GCE

History B

Advanced GCE **A2 H508**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H108**

OCR Report to Centres

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Advanced Subsidiary GCE History B (H108)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Overview

Many candidates appear to be benefiting from studying Specification B. It is a demanding course of study, and examiners and moderators recognise the hard work that teachers have put in preparing for the teaching and learning. There was clear evidence this year, as in previous years, that by the end of the course an encouraging number of candidates had developed a mature understanding of the nature of the discipline of history.

The specification was designed to enable candidates to progress from one stage of understanding to another. This is clearly working as evidenced by the improvement in quality that characterises A2 work compared to work completed for AS.

The candidates' ability to write modal explanations is improving. As the Principal Examiner mentions in his report this involves more than labelling. Candidates produced good explanations that demonstrated an understanding that different aspects of a situation, such as intentions, beliefs and the state of affairs at the time, need to be explored to produce a full and rounded historical explanation. Candidates then go on to consider how sources are used to reach judgements about the past. This year's work saw a good number of candidates understanding the relationship between sources and evidence to produce 'excellent and insightful history'.

The Controversies unit introduces candidates to a new, and more challenging, way of looking at the subject of history. Candidates' work for this unit continues to impress examiners enormously. It is rewarding to see candidates exploring the gendering of the Crusades, understanding the intricacies of studying witch-hunting or discussing the role of post-modernism in history. Finally, candidates can feed all that they have learned into their coursework essay and produce their own assessment of the significance of a person, event or development. This year, there were many studies demonstrating a mature understanding of how one goes about judging significance both at the time and across time.

From the feedback received about this specification its success for candidates, teachers and examiners is clear.

F981/F982 Historical Explanation

General comments

At this stage of the examination cycle, it is more appropriate to offer centres and candidates a few reminders of what will help to constitute good historical explanation than to try to introduce anything new. It is hoped that the comments here on specific questions, forming the body of this report, are useful.

'Beginnings'

This term may be preferable to 'Introductions', since the latter carries connotations of scene-setting and content listing. There is no requirement at all for an Explanations essay to have a separate 'Beginning' paragraph. It is perfectly acceptable to plunge straight into an essay with an initial paragraph of core material which answers the question, which is analytical and which explains a development, event or action, as appropriate to the precise wording of the question. Marks will not be deducted for the lack of any kind of 'Beginning'. Should this be the chosen strategy, however, it would be appropriate for some brief 'signposting' to be offered to the reader at the start of each paragraph in order that he or she can be given some sense of an argument developing around an ordered body of content. Alternatively, a 'Beginning' may be provided which concisely sets out a direction of travel for the essay and which, crucially, suggests a mode or modes which offer the most suitable 'way in' to this particular essay. Scene-setting, shopping lists and grand statements about 'this essay' are not needed, and simply waste time. To dispel another myth, use of the first person is not discouraged. It would hardly be consistent for examiners for this unit to request engaging, individual arguments, which show a student thinking on their feet to offer insight and reflection, if they then discouraged students from offering personalised responses which mean something to them: *'The Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 has been called a coup d'etat, and in my opinion the intentional mode best explains how and why this could have happened.'*

Endings

Whereas a 'Beginning' is optional, an 'Ending' is not. An explanation of a complex phenomenon is enhanced by a judgement. Ideally, this sense of arguing a case and judging the appropriateness and validity of particular explanations will have occurred throughout the essay. In such instances, a gentle reminder to the examiner of the thrust of this argument is all that is needed as an Ending. In other cases, however, a student may be reaching a judgment in the final paragraph, where there is a lot to be gained in a little time. The least effective use of this time and space is simply to summarise a list of points already made, or to engage in some random rank ordering of a 'most important factor' in a fashion divorced from the body of the answer. Such a summary is not a proper 'Ending'. By conclusion or 'Ending' in an Explanations paper is meant a judgment about the issues at the heart of the question, a weighing of the importance of popular protests, for example, or a careful consideration of Luther's intentions in issuing his Ninety-Five Theses when he did and where he did. Again, a sense of personal engagement with the subject matter of the question and a depth of quality to an argument or judgement are characteristics which are most likely to leave an examiner with evidence with which to make a favourable decision regarding level and mark within a level. An Ending may well wish to explore links between themes or modes which have occurred to the student during their essay, and which need to be 'tied up'. It is undesirable to be overly prescriptive. It must add something to the answer, and must earn its place.

Reference was made in the January 2013 Principal Examiner's Report to the 'light touch' use of modes, and it is pleasing to note from this summer's entries that some centres have demonstrated that their candidates know what this means in practice. One approach that is less

successful is that of applying a formula for the use of modal explanation. For example, some answers on Paper F981 The End of Consensus discussed why the Thatcher government faced opposition from the miners. It was unhelpful for candidates' responses to explain seemingly every form of government action as 'intentional mode' and for any comment regarding miners being angry about the loss of jobs as 'empathetic', or every reference to unemployment being causal: *'These riots are explained by the causal mode as they were actions which miners took'.* Likewise, a question about why the Conservatives won the 1959 General Election was hamstrung by statements regarding Macmillan's policies such as, *'The empathetic explanation therefore includes the widespread support of the government's policies that allowed the causal factor of prosperity…'*

Modal explanation is a way of shedding light on an issue, a 'way in' to a problem, and not a universal straitjacket to apply to answers at the expense of analysis or common sense. A more subtle use of the modes on the same subject came from another candidate: '*Significantly, Thatcher's government's intentions were to close down 20 coal pits that were unprofitable. The belief among many miners was that they deserved their jobs and that they felt it was wrong that they were being taken away. The attitude was that they needed the job for their livelihoods.'* This approach is less concerned with labelling and categorising and more concerned with explaining beliefs, attitudes and intentions.

F981

It is very pleasing to see the continued commitment of some centres to Lancastrians and Yorkists, 1437-85. Questions on Warwick 'the Kingmaker' and Richard, Duke of Gloucester were linked by their use of the term 'important', allowing candidates to consider what such an adjective might mean: important when, to whom, and why? Although responses showed a good understanding of the respective actions of the two men and of the events which surrounded them, there was less engagement with 'important'. This is something for centres to consider for future sessions. The Franco-Burgundian complications of the Warwick-Edward relationship were well discussed in Q1a and 1b, as was the impact of the Woodville marriage, but better answers were able to examine patronage, connection and marriage ties in greater depth and detail, using precise period knowledge to comment on likely motives and intentions. In response to Q1(a), one student wrote: '*Although some historians have claimed that Warwick ruled while Edward reigned it cannot be denied that without Warwick's assistance both in battle and after it could be questioned whether Edward's reign would have been as strong and stable as it was, or if he would be crowned at all.'* The qualifier 'so quickly' in Q2b was largely ignored, which represented a missed opportunity.

The same message applies to the popular Mary Queen of Scots questions. It was a pleasure to be able to reward complex judgements based on subtle deployment of knowledge and modes, as with this excellent L1 response: '*However the empathetic mode alone does not explain why she consistently maintained her claim, because surely even with these beliefs she would have renounced her claim when she realised the risks it caused to herself, particularly after Norfolk was executed in 1572 after trying to put her on the throne.'* Linking modes to possible intentions and events in this way also raises the key historical concept of change over time, often raised in previous Reports regarding Elizabeth's reign. Some candidates were able to argue that Mary's claim may have remained 'consistent', as the question alleges, but that the circumstances surrounding the claim certainly did not: Elizabeth was ageing, and unmarried, and childless; Mary had a thriving son. As one response convincingly explained, Mary's son being raised as a Protestant, and Elizabeth's inability or unwillingness to produce an heir meant that Mary was in the way of a stable and secure Protestant succession. Similarly, the complexities of England's relationships with France and Spain, and their respective relationships with each other, created a changing state of affairs to which candidates could refer adeptly. This was a theme common to responses to Qs 3a and 3b, namely that events were not inevitable and actions have to be explained against a backdrop of changing states of affairs. Mary was cautious about becoming involved in plots against Elizabeth, some candidates argued, particularly after the passage of the

Bond of Association. This document featured prominently in some responses, but one examiner notes that it was never mentioned in scripts she saw. The roles of the Privy Council and of Walsingham were at best only partly understood. As one examiner put it: '*Better responses began to consider the issue of why, after 19 years, the Babington Plot made the difference, often citing the existence of evidence as a critical factor in determining a change of response by Elizabeth.*' On the other hand, several examiners were dismayed by the number of candidates insisting that England was overwhelmingly Catholic in 1588, 80% Catholic, and longing for Mary Queen of Scots to assume power; England was not.

