GCE

Report on the Units

January 2009

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE History (H508)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE History H108)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Units F981 and F982

General comments

The candidature for Unit 1 was small, unsurprisingly given that this was the first cohort to be offered the chance to sit this examination. The following comments need therefore to be taken very much in the context of an initial entry of, in round terms, 200 candidates for F981 and 100 for F982. Nevertheless much of value has been gleaned and it is hoped that the following observations will be useful to centres preparing candidates for June 2009 or subsequent entry. Overall, there was much to praise. The stated intention of Specification B, to encourage candidates to explore the nature of the discipline of History, is proving to be within the capability of some candidates, at least. There was a refreshing absence of descriptive and narrative writing, which it is to be hoped will be carried forward to future sessions; thematic or analytical writing was normal, even among weaker answers; attempts were made to link together, and to prioritise, factors. The strongest answers seen were able to offer a logical and coherent argument and were worthy of high praise as excellent examples of AS History.

Some particular areas of weakness will be addressed below, but in general terms several points can be made which may prove helpful. First, some centres saw their candidates struggle with time management, with too much time spent on part (a) and too little on part (b). This should, obviously, be avoided where possible. Secondly, some candidates infringed the rubric by tackling a part (a) from one question and a part (b) from another question, or indeed by attempting to answer parts (a) and (b) from both questions. Principal Examiners are prone to point out spelling and grammar errors. This time the list includes 'would of' being quite commonly used; conversational forms such as 'Philip of Hesse was majorly influenced by Luther's writings'; superfluous apostrophes were not unusual, for example 'Luther's idea's.' The impression which such errors make is not a good one, and accuracy in the use of proper nouns, capital letters and dates should be routine, and casual forms of expression discouraged.

Some centres have explicitly taught their students to use the modes: intentional, empathetic and causal. At best, this approach has been successful because it has allowed students to think about a particular question from a variety of angles, as we would wish to encourage. At worst, and less frequently, it has encouraged mechanical responses where students try to fit any evidence they can find into a particular category or box. It is difficult and undesirable to be wholly prescriptive here, but as a general principle students will benefit from explicit use of the modes. They should help candidates to plan and organise their work so that they are deliberately and consciously explaining ideas, or states of affairs, or intentions and actions. Where no explicit reference is made to these modes of explanation, it is still perfectly possible to secure a Level 1, and a number of candidates did do so, because of the quality of their analysis and explanation. But in some cases they did not secure the highest marks within Level 1, which were reserved to those responses which did, knowingly and explicitly, use modes of explanation to inform their analysis. At best, responses will identify which mode or mode is or are most appropriate as a means of explaining an event, or an action or series of actions, or changing ideas and attitudes.

Such thinking skills are strongly to be encouraged in the teaching and assessment of this Unit. We saw some candidates challenging notions of 'revolution'; others explicitly used terms such as 'counterfactual History' to explore what might have been the outcome if certain events had occurred or not taken place. Again, without making this prescriptive, mechanical and recommended as a device for teachers to insist on from their candidates, a sense of self awareness in historical writing (or metacognition) is praiseworthy and will be a very useful Specification B skill for students moving on to Units 3 and 4 at A2.

Comments on individual questions

F981

The most popular units here were Tudor Finale: the Reign of Elizabeth 1 1558-1603 and The End of Consensus: Britain 1945-90. Both saw some excellent analysis and explanation from candidates. Answers on Elizabeth saw some telling use of the modes explicitly. The following response to Q4(b) is an example. It is not perfect, but was awarded Level 1 22/25:
Elizabeth tried very hard to do everything she could to portray herself as a strong, confident queen. She even went so far as to say that she was like the Greek Goddess of Justice, Astreae. This became known as the 'cult of Gloriana'. The main way to explain this was Elizabeth's strong beliefs and intentions driving her to portray this image of herself. But some belief factors by other people and some causal factors that caused Elizabeth to have these intentions also played a part.

