Pearson Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level In History (WHI04)

Paper 4: International Study with Historical Interpretations

Option 1B: The World in Crisis, 1879–1945

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Introduction

Please note: that it is recommended that centres look at a selection of Principal Examiner Reports from across the different options within WHI04 1A-1D and previous series to get an overall sense of examiner feedback, centre approaches and candidate achievement. It is also highly recommended that centres read the general Introduction and Section A and B introductions in the Principal Examiner Reports for June 2017. These generic introductions outline the assessment requirements for WHI04 and give an indication of the skills required.

Centres may wish to refer to the *Getting Started* guide that is to be found on the IAL History Pearson Edexcel website. It is also useful to take note of the indicative content in the mark schemes.

Further resources that may be of use are the *Applying Criteria* and *Developing Student's Understanding of Historical Interpretations* documents to be found on the Pearson Edexcel History GCE website along with the Principal Examiner Reports for paper 1 of the Pearson Edexcel History GCE. The *Applying Criteria* document gives guidance with regard to the application of criteria for the different AOs tested at A level. The paper 1 Reports will be particularly useful for exemplification of AO3 interpretations skills as will the *Historical Interpretations* document (but please be aware that there are slight differences within the general Level descriptors of the mark scheme).

Although much of the feedback for the 2019 series will be similar to that of 2018 there were key characteristics that were apparent this year and these will be discussed below. There has been a further increase in entries since 2018 and it is clear that the majority of centres have taken note of the feedback provided in previous Principal Examiner reports. However, this summer there was an increase in candidates unable to access marks above low Level 4 in Q1 because they failed to reach a judgement on the view stated in the question and an increase in the number of responses that just seemed to include everything the candidates had learned about a topic. To reach the higher Levels in Q1 centres are reminded that a judgement on the interpretations presented in the extracts is required and that to reach Level 5 in Section B for bullet point 2 knowledge should be '*precisely selected*'.

Candidates in general produce interesting responses that it is a pleasure to read and reward. As in previous series candidates are usually very well prepared in relation to knowledge of the specification and centres are to be commended for this. Candidates have good knowledge and they often include material which is thought provoking. Many responses were well-informed and well-written. However, as stated above there does need to be more discrimination in the selection and deployment of knowledge in both Section A and Section B.

Once again there was an improvement in the understanding and appreciation of the skills required for the Section A Historical Interpretation question which assesses AO3/AO1 with many fewer responses being awarded Level 1 and Level 2 marks. However, some candidates are still not using the extracts as the basis of their response and candidates do need to reach a judgement to access all Levels.

Section B responses were also generally stronger with many more responses clearly showing the qualities of Level 4, and indeed Level 5. However, lower Level responses continue to exhibit the weaknesses highlighted in previous series in regard to a lack of focus on the wording of the question and/or the second-order concept being targeted

along with a tendency for candidates to write about everything they know rather than to select material relevant to the question.

Once again it is worth noting that the responses are marked using a 'best-fit' process. Each bullet point strand within the generic mark scheme is considered to create an overall sense of Level and a mark applied within the Level. If a response has qualities which exemplify a variety of Levels or a strand is missing then this will be reflected by applying a 'best-fit' Level and mark. For responses which do not address an aspect of a particular strand, for example reaching a judgement in bullet point 3 for Q1, this will be reflected in the mark rewarded.

There were fewer candidates who wrote responses which seem to thread their knowledge into the language of the mark schemes this year but there are still some centres that are clearly advising candidates to do so. The descriptors reflect the qualities examiners would expect to see in an essay answering the question set rather than a scaffold on which responses should be built. It is the examiner who determines whether criteria are valid or if the analysis is sustained rather than the candidate by asserting 'so it can be seen by the valid criteria I have used…' or 'In conclusion, this sustained analysis…'. This does not necessarily add value to the response and can be detrimental if this assertion is clearly not substantiated. This is also the case in responses that assert 'It is a compelling argument…' when that argument is not well organised or even contradicts itself. Some candidates even begin each new point with this statement clearly writing this in a formulaic way with little understanding of what they are actually arguing.

It is pleasing to see that most candidates were, in general, clearly aware of both the structure and the timing of the examination paper; there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B. There were more candidates this year producing responses of a similar length and quality on both sections. General candidate performance on each Section and specific performance on individual questions for Paper 1B are considered below.

Section A

Although there continues to be fewer candidates writing responses at Level 1 and Level 2 for the AO3/AO1 interpretation Q1, this year the improvement seen last year did seem to stall a little. This was particularly due to candidates

a) using the extracts to exemplify a standard Section B (AO1) style essay in response to the view being put forward
or
b) using the extracts to exemplify a standard Section B (AO1) style essay in response to a generalised understanding of the key topic
or, particularly,
c) applying Strand 1 and Strand 2 skills to the two extracts but then just summarising the two interpretations in a conclusion with virtually no attempt to come to a judgement on the view.

Centres should note that this is an AO3/AO1 question with the majority of the marks being awarded for application of skills in relation to AO3 historical interpretations and that from Level 1 a judgement on the stated view is required.

However, having stated the concerns above, some high Level responses reflected an outstanding ability to address the viewpoint through superb analysis of the

interpretations presented while integrating detailed historical knowledge in the time provided. The best responses are invariably those that are built around the views expressed in the extracts throughout the response. These responses were often thoughtful discussions of the viewpoint in the question and resulted in interesting answers that were very enjoyable to read.

The question requires candidates to make a judgement on a stated viewpoint, through the analysis of two extracts from historical works which address the historical issue and their own knowledge of the historical debate. It is worth reminding centres that the generic mark scheme clearly indicates the three bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks:

- interpretation and analysis of extracts
- deployment of knowledge of issues related to the debate
- evaluation of, and judgement about, the interpretations

The best responses reflected the qualities of each strand outlined in the Level 4 and Level 5 descriptors. However, it is worth noting that, although some candidates now clearly better understand what is required and write answers that can achieve Level 4, there are many candidates failing to reach high Level 4 or Level 5 because they are writing very long responses that include everything they know and develop a confused or contradictory argument/overall judgement as a result. This results in both an imbalanced response with an over-emphasis on Strand 2 and difficulty in accessing high Level 4 or Level 5 marks. There is sufficient time to plan a response of sufficient length which interprets the extracts with 'confidence and discrimination' and in which the knowledge is 'sufficient' and 'precisely selected and deployed' to explore the view under debate.

There are also some candidates who are able to access Level 4/Level 5 for Strand 1 interpretation and analysis of the extracts but who either do not deploy knowledge of the issues related to the debate or do not come to a judgement in relation to the view in the question. As stated above many responses reflected a structure that analysed Extract 1 and Extract 2 with some skill but then wrote a conclusion which just restated an understanding of the view in Extract 1 and the view in Extract 2 without coming to a judgment at all – so making it difficult to reward Strand 3 of the mark scheme.

Here is an example from WHI04_1B of a conclusion that just summarises the interpretations in the extracts:

In conclusion, the view that the diplomatic of 1905-13 created the conditions that explain the transformation of the June/July crisis into a general war is both supported and challenged by the extracts. Extract 1 largely agrees with this view as it illustrates that the crises led to the alliance system and the arms race. On the other hand, Extract 2 believes that these factors were insufficient for war and the events of the June/July crisis alone led to war. The absence of Franz Ferdinand proving to be important.

This conclusion from WHI04_1D, however, gives a judgement on the interpretations presented in the extracts:

In conclusion, I disagree to a small extent with the view that MacArthur was dismissed because of his interference in President Truman's proposed Korean peace initiative. Although MacArthur's rash behaviour and military insubordination frustrated Truman and contributed to their tense relationship, I disagree with Halberstam's interpretation that it was the deciding factor for his dismissal. It was

instead, as Stone claims, the threat that MacArthur's popularity in Washing posed to Truman's vulnerable position that made Truman feel as if MacArthur's dismissal was the only way to ensure his authority, solidify his role as 'Commander-in-Chief', and shield himself from the criticisms of militantly anti-communist Republican opposition.
A few candidates exhibited good knowledge of the debate central to the overall focus of the question but ignored the extracts altogether, perhaps referring to them briefly to exemplify a point being made.

There are still a few candidates whose responses reflect the qualities outlined in the lower Levels of the mark scheme but this is becoming much rarer. These responses often showed the following characteristics:
- answering the question without reference to the extracts at all or only using the views implicitly
- paraphrasing the extracts or just stringing together quotations from the extracts using connecting words or terms
- do not include any relevant historical knowledge to support the analysis
- use AO2 skills of source analysis to evaluate the extracts with regard to aspects of provenance.

