



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 2041

Unit HIS3L

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS3L

Unit 3L: From Defeat to Unity: Germany, 1945–1991

General Comments

It was clear that most students had been well-prepared for this paper and had absorbed a good deal of pertinent, and often quite detailed, knowledge, particularly with regard to Adenauer's Chancellorship and life in the GDR. Factual awareness about the relationship between East and West Germany over a four decade span was less secure, although, even here, aspects of that relationship were well-known.

Candidates were also prepared to debate and argue and, at best, the direction of the essays and the analysis employed were impressive, showing high level essay writing skills. Some, however, almost tried to 'over-analyse', questioning every little detail, no matter what its relevance to the question. Others made perfunctory attempts at balanced argument, presenting a range of factors but never really assessing their relationship or relative importance. Such answers were, of course, better than the efforts of those who simply described what they knew, but the latter were, gratifyingly, not much in evidence.

In a future session, it would be good to see more candidates reflecting on their own position in relation to the key debates raised in the questions and forming and upholding a particular viewpoint from the outset of their essays. This would encourage them to argue in defence of a personal judgement (which does not need to be extreme, but should be clear) and make better use of the material which they have shown themselves so capable of absorbing and understanding.

Specific comment on the individual questions follows.

Question 1

01 Most students were able to appraise the success of the West Germany economy and relate this to support for the Chancellor, Adenauer. The best reflected on the improvement in living standards and considered what economic growth meant for the ordinary man in the street (the voter), rather than spending time examining West Germany's GDP and the success of individual industries. A few became side-tracked into considering the causes of economic change, whilst others tried to argue as to whether Erhard or Adenauer deserved to be credited with that change; both are interesting issues in themselves but sadly, of little relevance to this question.

Good answers went on to look at other reasons for Adenauer's success, evaluating each and considering its relative importance in Adenauer's longevity. Factors ranged from the personal, directly linked to Adenauer as a leader, to his domestic and international policies, the context of post war Germany and its people and the weaknesses of the opposition and constraints of the constitution. Wide-ranging answers effectively managed to address such a breadth of areas without losing sight of the central issue of economic success. Some effectively linked almost everything to the economic change and saw this as the underpinning source of the Chancellor's continued success. Other equally good answers focused on an alternative factor and provided supported argument to explain why this was considered the key issue. Whatever the argument, the best essays were most impressive; well judged, sustained and precisely supported throughout.

Those who performed less well were sometimes hampered by the narrowness of their range of factors or the imprecision of their material, but more often it was because they failed to address the question directly. They were required to adapt what they had learned about Adenauer to focus on why the West Germans kept voting for him and why his party continued to support him, and some failed to appreciate what this meant. A number simply considered the successes and failures of Adenauer and assumed this accounted for his longevity. However, failures and criticism of performance were of limited relevance here, unless used to show how he overcame such, whilst his success, for example in foreign affairs, needed a very close link to electoral support if it was to be meaningful.

Question 2

- 02** Most candidates who answered this question showed a genuine interest in the topic of life in the GDR and wrote with some authority, even if they were less secure on more specific details. The concept of the 'niche society' was well-known (although not always fully understood) and most candidates could muster a range of examples to show why there were grounds both for contentment and discontent. The best chose an argument in favour of one or the other and supported it accordingly; the middle ranking candidates 'sat on the fence', whilst the weakest were either one-sided or provided only generalisations.

Perhaps the biggest error was to write about the whole period of the GDR's existence without focusing on the 1970s – and, in some cases, without appreciating any particular difference between attitudes in the 1970s and those in the 1950s and late 1980s. Weaker answers also tended to address all East Germans as one homogenous mass, without distinguishing between different types of people in a way that showed the folly of assuming that 'everyone' could be categorised as either contented or discontented.

Question 3

- 03** Candidates were generally well-informed about the issues of 1948/9 and the Berlin blockade which set the scene for the troubled relationship between the two German states, but remarkably few covered the period of this breadth question fully and whilst the erection of the Berlin Wall was invariably commented upon there was a surprising dearth of reference to its fall in November 1989.

Furthermore, a greater number of answers here, than in the responses to the other two essay questions, lacked balance. Some of the troubles in Berlin were noted and assessed, but only the best candidates directly considered other factors affecting relations between East and West Germany. Some referred to the Hallstein doctrine and to Brandt's Ostpolitik and a few emphasised the importance of the underlying clash of ideologies but, with some exceptions, there was too much inclination to assume that the attitudes of Berliners were identical to those of families living in the rest of the GDR and that the problems of that city were a solely German matter.

Considering issues in breadth poses a different challenge from the study of more specific 'depth' topics and too many of those who attempted this question presented their answer in the form of a series of quite separate episodes, rather than analysing a continuous relationship and considering its high and low points, and what provoked them. Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of looking at both the beginning and end dates of a breadth question, with the aim of assessing the changes as well as the continuity of the intervening period.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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