Responses to Q4 were less common. Better answers understood the limited role of parliament and were able to avoid unhistorical parallels with its present-day successor. One comment from an examiner may be helpful here: '*There were some stronger answers here than in previous questions on Parliament, in that the differences in beliefs between Elizabeth and her Parliaments on what constituted their role were seen as the prime factor.*' References to tensions over the Act of Settlement and the marriage question were valid and useful. For Q4b some responses detailed the events of the Essex rebellion and other events which challenged the assumption in the question, which was entirely appropriate, but such an approach could not be used as a substitute for answering the point that opposition was usually temperate and limited, for reasons which required exploration. The Privy Council's role and work were not well explained, if they were mentioned at all. The punishment of MPs and Council members who erred was viewed as a deterrent. Most concluded that it was the respect and esteem in which Elizabeth was held after the restoration of stable government that prevented open revolt.

As always, it was difficult for students to answer questions on Ireland without what the Mark Scheme calls, for Level 2, relevant and accurate knowledge. Defining Home Rule with precision, for example, was a prerequisite to explaining why some Irish people supported it. Similarly, an ability to explain the effects and impact of the Easter Rising, rather than the causes of it, distinguished better from weaker responses. The changing British domestic circumstances of two elections in 1910 were a vital backcloth to Q5a, as was the passage of the Parliament Act, making Home Rule attainable. One response saw the Easter Rising as ' a catalyst for changing attitudes' and was able to trace the growth in support for Sinn Fein down to 1922, which is indeed when this section of the specification ends – not in 1918. Answers to Q6 were less common. Using the traditional focus on states of affairs, actions and events enabled candidates to avoid a narrow focus on the respective personalities of Lloyd George and Asquith, which at best would provide only a partial explanation.

End of Consensus answers seem to be becoming more popular as interest in post WW2 British History expands. Answers to Q7b were often better than those to 7a: the events of the 'Night of the Long Knives' and the Profumo Affair were well known and were recounted with gusto. Labour party politics, personalities and divisions were less well grasped for Q7a or 7b, with Gaitskell in particular proving elusive, whereas Macmillan loomed large. The same comments apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Q8: responses showed more interest in and more opinions on Thatcher than on Kinnock or Scargill. There were some accurate and interesting parallels between the respective responses of Heath and Thatcher to the threat and reality of miners' strikes, and apposite references to the 'Winter of Discontent'. The conflict of attitudes and ideas between the NCB, MacGregor and Thatcher on the one hand and Scargill and some miners (not all miners, as the question implied but few responses realised) on the other was fruitfully explored. What was less effective was the explanation of the employment and industrial relations legislation of the period. Centres may well wish to take note of this shortcoming. Correspondingly, the importance of the poll tax to Thatcher's political demise was well attested, but the nature of how it worked was not.

F982

No candidates attempted Qs 1 and 2 on Charlemagne. Intelligent and complex responses were seen and enjoyed on Luther and the German Reformation. Without humanism, one candidate argued, there would have been no Lutheran ideas: '*Culturally the humanists were already establishing an analytical way of thinking that precipitated the Renaissance, with scientific pioneers like Vesalius and Copernicus taking the concept of* ad fontes *a stage further by returning to classical theories in order to progress.'* By this preparation of society for Luther's subsequent attack, by this intelligent questioning of beliefs, by this insistence on debate, ideas began to take root in the minds of secular rulers such as Philip of Hesse. Similarly the effective use of modes as a way in to this question added much, notably when they allowed engagement with different stages of humanist influence:

'*However the causal mode was not as significant once events had been set in motion, which was not necessarily a bad thing because intentionally Luther had by then triggered enmity with Erasmus… by then the Reformation was carving its own path in the pre-laid sea of humanist thought.'*

Alternatively: '*Thus the causal mode was important but intertwined with the empathetic, because one needed the underlying belief system in order for Luther to have the support that he needed.'* Or again: '*In some instances Luther was loyal to humanist ideas like* sola scriptura *but in others he adapted ideas for his own uses in denouncing the pope. This labels Luther's adaptability and ingenuity as the most important factor for his ability to exploit both causal and empathetic matters.'*

Some candidates were able to see parallels between the lives and actions of Luther and Erasmus, both having had monastic experiences and both wanting to express their ideas about what church life should be like, but with clear differences emerging about how best to carry forward those ideas.

