



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1060–1087

General Comments

There are important issues with this paper which are constantly stressed in these report, although it seems with little response.

Students' 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. Generalised assertion does not gain more than L2, 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, some answers are poorly structured. Judgement is a requirement of essay 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 students 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.

Question 1

- 01** This question was handled surprisingly poorly by many students. The focus should have been on 'causes of unrest' as stated but a very high number of students raised examples that were much more about why rebellions failed or William's tactics. There was an emphasis on provenance that was generic and assertive in a manner that was inappropriate to the question; it seemed like some students had been drilled to comment even when it was not relevant to do so. Centres need to remember that the views raised in the sources need to be explicitly compared. Far too many students simply described the content of one source and then the other with, at best, implicit comparison between the sources. A number still rely on identifying omissions; 'Source A does not mention the point made in Source B..' which is not a relevant difference and attracts no marks as do those that are looking for differences of FACT or turn the question into one relating to reliability which is not its focus. Such points are only relevant when explaining the **reasons** for differences within the views. 'Own knowledge' requires students to consider the issue in context, to display an understanding of why sources differ (or are similar). It is not additional factual information for its own sake. Failure to do this effectively led some students 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** In essay questions – which include 02 – students 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. This question was generally handled reasonably well, with many students able to establish a range of reasons why rebellion failed in comparison to Norman oppression and thus able to reach at least Level 4. The main limiting factor was a failure to demonstrate knowledge of the rebellions beyond the sources, including some places, leaders involved and some dates. Without some knowledge to support, answers could be rather assertive. Indeed some did not cover the range to 1075 and this limited their answer. Some students failed to use the sources at all and this therefore heavily restricted the marks available.

Question 2

- 03** 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.

Most students were able to identify a range of reasons for Harold’s intervention against Hardrada at Stamford Bridge. However, too many inaccurately discussed the Danes, failing to appreciate that Hardrada was the king of Norway. A large number also fell into the trap of describing the events of 1066 and the succession crisis or discussed **how** the battle of Stamford Bridge was fought rather than **why**. The best answers concentrated on the key words and relevant context, providing the linkage between the reasons, which was needed for the highest level. Unfortunately, many students still 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.

- 04** Unsurprisingly, this was generally answered very well for the most part. Students were able to consider military inferiority in the context of other possible reasons for success. There were some excellent answers that both challenged the question and demonstrated alternative approaches. However, failure to develop a sustained line of judgement was what limited some otherwise factually excellent and wide-ranging responses. Much was made of William’s preparations and the problems in Northern England, as well as the events of the battle, in establishing why the English lost at Hastings. What separated a good answer from the merely average was the degree to which students considered the range of reasons and presented an effective and well-supported debate, rather than just listing points. Better students identified the nature of the argument, appreciated the interpretation and balanced ideas of possible English weakness against the wider context. 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** This was handled reasonably well by the very small number of students who attempted it but lack of precise knowledge limited the marks achieved as students did sometimes struggle to support their relevant points. The best answers reached the higher levels by noting the roles of institutions such as Shire and Hundred courts and the coronation oath made by William. Some did link this question relevantly to the importance of keeping English support and helping William to establish control but, as with 03, too few developed such links, with many leaving it to an assertive comment at the end which did not establish why a factor was more important.

- 06** This question was handled reasonably well by those who attempted it, although there was not always a satisfactory range of knowledge of the system of justice necessary to fully develop answers and achieve the highest levels.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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