Elizabeth intended to create an image of perfection of herself. The way she did this was through standard images…..[examples given]. *One causal reason which made her do this was the fact that she was a single female monarch. Females at this time were seen as weak and inferior to men so she had to create a strong image of herself…*[details of Matilda and Mary Tudor given]. *Another belief that may have caused her strong intention to create a strong image was that some people believed her to be illegitimate* [details of context of Henry VIII's divorce given]. *Another reason Elizabeth did this was that Mary Queen of Scots had arrived in England in 1568 causing a great threat to her* [details given].

Although most candidates preferred to answer Q3, they did not always know or appreciate the details of the Elizabethan settlement itself, which limited their ability to answer both parts of the question. There was some tendency therefore to focus more on Puritan and Catholic opposition than on the terms of the settlement. For End of Consensus, candidates did Q7 rather than Q8 by and large. Their responses were fuller and more convincing on why Labour won in 1945 than on Bevan's difficulties in setting up the NHS, which tended to see rushed and short answers. Either question would lend itself well to an approach which addressed for example the intentions of leading politicians such as Churchill, Attlee or Bevan (or interest groups such as the BMA), contemporary attitudes towards social reform, for example responses to the Beveridge Report, and events such as the split within the Labour Party over prescription charges.

F982
There were no entries for the options on Charlemagne or Robespierre and the French Revolution, 1774-95. For the Luther option, Q3 was more commonly attempted than Q4. Factual knowledge was good, and some candidates considered briefly but effectively whether the papacy might have secured better outcomes from different approaches to Luther in the early years of their dispute. For the Russia in Turmoil, 1900-1921 option, Q7 was more popular than Q8.

For both these options, there was a tendency for candidates to focus first on 'preconditions' or general contextual factors: the state of the late medieval church and criticism of its abuses; the economy of Russia and the poor social conditions suffered by many at the turn of the century, and so on. This could all be made relevant to the specific questions asked, but often was not.

One suggestion would therefore be for candidates to try to tie together a precondition of this kind to a particular 'trigger' or event directly relevant to the question set: not just writing a paragraph on problems of infrastructure, geography and climate in Russia but explaining why Russia had become so difficult to govern for Nicholas in 1905 that demands were made to find ways to help him, or relating the war against Japan directly to reasons for the failure of the 1905 Revolution, in the sense that Nicholas was able to deploy troops recalled from the war against strikers and protesters. Encouraging students to start from the stone landing in the pond and then following the ripples outwards, rather than starting at the edge and working, belatedly, to the actual

question at the centre, may prove profitable. Likewise some candidates discussed rather abstract arguments for Q8 about whether Russia in 1917 experienced revolution 'from below' or 'from above' without offering their own assessment of each case and without relating these ideas to the actual questions set. Contrariwise, assessing and arguing a case in support of a term such as 'revolution' or against it could be, and was, achieved succinctly and successfully.

Here are some extracts from a L1 Luther response in answer to Q 3 (b): *How is the failure of the Catholic Church's response to Luther best explained?*
I feel the major point is based on the intentional mode in that popes themselves were unsuccessful in suppressing Luther and his movement. Leo X firstly sent Cajetan to Luther to have a private debate which Leo was sure Luther would lose [details of the debate and sending of Eck]…Luther was happy to be compared to Jan Huss, saying that if his ideas were against the pope then the comparison was correct, showing Luther truly believed in himself and was not happy going without a fight, contrary to Leo's beliefs [details…] *If the papacy itself could not stop Luther then who could? The major driving force behind the whole of Catholicism could not concentrate its efforts on Lutheranism and as such let it expand.*
This brings me to my next point. Many of the actions taken were too little too late. The Church actually set up a council to try and sort out the internal corruption of the Catholic Church. But this was in 1545. What had begun in 1517 was only just becoming an urgent issue [details…]

Overall the failure of the Church authorities is best explained by the church just not taking Luther seriously enough at the optimum suppression time and letting the movement expand as it did leading to what is now known as the Reformation. Combined with the incompetence of the popes it led to a 'too little too late scenario.' This sudden realisation was catastrophic.

