined to Level 2 or lower. Some answers were able to develop some balance by exploring not only the logistical support but also a range of other factors which strengthened the enemies of South Vietnam and the USA. Range and balance are important elements in a good answer but there is also the requirement to develop an evaluation. The question asks candidates to consider 'How important' the logistical support was. This can only be achieved by establishing a comparative analysis founded upon a well selected and firm evidence base from both the sources and candidate own knowledge. It was this element that a number of well informed candidates did not develop in their answers.

Question 2

- 03** Many candidates clearly had a good knowledge base and understanding of the wider context underpinning the USA's involvement in Vietnam. There was clear evidence that many candidates were aware of the Cold War context and the direction of US strategic and political thinking under Kennedy. Many candidates were able to explore the impact of containment and Kennedy's commitment to it. Occasionally less developed answers referred to Kennedy's Catholicism and his consequent hatred of atheistic Communism. Some good answers developed Kennedy's commitment to stopping the spread of

Communism into Third World countries and linked this to South Vietnam. There were also some good references to the regional importance of South Vietnam. This type of developed detail and range was often enough to enable answers to move into Level 4. Those answers that simply itemised a range of reasons with some explanatory detail tended to remain in Level 3. Undeveloped range was inevitably confined to Level 2 or Level 1.

- 04** Relatively few answers lacked balance. Occasionally candidates expressed the view that because Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, it was not only difficult but almost impossible to establish his medium- to long-term plans in terms of US commitment to South Vietnam. Stronger answers addressed the question and recognised the influences that impacted on Kennedy's thinking. There were many examples of balanced responses which considered the wider context. The problems within South Vietnam itself were well developed through analyses of Diem's regime and the condition of the South Vietnamese army. Well developed comments were often evident through an examination of North Vietnam and its intentions. Overall there were a significant number of soundly balanced and analytical responses to this question.

Question 3

- 05** There were some well developed answers to this question. Many candidates were able to offer a good range of reasons as to why Johnson did not stand for re-election in 1968. Few answers failed to develop the impact of the Tet Offensive on Johnson's thinking. Equally, many answers considered the impact of popular protest and the role of the media. References to the costs, both economical and human, were also raised in many answers. Relatively few answers were unable to develop a range of factors and this meant that many entered Level 3. The real issue was enabling such answers to extend into Level 4. Some answers did seek to establish a degree of prioritisation amongst the factors. These were able to advance beyond Level 3. Some candidates made detailed analyses of the reasons and connected the factors. The most common route to this end was to consider the media reports and comments on the Tet Offensive and the impact these had on popular opinion. Only the least prepared candidates were struggling to establish a range.
- 06** There was an impressive range of knowledge and understanding displayed in numerous answers to this question, however, some answers tended to describe the protest rather than develop this knowledge into an evaluation of its significance. This approach was sometimes apparent in answers which had a good range of factors established as an evidence base. At times it seemed as if some candidates were merely repeating the techniques they had applied to Question 3 (05). Answers to this question were sometimes based on listing a series of factors, as was often the approach to Question 3 05, without then using this detail as the basis for an analytical. Like Question 2 (04), this question is marked against a different set of generic descriptors from those applied to Questions 2 (03) and 3 (05). Despite this there were many examples of wide ranging and in depth analyses that were clearly focused on the question and often led to a well-honed judgement. Such answers often not only explored the domestic pressures facing Nixon and the problems in Vietnam itself, but they also considered the wider Cold War context. References to détente and the role of China in US diplomatic thinking were common in such answers. This approach generally gave candidates the opportunity to display sound understanding and range which facilitated in depth commentaries.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator: www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion