

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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GCE History (6HI01) Paper B

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Introduction

Candidates and their teachers are to be congratulated on the amount of knowledge shown and the serious application given to answering almost the entire range of questions across the six options. Legibility was generally good and very few scripts were difficult to read.

The standard of English and spelling is a perennial concern. Colloquialisms were commonplace and the use of abbreviations, perhaps linked to the universality of text messaging, seems to be on the increase. Some abbreviations might be tolerated where they are in general use, such as MLK for Martin Luther King. However, to link MLK to JFK and LBJ, and to credit him with the passing of the CRA and the VRA, not to mention the success of the MBB, can be confusing and often obscures the point being made.

It is interesting to note that long narrative answers, which were once common, no longer appear very often. Fewer candidates reiterate the question at the beginning of their answers, and more are attempting to engage with the question from the outset. Some groups of candidates, however, appear to bring a learned response to the examination room, with a succession of scripts offering the same factors and the same supporting evidence. While this approach may produce an acceptable level of attainment, it can be a limiting tactic because students have difficulty in accessing a wider pool of evidence and ideas in order to show their own initiative and thinking; such answers find it difficult to meet the direct focus and explicit understanding required for Level 5 marks. Answers at Level 5 require elements of sophistication in which students can provide analysis, inter-related links and judgements using evidence which reflects their own opinions and thoughts on the specific question asked.

Stated factor questions were generally approached with a discussion of the stated factor in the first paragraph and a consideration of other factors in the following paragraphs. However, some candidates were not able to play the factors confidently one against the other as the answer unfolded. Also a substantial number of answers applied a stated factor approach where none was needed or desirable. Question D9 asked 'How successful was Martin Luther King's campaign for civil rights in the years 1955-68?' There is no invitation in this question to consider other factors influencing civil rights, such as Malcolm X and Black Power, but many answers dealt only briefly with King's campaign as one of several, often irrelevant, factors.

A number of answers displayed an imbalance between content and analysis. Many of these were answers with a great deal of relevant content but with limited discussion of the effects or the significance of events, which thereby hindered the development of a detailed and focused analysis. Some perhaps considered the significance self-evident. For example, some answers on the Provisional Government (Question D5) contained much relevant detail about the continuation of the war, but then simply stated that this 'made them unpopular.' Lenin's slogan of 'Peace, Bread, Land' was apparently so popular it made the outcome of the October/November revolution a foregone

conclusion. However, there are also an increasing number of responses which provide secure analysis, and often very good conclusions, but do not provide sufficient relevant and accurate factual supporting material to justify their argument.

Overall, however, there were few weak responses, with most finding their home somewhere within Levels 3 and 4.

Question 1

This was a popular question, with a wide range of marks being awarded. The key to success was focusing on the events of the years 1517-21. High level answers noted that Leo X was initially unconcerned by the 95 Theses, and asked the Augustinian order to deal with the matter. The subsequent debates with Cajetan and Eck were known in some detail, along with the significance of Exsurge Domine in 1520. In considering Charles V, many noted his recent election and the limited power he exercised within Germany. Events at the Diet of Worms were discussed, though few mentioned the significance of the Imperial ban. Less successful answers came from candidates who appeared to misunderstand the question's focus, devoting much of their answer to a discussion of reasons why Luther succeeded rather than analysing the difficulties faced by church and Emperor. Some strayed out of the chronology by considering the problems which Charles faced elsewhere in Europe during the 1520s. A surprising number of candidates appeared unaware of the fact that Charles was elected in 1519, and suggested that the Emperor needed the support of Frederick the Wise for his election as late as 1521. Several candidates decided that an important reason for the church's inability to counter Luther was because of pre-existing conditions, notably the corruption of the German church. While this had some relevance, this factor dominated some candidates' answers, leading to only an oblique focus on the question set.

Question 2

Question 2 was much less popular than Question 1, perhaps because candidates were uncomfortable with the idea of a turning point. Examiners reported that, while most were aware of Luther's reaction to the Peasant War of 1525, they were much less secure in addressing Luther's role in the German Reformation thereafter. Better answers considered other possible turning points, including the 1520 pamphlets and the formation of the Schmalkaldic league.

Question 3

The small number of answers to Question 3 often displayed good range and depth of supporting material. Answers were aware of the founding of new religious orders in the early 16th century, though were less secure on their aims and importance. Paul III's pontificate was well-known, and there were detailed references to the reform of the papal court and the Consilium. There were some good discussions of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and the extent to which they clarified Catholic doctrine and spirituality.