This response integrates intention, actions and a willingness to see the question from several perspectives, as it is to be hoped the extracts indicate.

Units F983 and F984

General comments

The entry in these Units was very small, not surprisingly since the course was designed in anticipation that these Units would be studied second, after Unit 1. Nevertheless examiners observed some general points about the answers that are worthy of note in the hope that their observations will be of use to Centres preparing candidates for examination in June.

In part (a) candidates did best when they had unpacked the interpretation before beginning their answers, identifying what kind of evidence was needed to support the interpretation and what could challenge it. However, simply producing a new interpretation on the basis of contextual knowledge then making the sources fit it is not rewardable.

Candidates adopted a range of approaches to part (a) and certainly it is not necessary to test the given interpretation mechanically against individual sources. The best answers wove a new interpretation, whether a revision of that given or a completely new one, into their analysis of the sources. Some started with their revised or new interpretation. This worked well when they made clear both that the new interpretation was derived from the provided sources and that it was an improvement of the given interpretation: that is, they tested the given interpretation while constructing an argument supporting the new one. This successful approach was only possible when the response had been planned before commencing writing, and it should be noted that it is the prior planning rather than the specific structure that rendered such responses successful.

Other candidates started by grouping sources according to whether they supported or challenged the given interpretation. This is an apparently more straightforward strategy, and can lead candidates to adapting or rejecting the given interpretation on the basis of evidence, inferred from the sources, that challenges the interpretation. However, it can present problems with the overall flow of argument where candidates want to contrast a face value reading of a source with an inference made on the basis of contextual knowledge or evaluation of the provenance of the source. Although the argument may become clumsier, it is nevertheless possible to adopt this approach and reach a reasoned and justified judgement including a revised or new hypothesis.

Less successful approaches were, firstly, those that grouped the sources by type: newspapers, photographs and so on. This was not conducive to a systematic evaluation of the given interpretation or to the justification of a new one. This approach may work in part (b) but was not effective in part (a). Secondly, some candidates analysed (or more often paraphrased or described) the sources in turn. While this approach may have some merit if it is used to establish a pattern of change (the sources appear in chronological order on the paper), candidates did not generally seem to adopt this approach for that reason. In essence their answers consisted of material that would have better been noted at the planning stage.

Many candidates questioned the typicality of the sources, for example Source 2 in F983 question 4 which showed men outside a recruiting office in Cardiff at the beginning of the First World War. Candidates should be able to recognise that very many sources, including this one, do show typical scenes or give typical views in their accounts of events. Candidates should not hesitate to acknowledge this, and indeed in this case those who simply challenged the typicality of the scene ("we do not know if this is typical") revealed their lack of knowledge of the period.

Candidates made more effective use of the sources when they questioned the motive of the writer, artist or photographer than when they tried to raise issues or problems concerned with the type of source. This applies to all types of sources but was noted particularly in relation to newspapers and photographs. No doubt similar comments would have been made about other

types of sources such as chronicles and letters had a wider range of answers been seen. For example, the motive of the newspaper's owner or perhaps the journalist should be the focus rather than the nature and purpose of newspapers in general. Knowledge of the political stance or audience of all available publications is not, of course, required. However, the comments should relate to the specific extract presented.

Candidates should accept the attributions of photographs or paintings. If air brushing or other tampering with negatives has taken place, this will be mentioned in the information provided. Candidates would be better advised to question the motives and intentions of the artist or photographer: why was this shot chosen to illustrate the event? Why was this camera angle chosen?

In part (b) many candidates made general comments that were not specific to the sources provided. They should instead focus on the particular sources provided. Any general uses, issues or problems should be illustrated from specific sources in the set provided. The sources should be evaluated, and issues and problems being raised both about individual sources and about the sources as a set.