Q3b saw a straightforward focus on 'why then and why there?, with the All Saints' Day relevance of pilgrimages from all over the Holy Roman Empire to see Frederick of Saxony's relics in return for the issue of an indulgence being well attested. Did Luther issue his Theses only to be examined by 'learned men', as he claimed? Some excellent answers to Q4b considered that circumstances and states of affairs could not satisfactorily explain why Luther's teachings were not fully accepted by other Protestant reformers, since they were in many ways ideal, given the contemporaneous Italian Wars, so other explanations are needed: theological disputes with Zwingli, political disagreements with Munzer over the Peasants' War, and so on. Such approaches opened up these questions very well: the interplay of different and changing local, regional and international circumstances, the possible motives and intentions of the actors, the rapidly-changing sequences of events and actions which occurred. For Q4b some candidates chose to look at what would have been different had there been unity post-Marburg, a reasonable and thoughtful approach to take.

Many responses to Q5a demonstrated agile thinking, but others consisted of long, rambling accounts of the problems of Ancien Regime France. Most were successful in avoiding this however, preferring instead to consider the determination of the Third Estate not to be marginalised by the privileged orders but to pursue with seriousness a desire to give France a constitution. Intentions therefore link to actions. Louis' actions in sending troops to Paris triggered the counter-response of citizens determined to resist the dissolution of the Assembly by force. The event or action of the Tennis Court Oath was therefore profitably discussed in some responses as a consequence of a belief in some ideas, or ideals, and of the actions of the King in mishandling events or his inactions in ignoring the *cahiers*.

Q5b answers included the following: '*Therefore these protests were important as they triggered the creation and acceptance of legislation that would create uniformity and equality and ensured the end of the Ancien Regime.'*

'*Rural and municipal revolts triggered by the Storming of the Bastille were important in that they showed the intention of peasants to fight the unfair feudal system by attacking chateaux…this caused the drawing up of the August Decrees.'*

These answers show that there was opportunity to discuss rural as well as urban protests, and certainly a chance to explain the central role of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Some students appropriately noted that the 14th of July retains importance and significance to this day.

In looking at Q6, it is important to note that the events of 1791-3 remain difficult for some students to sequence and to explain. This hampered attempts to access the higher levels. It was difficult to offer sound judgement on the actions of Louis XVI during 1791 and 1792 without some knowledge of his reactions to Pillnitz and Brunswick, or his exercise of the three-year suspensive veto, to take just two examples of what might have been included. The one event that was known was the Flight to Varennes. It was helpful to link these events to the question directly, for example by using the Flight to underscore the need for a change to the way government ran, since Louis would not accept constitutional monarchy. Also understood, for the most part, was the role of the Paris clubs and political societies, which were used to help explain rising tensions and a sense of rapid change and radicalisation of ideas.

Russia in Turmoil was the most popular section of the paper, with a fairly even split between Qs 7 and 8. In general (as ever) the extent to which candidates are in command of their material is the real discriminator. For Q7a some students seemed to be unsure of the meaning of 'military reverses' but were nevertheless credited if they took as a 'reverse', for example, the loss of army loyalty in Petrograd in 1917. Some very able candidates found ways to cover both bases, as can be seen in this high Level 1 response: '*Up until [February 1917], the Army had complied with both the Tsar and the generals, but after a while they had a large change in attitude, in what was almost an epiphany: why shoot fellow Russians when they had enlisted in the army to fend off the German expansion into, and invasion of, the Russian Empire? The initial tipping point for the large numbers of (now revolutionary) troops uniting with the civilian population against the Tsar was when the Petrograd garrison, ordered to disperse the gathering crowds of demonstrators in February, shot their officers and joined the people.'*