Candidates at all Levels are still tend towards using the term 'source' rather than 'extract' when referring to the material under discussion. If candidates are to see the material as interpretations, rather than sources of evidence, centres should encourage candidates to refer to Extract 1 or Extract 2, interpretations or the names of the authors. The most successful responses are often those that use the names of the authors as they can stand back from the content of the extracts and clearly show an '*understanding of the nature of historical debate*' (Level 5). Candidates should be encouraged to see the sources evaluated in WHI02 and WHI03 as the building blocks which create the interpretations and views being discussed in WHI04. One extract will mainly reflect the view given in the question statement while the other will mainly reflect a counter argument to be discussed in the course of coming to an overall judgement.

Pleasingly there was much less formulaic discussion of historiographical debates, in some cases unconnected to the extracts, but as in the previous Reports please note the guidance given in the *Getting Started* document: *Students are not expected to be familiar with the writing of the selected historians but they should be familiar with the issues that make the question controversial. Reference to the works of name historians, other than the material in the extracts provided is not expected but students may consider historians' viewpoints in framing their arguments.*

It was a little frustrating once again to find that many candidates appeared to create their discussion by reference to only the first few lines of each extract and so lost an opportunity to develop key points made later in the extracts. Candidates have sufficient time to consider the extracts carefully, to plan and to draw out a variety of different key points in order to compare and contrast the interpretations presented. Finally, centres should note that the response is set up for candidates to discuss the view put forward in the question in relation to the views being expressed in the extracts rather than using the extracts to exemplify the debate. The most successful candidates are those that build their response around the debate that has been set up by the extracts.

Q1

As with the previous series there were some good responses to Q1 which were pleasing to read. Candidates were generally well-prepared in relation to both their knowledge and understanding of the debate surrounding the origins of the First World War. Candidates were clearly aware of different views and the best responses were able to deploy this in discussing the extracts and using their understanding to reach a judgement on the view stated in the question. Fewer candidates ignored the view stated in the question and went on to develop a discussion of the stated view reflected in the extracts provided. However, there were still some candidates that analysed the extracts without developing a discussion of the stated view. It was particularly noticeable for paper 1B that a significant number of candidates were unable to access marks above mid-Level 4 as they failed to reach an overall judgement due to their conclusion merely summarising the views of the extracts. A small number of candidates also wrote long responses which could have been more effective with some judicious planning. There is sufficient time within the one hour available for this question to plan answers effectively.

Many responses were able to contrast the view in Extract 1 that the crises of 1905-13 created a pattern of reaction amongst the Great Powers that meant that the June/July crisis of 1914 was likely to develop into a general war with the view in Extract 2 that it was the specific events surrounding the assassination in Sarajevo that led to general war and not the underlying forces evident in the years 1905-13. However, a significant number of candidates only reflected on the role of the underlying forces discussed in both extracts rather than also discussing the impact of the events in Sarajevo. A key element of Extract 2 was the reference to the direct consequence of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. This almost certainly reflects the fact that many candidates are not reading the extracts thoroughly and rely on a discussion of the first few lines of each. There is sufficient time within the one hour available for this question to read the extracts fully.

Many candidates were able to use their contextual knowledge to explain and evaluate the views presented. Candidates used their knowledge of the 1905-13 crises and the development of the alliance system very effectively. There was some impressive knowledge of the crises. However, many candidates did not integrate their contextual knowledge of the June/July crisis and the outbreak of the war itself to the view being discussed and so limited their ability to come to a fully substantiated judgement of the view.

Section B

Well-informed candidates were able to respond to the focus of the question directly and to use the wording of the questions to create discussion and debate. There were some knowledgeable and well-organised responses. However, this summer there were a noticeable number of candidates who perhaps did not take time to plan their answers and consequently wrote very long but indiscriminate responses that did not really focus on the question asked. Once again, there was little evidence to suggest that the range and depth of essays were affected by the time taken to consider the two extracts in Section A.

It is important to note that questions can cover content which stretches across the key topics as well as within the key topics. In order to ensure that candidates are prepared

to answer any question set centres should cover all the content outlined in the specification.