Question 4

Most answers to Question 4 were very successful. Candidates showed a secure understanding of the work of the Jesuits and were not diverted into describing Loyola's calling and the Jesuits' lifestyle and discipline. What was explained felt appropriate in most cases to set some context and it was often successfully applied to the focus and their impact. Answers noted the impact of the Tridentine decrees as they were put into operation after 1563, though the degree of support given to the Counter-Reformation by Catholic rulers was not investigated in much detail.

Questions 5 and 6

There were a small number of answers to the questions for topic B3. Answers to **Question 5** often focused on the rule of Alva: the leadership of subsequent rulers, including Parma, was less well-known. It was perhaps surprising that many candidates failed to consider the role of William of Orange in these years and the extent to which his leadership was responsible for the growing divisions between North and South. Answers to **Question 6** were usually able to list Spanish weaknesses and explain these, notably the links between Spain's economic difficulties and mutinies among Spanish armed forces in the Netherlands. In considering other factors few mentioned Oldenbarnevelt, but most were able to discuss the role of Maurice of Nassau. It is important to note that very few candidates covered the whole chronology up to the truce of 1609.

Question 7

Candidates appeared very well-informed on the numerous reasons for the outbreak of the witchcraze, and this information was less anecdotal and narrative than in previous years. However, the focus on printed materials proved challenging for some as they appeared to know only of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the *Demonolatreiae*: in some cases no specific literature was mentioned. Some very good responses recognised the role of the intellectual elite as readers and people of influence, and noted the importance of publishing trial transcripts. Many answers spent a fairly short time on printed materials before moving on to a range of other factors such as the degree of state power, economic dislocation, wars and civil conflicts.

Question 8

Most answers were aware of the changes that had taken place to create different legal systems, and the impact which these changes had on the nature of trials and their outcomes. Candidates were able to offer some very good supporting material to highlight the differences between, for example, the number of trials in Spain and Italy compared with Germany. They were able to bring in the importance of secular versus ecclesiastical processes while noting that the Inquisition in Spain had long experience of trials and of correct processes. The question allowed candidates to address the use of torture and the role of individuals, and the connection to strong or weak government systems in various regions affected by warfare. However, references to the French Wars of Religion and the Salem witch trials were essentially irrelevant.

Questions 9 and 10

There were a small number of answers on topic B5, with **Question 9** the more popular. Most stayed within the timeframe to 1641, pointing to the resentment felt by both the plantations and the restrictions placed on Irish people. Candidates were aware of the obvious religious differences, although this was sometimes implied rather than stated. Wentworth's government in the 1630s was, perhaps surprisingly, ignored by many. With a few exceptions, the common response was to focus on the plantation policies and agree with the question. The small number of answers to **Question 10** make a meaningful report impossible.

Questions 11 and 12

There were some very impressive answers to both questions from candidates who were able to range confidently across the whole chronology. Most challenged the suggestion in **Question 11** that the war was essentially a religious conflict. Candidates were aware that, although religious concerns were paramount in the early years of the war, the broadening of the conflict in the 1630s was due more to French and Swedish concerns about the expansion of Habsburg power in Europe. Some very strong answers referred to the peace of Westphalia and pointed out that the terms agreed reflected on the nature of the conflict itself. Answers to **Question 12** noted that the war might have ended with the defeat of Denmark in 1628, but that Habsburg power was not strong enough to impose a settlement, and that the opportunity for peace was lost by the intervention of France and Spain. Some of the best answers pointed out that the conflict was essentially over by the early 1640s and the peace negotiations were dragged out until Westphalia in 1648.

Questions 13 and 14

Many answers to **Question 13** displayed a lack of secure knowledge of Charles II's foreign policy. Although candidates were able to raise the issue of the Treaty of Dover and fears over Charles' growing relationship with Louis XIV, few were able to address the Anglo-Dutch wars with much confidence. The other factors which influenced Charles's relationship with Parliament, such as the Restoration Settlement and opposition to the King's ministers, were not well known. Those who answered **Question 14** displayed reasonable, though not detailed, understanding of the question. Fear of absolute monarchy was usually set against religious concerns.

Summary

Centres might consider the following areas of weakness in many responses:

- a) Answer the question set – are candidates concentrating on the specific wording in the question and the dates covered?

- b) Chronological awareness and application – do candidates know the key dates and are they able to explain/expand points made with accurate reference to the order in which events happened?

- c) Supporting material – are candidates using sufficient relevant, specific and accurate material to support their analysis and, in particular, the conclusions to which they come?

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