Once again, an ability to explain changing circumstances helps candidates achieve what the generic Mark Scheme calls a '*developed analysis of interactions between…ideas, beliefs, actions and events.'* Many were able to see WW1 as an accelerator of Russia's problems, and one or two used the lovely phrase 'trench socialism' to suggest how radical ideas were circulating. Given that Q7 was headed '1917: The February Revolution', it was not appropriate to reward explanation of the military reverses of the Russo-Japanese War, however. Candidates should take careful note of these headings, which exactly replicate those of the Specification itself.

Q7b required reference to the events of March 1917, and not just general reference to Tsarist weakness. This was an important discriminator. Some candidates spotted that the question referred to 'the monarchy' and not 'Nicholas II', allowing explanation of the attempted abdication in favour of Nicholas' brother and son. Centres are gently reminded that even Rasputin's legendary powers could hardly be central to the events of March 1917, several months after his death. The idea of a 'tipping point' was seen in some essays as a way of focusing squarely on what made these Petrograd protests different in scale and importance to others.

There were opportunities within Q8a to explore divisions and differences within Bolshevik ranks, and it was a pleasure for examiners to follow careful outlines of those ideological and practical nuances before and after Lenin's dramatic return. Whether Lenin was a charismatic speaker and great orator, as many candidates averred but some historians certainly question, there were many sound explanations of the effects of the issuing of the April Theses. In order to address the key term 'important', some suggested that the Bolsheviks thereafter appeared radical, linking appropriately with Trotsky's role within the MRC and the Petrograd garrison. Others considered what might have happened to the Bolshevik Party without him. Weaker responses were confused by the chronology of 1917 and saw Lenin's arrival as the precursor to an inevitable revolution, conveniently ignoring the July Days and much else besides. It really is a basic expectation among examiners that AS students who have spent a year studying this period should have a secure grip of the key events of the key year of the period. Conversely, an understanding of the continued appeal of the SRs to the peasant class in particular, and Lenin's willingness to appropriate the SRs' ideas and language, did much to enhance some essays. A combination of modes proved highly effective in this fine Level 1 answer: '*Lenin's beliefs that he should not co-operate with other parties led to the other parties being caught up with the failings of the Provisional Government and allowed Lenin to gain the support of the peasants and workers through the issuing of the April Theses. Therefore the state of affairs created by Lenin's return explain why the later events such as the failing of the June Offensive and the Kornilov Affair had significance later in the year.*'

In direct contradiction of the question, some responses insisted that peasants and workers supported the Bolshevik seizure of power in large numbers. Challenging the question or the assumptions behind it are welcome, but ignoring the wording and answering the question you would have liked it to have been are not. More successful was to use terms such as 'precondition' to discuss the events which saw the Provisional Government arming some Bolsheviks in response to Kornilov's attempted coup, or to explore the idea that the Bolshevik seizure of power was carried out in the name of the people, thereby not needing popular support. This interesting approach was able to use Bolshevik propaganda to aid an explanation of events. Others suggested that it was not so much a seizure of power as a handover in all but name by a weak and ineffective Provisional Government. By this analysis, when Lenin and Trotsky decided to seize power, Petrograd citizens were not prepared to defend the Provisional Government and thereby created the necessary preconditions not just for taking but also for retaining power, at least short-term. The failure of the June Offensive offered robust factual support for the notion that events and actions played their part, by helping to weaken the resolve of the Petrograd Garrison to defend their political masters.

Practicalities

This session saw very few rubric infringements (one examiner reported an F982 candidate tackling Q5b and 6a), so the good work of centres in explaining how the paper works is appreciated. It would be helpful to remind candidates that abbreviations such as 'MQS' for Mary Queen of Scots are perfectly acceptable in plans but not in the body of examination answers. Leaving a few lines, or the remainder of a page, between answers to part a) and part b) allows examiners space to write comments and record marks.

