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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level  
In History (WHI04)

Paper 4: International Study with Historical  
Interpretations

Option 1C: The World Divided: Superpower  
Relations

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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 1C 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 excellent responses to this question 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 Cold War. Candidates were clearly aware of different views and the best responses were able to deploy this in discussing the extracts and use their understanding to reach a judgement on the view stated in the question. Most candidates now develop a discussion of the stated view reflected in the extracts provided. However, there were still some candidates who ignored the view completely or just paraphrased the extracts with no analysis at all. A significant number of candidates failed to address the specific wording of the question concentrating on the words 'ideological struggle' rather than the view that it was the 'US commitment to an ideological struggle' that needed to be discussed. A small number of candidates continue to write long responses which, although extensive, fail to answer the question coherently. 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 it was the US commitment to an ideological struggle outlined in the presentation of the Truman Doctrine to the world on 12 March 1947 that was responsible for the development of the Cold war with the view in Extract 2 that it was a complex interaction of factors. There was some good analysis of the two extracts with a clear understanding of the debate being developed and the nature of the historical interpretations being presented. Many candidates were, however, limited by their failure to reach a judgement in regard to the view stated in the question.

Many candidates were able to use their contextual knowledge to explain and evaluate the views presented. Candidates used their knowledge of the immediate post-war environment to great effect in developing a discussion of the two extracts. There was some impressive knowledge of the inter-relationship between events in eastern Europe and the developing antagonism between the US and the USSR. However, a disappointing number of candidates failed to recognise Truman's speech as the genesis of the Truman Doctrine and proceeded to write separate paragraphs about the impact of the Doctrine on events. A significant number of candidates also just wrote everything they knew about post-War events. Centres should note that the Section A Strand 2 mark scheme, as with Section B, refers to knowledge being 'precisely selected and deployed'.

Centres have clearly taken on board the feedback with regard to the role of historiographical debate in AO3 interpretations. There were virtually no candidates this year who wrote essays using an entirely historiographical approach. Candidates were able to identify a 'revisionist' view in Extract 1 and 'post-revisionist' view in Extract 2 but this did not dominate answers and was often used very effectively. Fewer candidates evaluated the extracts as sources this year as well. A few candidates were able to use the title of Lucas' book *Freedom's War* to show their understanding of the interpretation being presented.

## 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

Most candidates chose to do Q2 and were knowledgeable about US-Soviet relations in the years 1953-68. This question asked whether the Cuban Missile crisis was a turning point in the development of relations rather than whether it was the **key** turning point. Candidates approached this either by addressing change and continuity before and after the event or by comparing the Missile Crisis to other key events in the period. Those who addressed the question by looking at the relationship before and after the Crisis tended to write more logical and coherent arguments as they were able to measure the extent of change. Those who chose to look at the Missile Crisis in relation to other events often were not sure of the criteria they were using to measure change and were too keen to dismiss the Missile Crisis itself and write about the key events of the 1950s. To work well, this approach required candidates to analyse the impact of the Missile Crisis in sufficient depth to be able to judge relative significance. Those who analysed the situation before and after the Crisis were more able to show change and continuity. Many candidates just described the events from the Cuban Revolution to the Missile Crisis followed by a description of key events in the 1950s and 60s, such as the death of Stalin, the U2 incident, the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations and the building of the Berlin Wall. Better responses concentrated on the Missile Crisis itself arguing either that the Crisis brought the reality of the nuclear age to a head so leading to the era of arms limitation and détente or that, although on the surface it appeared to be a turning point, in reality the arms race continued and there was little real communication between the two superpowers. In general candidates spent too much time just recounting the events leading up to the Missile Crisis and insufficient time analysing the events and their impact. This question was an example of where consideration of the wording of the question, and time taken to plan, would have seen many candidates move from Level 3 to Level 4 and Level 4 to Level 5. A few candidates had little understanding of the concept of a turning point.

## Q3

Fewer candidates chose this question but those who did were clearly knowledgeable about the key features of superpower relations the mid-late 1960s and 1970s outlined in the specification and so were able to discuss war by proxy in relation to a variety of other key features. War by proxy was given quite a wide definition and wars in which only one superpower was involved directly were seen as valid, as was the Vietnam War as long as it did not dominate the knowledge used in the response. Some candidates just described and explained the impact of war by proxy and other features such as détente in the arms race, Sino-US relations, Sino-Soviet relations and moves towards human rights agreements but there were some excellent discursive responses that weighed up the impact of war by proxy against other factors. There were some interesting responses with very good knowledge of superpower influence in Latin America and Africa in particular.

## 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.