Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2021

Pearson Edexcel International A Level

History
International Advanced Subsidiary
Paper 2: Breadth Study with Source Evaluation
Option 1D: South Africa, 1948–2014

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Examiner Report: WHIO2 1D South Africa, 1948-2014

Introduction

The IAS Paper WHI02 1D covers South Africa, 1948-2014. The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory two-part question for the option studied, each part based on one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts - cause, consequence, change/ continuity, similarity/difference and significance.

In common with the previous series, candidates found Section A more challenging than Section B. Some candidates were still not clear on what was meant by 'value' and 'weight' in the context of source analysis and evaluation. Performance in Section A by some candidates was also affected by the absence of the secure knowledge base required to add contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources. Most candidates did use their time effectively and, although a few responses were quite brief, there was no evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions both sections. Furthermore, in Section B, most responses attempted an analytical focus, and most responses showed an attempt to structure the answer. The most common weakness in Section B essays was the lack of a sharp focus on the precise terms of the question and/or the second order concept that was targeted. This meant that some candidates wrote at length on topics that were only peripherally related to the question or which did not cover the whole time period.

It remains important to realise that Section A topics are drawn from highlighted topics on the specification whereas Section B questions may be set from any part of any Key Topic, and, as a result, full coverage of the specification is enormously important. There was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Question 1a)

Most candidates approached this question by paraphrasing the source material. Many answers showed little awareness of the nature of the exercise and did not consider the source as evidence but only as a source of information. Consequently, many candidates were rewarded in level 1. Some candidates were able to add some information from knowledge to expand on the source material and these candidates were able to access level 2. Fewer candidates referred at all to the provenance of the source and used it to discuss the value in relation to the enquiry. Those that did made good use of nature of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the expectation that evidence presented to it would be reliable and therefore valuable. Candidates would benefit from studying the generic mark scheme and developing their awareness of the demands of the source questions to analyse the source material in relation to the information and inferences that can be drawn from it, the use of contextual knowledge to confirm matters of detail and to develop inferences and the evaluation of the source in the light of its provenance and purpose.

Question 1b)

Similarly to responses to Question 1a), many responses to this question focused on paraphrasing the source material. In some cases, knowledge was added about AIDS but without focus on the enquiry. Consequently, many responses were awarded in level 1. Responses lacked an awareness that they were dealing with evidence that needed to be analysed and evaluated. Again, candidates need to familiarise themselves with the demands of Section A as outlined in the generic mark scheme. Candidates would benefit from looking at Examiner Reports from previous series with the examples of answers in levels 3 and 4 for additional guidance on how to address the source questions.

Question 2

This was the most popular question on the paper with about half of the candidates addressing it. Some candidates showed a good knowledge of the various measures that were developed in the implementation of the apartheid system and attempted to analyse them in relation to the stated factor (Pass Laws) and the second order concept – significance. Candidates referred to the Pass Laws, the Group Area Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Mixed Marriage Act, and the Bantu Education Act. Candidates who attempted or were able to develop criteria for judgement were able to access level 4.

Question 3

Most candidates who answered this question achieved in levels 2 and 3. Most had some knowledge of the relations between Britain and South Africa and were able to describe some elements of the relationship, including South Africa's decision to leave the Commonwealth, the problems arising from sporting links and the increasing importance of the USA.

Question 4

There was only one response to this question. Questions have been set on Key Topic 2 on most WHI02 1D papers but this is the first time that the main focus of the question was on the mining and extractive industries.

Paper Summary

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

Section A

Value of Source Question (1(a))

- Candidates must be more prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- Move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source e.g. look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Avoid writing about the deficiencies of the source when assessing its value to the enquiry.

Weight of Source Question (1(b)/2(b))

- Candidates should be prepared to assess the weight of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience. Be aware of the values and concerns of that audience.
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to use contextual knowledge to support/challenge statements and claims made in the source
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- Knowledge should be integrated with the source evidence, to discuss the inferences drawn and their validity in the light of the contextual understanding of the period.
- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source. However, simply stating that a source is limited because it does not cover certain events or developments does not establish weight since no source can be comprehensive.

Section B

Essay questions

- Candidates must provide more factual details as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Take a few minutes to plan your answer before you begin to write your response
- Pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (for e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Pay more careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing and use them throughout the essay to prevent deviation from the central issues and concepts
- Pay careful attention to the date range in the question. Plan the answer with a focus on this range and avoid lengthy exploration of events outside of the time period set
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.

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