F983/F984 Historical Evidence

General comments

This year's questions succeeded in producing a full range of answers with candidates able to access the questions – both interpretation and sources – at different levels. Examiners continue to remark on the high conceptual level demonstrated by the more able candidates in what are two very challenging tasks in terms of understanding the relationship between sources and the evidence they contain and the integration of knowledge to support an argument about the sources. There was some excellent and insightful history, demonstrating the ability to read sources carefully and with understanding and then produce a reasoned argument using the evidence in the sources. It was also apparent that in many of the middle ability responses candidates rely on a formulaic approach that might support them in producing well-structured arguments but that nevertheless fall short of demonstrating a full grasp of unfamiliar sources. At the lower end were candidates who struggled to read accurately, and it was this, more than other shortcomings, that held them back. This report aims to highlight both strengths and weaknesses to support teachers in helping candidates to achieve their full potential in future sessions.

Candidates in general divide their time effectively between the two questions and are able to write extensively in response to each. Candidates should, however, note that the second question is worth only 30% of the marks, so they should aim to write considerably more in response to (a) than (b). For some candidates the advice must be to write a little less and spend more time on careful reading of the interpretation and sources rather than launching too quickly into writing. Candidates need to be aware that, with only seven sources covering a hundred year period, individual sources are likely to contain elements that can support and challenge the given interpretation. Source 7 in F984 Q4 was a good example of this, as the freedom rider himself was supportive of the cause of African-American civil rights, but his parents were afraid for him, especially when he married an African-American woman.

There was some evidence of effective planning, and most candidates aimed for a basic structure to the part (a) answer in which they found evidence to support, then to challenge the given interpretation. However, too many answers were not organised as a debate about the interpretation – they merely traced what each source had to say (only drawing one inference from a source before moving on). This left the overall argument very unclear, so conclusions were inconsistent or absent. Although candidates are required to look for evidence of change and/or continuity over time it remains the case that an approach that focuses on generating a debate about the interpretation works better than one in which the sources are grouped by period. Examiners are looking for a new interpretation that shows awareness of change or continuity through time; a source-by-source approach, or even grouping by period, often leads to invalid arguments since the evidence in a source does not always conform to what might be expected in a given period.

Some candidates question the reliability of every source they read, then ignore what they have said when they move on to amend the interpretation. This is another example of where planning would help to support the writing of a coherent argument.

The need to produce a new interpretation or amend the existing one leads many to suggest their conclusion in the opening paragraph. While looking for a possible amendment is a wise strategy at the planning stage, many candidates who state theirs at the start realise too late that their new interpretation is flawed, leading to a contorted argument. An overview of the issues raised by the sources makes for a more effective introduction. Unpacking the given interpretation can be useful, for example by defining 'government ministers' in F984 Q3, but a lengthy discussion of the definition of 'loyalty' in F983 Q2 proved unproductive, given that loyalty *to the monarch* was specified.

As was the case in previous years, most candidates achieved a better standard in part (a) than in part (b). This was not a result of spending inadequate time on (b), but rather of failing to engage with the sources in the way that historians do. It was typical to find candidates who were achieving 70-80% in (a) who did not score beyond 60% in part (b). In relation to other candidates it is important to note that for (b) the generic mark scheme makes it clear that Level 2 in Assessment Objective 2a for part (b) requires some evaluation of sources if suggestions about historians' enquiries are to be rewarded. A significant number of candidates showed awareness of the terms in the mark scheme, but were unable to demonstrate higher level understanding of the concept of historical evidence. In general, (b) answers were weakened by a lack of supporting evidence in relation to the source under consideration. There was an abundance of claims about reliability, purpose and typicality but without using either contextual knowledge or evidence from the source to support points. Such responses achieved Level 4 or below.

It is worth taking into consideration that evaluative issues such as the reliability of a source can only be judged effectively in relation to an enquiry about second-order historical concepts. The reliability depends on the question being asked of the source by the historian. Most candidates needed to focus on the evaluation of specific sources, rather than writing about source-types in general terms. The report for June 2012 set out in detail what examiners are looking for in (b) and Centres may wish to revisit that report.

Comments on individual questions

F983

Question 1: The Impact and Consequences of the Black Death in England up to the 1450s.

