



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS1E

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1E

Unit 1E: Absolutist States: The Reign of Louis XIV, 1651–1715

General Comments

There were many clearly well prepared and able students sitting this exam. Subject knowledge tended to be very good and mostly showed an awareness of issues and concepts across the whole period from 1661 to 1715. In terms of approaches to the 12 mark questions, students are becoming much more adept at providing a focused range of reasons, with clear links between the reasons being explained. There remains a persistent minority, however, who resort to bland statements about linkage or prioritisation which are not supported. In terms of the 24 mark questions, there were some pleasing answers which showed detailed consideration of the key factor from the question, balanced against other possible factors. Where students lost marks they had either clearly prepared for different questions or did not have enough factual support. It might be helpful to remind students that their assessment should be supported with specific examples throughout – this should help students to reach higher Level 3 and Level 4 marks. It would be very helpful if students would number their answers clearly and correctly, to enable the process to run as smoothly as possible.

Question 1

- 01** Question 1 was the most popular question for students and there were many detailed and informed responses to this 12 mark question. A high percentage of answers identified a valid range of reasons for why Louis XIV began the War of Devolution. It should be stressed, however, that students should be cautious when talking about Louis' aims with regards to the Spanish Throne. At the start of his reign Louis wanted to gain certain strategic Spanish territories (e.g. the Spanish Netherlands) but he does not seem to have desired Bourbon control of the Spanish throne until much later in his reign.
- 02** About 75% of students produced focused responses to this question, with a large number considering the role of dynastic ambition in motivating Louis as opposed to other factors. Supporting evidence was wide ranging across the period defined by the question. Where a significant minority lost marks was in not understanding the key term of 'dynastic ambition' which rendered their answers vague and unfocused. It might be worth consulting the scheme of work for suggestions about key terminology in relation to various areas of the specification. Answers to this type of question can be structured in either a chronological or thematic way.

Question 2

- 03** This was a popular and accessible question, with many students being able to give a wide range of reasons for the Revocation in 1685. The best answers aimed to look at the inter-relationship of their reasons; for example, showing that Louis had a long term desire to extirpate heresy as seen in his coronation oath but that this became more prominent in 1685 after the death of Colbert and the increased pressure from his wife.

- 04** Many students demonstrated a developed understanding of Louis XIV's religious policies across his reign. Most answers mentioned his actions against the Huguenots and the Jansenists, but the best students also considered the Quietists and his relationship with the Gallican Church. Some students lost marks by becoming overly descriptive and listing what Louis did and why, rather than being focused on how far he achieved religious unity. It is also important to note that the question asked about religious unity in France and so relations with the Papacy, whilst relevant, needed to be considered in this context.

Question 3

- 05** This was a generally well answered question where students seemed confident to develop a wide range of reasons. Especially effective answers focused on Louis' personal jealousy of Fouquet and also the wider example he was trying to set with regards to the French nobility as a whole.
- 06** This was the least popular of the questions on offer, but was still answered by one third of students. There were some good answers which considered various costs of war and the other costs of the French crown. However, there were a number of students who made little or no reference to the costs of war and instead talked almost exclusively about the reforms of Colbert. Students should be encouraged to revise the French finance system and the economy across the whole of Louis' reign.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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