The question requires candidates to explore and discuss the given question while coming to an overall judgement. It is worth reminding centres that the generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks:

- analysis and exploration of key features and characteristics of the period in relation to the second-order conceptual demands of the question
- selection and deployment of knowledge
- substantiated evaluation and judgement
- organisation and communication of argument

Most candidates are clearly well-prepared and have good knowledge of the content of the specification with Strand 1 and Strand 2 often the strongest elements of the responses seen. However, this year, in particular, knowledgeable candidates often wrote detailed responses which included too much unfocussed supporting material and which often resulted in confused or contradictory arguments being developed that particularly affected Strand 4. Level 5 Strand 2 refers to 'sufficient knowledge precisely selected and deployed'. Good responses were also often unable to access Level 5 because of a lack of precision in the use of vocabulary when formulating an argument or establishing valid criteria. Some responses began every paragraph by saying 'x is significant to some extent…' or 'x is the main reason…' or began a conclusion by stating that 'I agree with the statement…' and then gave an overall judgement that contradicted this. Many responses begin with 'It is a compelling argument…' and then argue the opposite. It is important that judgements are substantiated and arguments developed with logic, coherence and precision.

Weaker responses were often those that did not address the question carefully, described the key features rather than explained or explored them, wrote a response set within the wrong time period or included major inaccuracies. Many candidates seemed to be prepared for specific potential set questions and edited these to 'fit' the focus of the question asked resulting in Level 3 responses that showed some relevance but were not really suited to the conceptual focus of the question. Candidates who took some time to plan responses with a clear line of argument were more likely to progress to the higher Levels. Also candidates who argue in their conclusion that a complex interaction of causes, factors etc should be taken into account are likely to be rewarded at the higher Levels if they show how these relate or consider relative significance based on supporting evidence discussed in the main body of the essay.

Q2

This question was the less popular of the two choices. However, it was very pleasing that most candidates did not just describe the decisions made at Versailles or the individual treaties but rather focused on the impact of the decisions made. Candidates were able to use their knowledge of international relations in the 1920s, and even early 1930s, to discuss whether peace was achieved and to discuss self-determination. Peace-keeping was dealt with better than self-determination but there were some interesting comments on the fate of minorities in Europe in the aftermath of the Settlement. Some of the better responses argued that, although there was no significant outbreak of war in the 1920s, the sporadic but persistent challenges to the settlement that were seen suggested that tensions were bubbling under the surface.

Q3

This was the more popular of the two questions. Candidates had a good knowledge of the general climate of tension leading to the outbreak of war in 1939. Most candidates focused on the long-term underlying causes of the outbreak of war comparing the responsibility of appeasement with other factors such as the Depression, the failures of the League of Nations and the aggressive foreign policies of Italy and Germany. Candidates did not need to have a balanced discussion of either British and French appeasement or the actions of Germany and Italy to reach the higher Levels but did need to have an understanding of the role of all four nations. Some candidates chose to discuss reactions to German and Italian foreign policy separately while others took a more generalised approach. Knowledge of appeasement was good but there was a disappointing lack of awareness of the events leading to the actual outbreak of conflict which was the focus of the question. Better responses argued that either appeasement fuelled the aggressive policies that led to war in 1939 or that it was one of many inter-related factors that resulted in war.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A (AO3/AO1)

- Candidates should come to an overall judgement with regard to the view stated in the question; it is not sufficient just to summarise the views presented in the extracts

- Candidates should use the time available to read both extracts carefully all the way through before planning their answer; the information in the extracts should be the foundation upon which the answer is constructed

- Candidates should make sure that they address the view specifically stated in the question preferably from the introductory paragraph; generic introductions related to generalised debates rarely gain rewards and waste candidate time

- Candidates should aim to interpret both extracts by analysing the issues raised and showing an understanding of the arguments presented by both authors

- Interpretations should be referred to as Extracts or by the author's name; the material presented are interpretations and not sources of evidence

- Candidates should select and deploy contextual knowledge in relation to the view being tested rather than including everything they know about the topic; failure to do so undermines all of the mark scheme Strands in the higher Levels.

Section B (AO1)

- Spending time planning helps to ensure the argument being presented is well organised; with an hour to answer the question there is sufficient time to plan well

- Candidates must provide more precise contextual knowledge as supporting evidence. Some Level 4 responses included too much information which led to contradiction and confusion in the overall argument being presented and could not move into Level 5

- Candidates should think carefully about the language they use to evaluate the second-order concepts being assessed; do not use 'to an extent' to mean both 'a little' and 'to a large degree' rather state the extent explicitly

- Use conclusions to state the judgement reached clearly and to show the relative significance of or the inter-relationship between key issues discussed in the main body of the essay; leave the examiner in no doubt as to what your judgement is

- Candidates should try to explore the links between issues in order to make the structure of the response flow more logically and to enable the integration of analysis

- The most effective answers are those that explore and discuss the specific question being asked; these responses consider argument and counter-argument to establish extent.