Candidates generally displayed a reasonable grasp of the social structure, enabling them to focus on the status of peasants in relation to their lords. This was important as most sources saw developments from the elite viewpoint and so needed to be interpreted accordingly. Source 1 presented the problem of identifying what was meant by 'early fourteenth century'. A sizeable minority thought that the source dated from the early 1400s and hence represented life after the Black Death.

Among those who did appreciate that it pre-dated the Black Death, some failed to understand that its use in (a) was to set the scene of peasant working conditions before the Black Death. Here was a clear opportunity to cross-reference with sources after the Black Death in order to demonstrate either change or continuity – or elements of both. Instead, some simply dismissed the source as useless because it showed nothing about peasant life post-1349.

Most candidates chose to discuss for how long peasants' lives improved after the Black Death. Opinions were divided. While most were clear that in the short term a shortage of workers allowed greater bargaining power and hence relatively higher standards of living in terms of quality of food and ability to negotiate terms for working the land, the longer-term consequences were less well established.

Question 2: Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England, 1489-1601.

The rebellions referred to in the sources were generally familiar to the candidates. Most candidates were, therefore, able to establish a basic contextual framework for the sources, but lacked a strong sense of what characterised a challenge to royal authority. Rebels were unlikely to make a strong statement against the monarch unless in anger, 'they first hot-headedly insulted the king's name' (Source 1). Hence knowledge of what constituted the preserve of royal prerogative in government would have helped many to judge whether, despite their protestations of loyalty, it was possible for rebels to attack the monarch's choice of counsellor or husband or religious policy and yet remain loyal to the monarch.

Some responses did display an understanding of this issue but others were less secure in their understanding of what constituted royal prerogative. There were many general claims about the pro-government bias of the sources, some of which were developed by using contextual knowledge.

As indicated above, most candidates have sound knowledge, but they can find it difficult to use the knowledge purposefully. In some cases however responses made good use of knowledge to evaluate the source.

Finding patterning across Tudor rebellions can be challenging, but some responses did this effectively, as in the following two examples. The first generalises from two sources: *"Sources 6 and 7 show that the nobles who were involved in the Northern Earls rebellion and Essex's rebellion mainly fought for their own personal gain and conspired to replace the monarch with either an alternative they prepared, or themselves."*

The second example shows cross-referencing to identify continuity over time: *"Sources 1 and 7 describing events over 100 years apart show no change in the fact that rebels were disloyal, being government documents it could show that throughout the Tudor period government always believed rebels not to be loyal."*

New interpretations sometimes suggested that there was a pattern to be found in the degree of loyalty demonstrated, linking this either to the passage of time or to the issue that was the focus of the rebellion.

Question 3: Radicalism, Popular Politics and Control 1780-1880s.

Parliamentary reform was a focus of radical demands for much of the period, yet unless the phrase or elements of it were explicitly stated in a source some candidates were unable to recognise it as an aim. More careful readers identified a number of more subtle points such as the reference to red and green caps and tricolour flags in Source 5. Candidates in this option are often well-rehearsed in the patterns of development and have learned to divide the century into periods with specific characteristics – the period of the French Revolution and so on. A pre-learned pattern is often unhelpful as it makes it difficult for weaker candidates to accommodate the unexpected or atypical source and straitjackets more able candidates, encouraging a chronological approach which can prevent recognition of patterns that more readily emerge if the evidence is organised for then against the interpretation. Besides this, any pre-learned interpretation can lead to a candidate appearing to use this, rather than the sources, to suggest an amended interpretation. In addition such responses often add knowledge to support the argument being made rather than using knowledge to draw inferences from or evaluate sources. Contextual knowledge is only rewarded if it used as such: to contextualise the sources, rather than to add information.

Some candidates amended the interpretation by adding factors: *"Radicals saw parliamentary and social reform as a priority."* Others tried something more complex: *"Radicals saw parliamentary reform as a priority but to the working population socio-economic reform was a priority."* Another possibility was to identify change over time, with a move from parliamentary reform to socio-economic issues.

In (b) many candidates wrote general answers that did not use the sources provided and were not specific to time or topic. Some responses included extracts from sources, but drew no conclusions from these.