Candidates could use (b) to show their understanding that alternative interpretations of sources are possible and that the same sources could be used to answer different questions. They could also explore the implications of disagreements between sources over the issue in question (a) or regarding other issues. The importance and uses for a historian of this richer pool of viewpoints could be explained in the context of the topic.

It is also valid to identify gaps in the sources – for example they may all be from one point of view. However, while it is useful to suggest different types of evidence or points of view that would make the given set more useful because it was more wide-ranging, a general statement that 'more sources are needed' especially when questioning the typicality of the source is not productive. The limitations of the examination mean that candidates will not be given more than seven sources. Suggesting other types of source that could have been used would provide the candidate with the opportunity to show knowledge and understanding of the range of sources available for the period and topic.

Time management was an issue for many candidates and it was sometimes disappointing that, as a result of leaving too little time for the second question, a candidate who answered part (a) well had little of value to write in part (b) despite providing good analysis and evaluation of the sources in part (a). Candidates are advised to annotate the sources while planning their answer to part (a) to identify issues and problems as well as uses for individual sources. Besides this it is useful for candidates to consider the uses, issues and problems presented by sources as a set while undertaking the initial reading of them. Comment on what is missing from the set is, as mentioned above, a useful way to evaluate the sources as a set.

Comments on individual questions

F983

Question 4 (a) and (b)
None of the sources presented particular problems, although in Source 1 there was some misunderstanding of the word 'relief' as applied to the end of the siege of Mafeking. Some candidates took this to refer to the relief felt by those celebrating. However, most candidates recognised that this source referred to an event during the Second Anglo-Boer War and that it recorded jingoism. Equally most referred to the censorship placed on reporters during the First World War (Source 3) although surprisingly few referred to the numbers lost from injury and death by both sides during the battle of the Somme which could have confirmed the bias of the reporting. Most candidates noted the range of headlines in the Sun, and some inferred

disapproval of the Trade Union boycotting the conflict. Source 7 was less direct, but most candidates were able to infer the general tone. In general candidates were too willing to generalise about the attitude of papers to war – The Sun being pro-war and The Guardian anti. Evaluation of Source 5 was surprisingly weak, given the emphasis now placed on the Internet and its use. Many candidates focused on when the account was written rather than questioning the purpose of the Peace Pledge Union website and how or if it controlled submissions.

F984

Question 4 (a) and (b)
Many candidates displayed a good level of knowledge about individual leaders, but were less clear on change and development over the period. There was a tendency to read both descriptions of the sources and the sources themselves at face value. Since Frederick Douglass was not identified as a leader he was not one. As Marcus Garvey advocated a return to Africa he was not concerned with Civil Rights for African Americans. The Autobiography of Malcolm X did not seem to be a well-known source; some knowledge of its compilation would have helped candidates to judge the weight to be given to Source 5. Source 7 confused some as they were only aware of the differences and hostility between Martin Luther King and Malcolm X; a few therefore questioned the veracity of Source 7, questioning where Cook had obtained his evidence. Many candidates began with a new interpretation suggesting that although Civil Rights were leaders were divided in methods they were united in aims. However the sources did not bring the expected similarities and differences out as much as expected and this sometimes led to distorted analysis. These comments should not, however, detract from the achievement of candidates in using the sources to construct arguments that clearly addressed the demands of the questions.

Part (b) was generally less well done. Candidates tended to focus on the usefulness of the sources in relation to the interpretation in (a) so that many comments were related simply to the amount of content rather than the type of source. Asking questions about the source, without answering them says, very little, especially when the questions are ones that the candidate might be expected to answer for themselves. Alex Haley's role in Malcolm X's autobiography was certainly not known.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE History B: H108/H508
January 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F981	Raw	50	40	35	30	25	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
F982	Raw	50	40	35	30	25	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
F983	Raw	50	40	35	30	25	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
F984	Raw	50	40	35	30	25	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

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