Question 4: The Impact of war on British Society and Politics since 1900.

Candidates seemed to find the topic of women's role accessible. The challenges lay elsewhere – with the ability to focus on the impact of war on women's roles and on the inferences that could reasonably be drawn from the sources. Responses suggest that many candidates found it difficult to establish the weight that should be given to evidence that is atypical or limited to a minority group, such as Muslim women, Suffragettes or even MPs. For example, many candidates knew when women were granted the vote, but failed to use the details in Source 3 to good effect. Although they grouped Sources 1 to 3 with reference to the First World War, they missed the opportunity to cross-reference Sources 2 and 3.

The view of the writer of source 4 goes against what many women claimed about work in the Second World War, yet was accepted by many simply as evidence that attitudes had changed little. Some candidates, however, used the sources effectively to decide what weight to give the evidence, which is the view of one man.

Some candidates felt the original interpretation was fine; however, most amended it in some way.

In (b) there was much that was generic and speculative with no contextual knowledge and no explanation of the assertions made. Better answers however explained the uses and issues, exemplifying the methodology of the historian as well as making the point that it clearly linked to the sources in question.

F984

Question 1: The Vikings in Europe 790s-1066

This option is a popular one and most candidates display a sound basic grasp of the issues. The interpretation identified one of many reasons why Vikings left their homelands and the sources addressed this issue as well as others. Most candidates opted to present an amended interpretation that included other factors besides settling. Often this new interpretation introduced the element of change over time. What was rarer was a response that justified the idea of change over time from the set of sources. One or two incorporated changing motives, for example Source 4, but one example, describing the exploits of two brothers, is not adequate support.

Few candidates were sufficiently ambitious in evaluating the sources in part (a), although answers to (b) revealed a sound basis of knowledge on which to base such evaluation. In (b) there were many mechanical responses that could nevertheless be differentiated on the basis of the extent to which the techniques the candidate had learned were successfully applied.

One problem found in many scripts was misreading of sources – Source 1 does not mention settling, just raiding, then the acceptance of poverty once the Norwegian Vikings converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, many candidates started their answers with evidence to support the interpretation and cited first Source 1. This was a weak start, often leading to somewhat contradictory claims about the source once the candidate moved on to challenge the interpretation. In Source 6 many candidates assumed that the Swedish Vikings were trading bread, milk, meat and strong drink rather than girls and animal pelts. A significant number of candidates claimed that the settlements in Source 7 were near the coast and rivers. In evaluating this source the most common claim was that Vikings may simply have named places as they were passing through; while Vikings may not have settled permanently in each location, the claim that the existing inhabitants would have accepted an alien name from someone passing through seems improbable.

In (b) the problems with Dudo were generally known, but not applied well to the specific extract presented. Most appreciated that the writer of Source 6 was relatively neutral towards Vikings, but not that his unfamiliarity with their customs could lead to misunderstanding of the religious ritual described. Many candidates relied on their knowledge of the Norwegian climate and topography to assess the reliability of Source 1, ignoring the author's claim that acceptance of Christianity had completely altered their behaviour, which would have been a better starting point for evaluation.

Question 2: The Italian Renaissance c1420-c1550

This was the first time that the Northern Renaissance has been the focus of a question and candidates responded by showing considerable knowledge of the artistic and other developments in this part of Europe. There were effective references to works such as the Fall of Icarus.

Many answers on this option had over-long introductions explaining the context of the Northern Renaissance. This is not necessary and wastes valuable time which should be used to address the issues in the interpretation.

There were many thoughtful attempts to interpret sources and create a new interpretation. Some candidates attempted to derive a new interpretation by suggesting that changes took place, for example that the Northern Renaissance depended less on Italy as time went on. However, a more effective argument seemed to be that there was little evidence in the sources of actual borrowing going on and the most that could be claimed is that the north was influenced by Italy. Few candidates took the route of adding factors even though there were suggestions of artists travelling to Italy to 'see the works of antiquity' for themselves, or the discovery of the New World being important in the Netherlands.

Candidates all understood and inferred evidence from the sources, but relatively few used individual sources to debate points. For example, it was clear from Source 5 that Northern artists travelled to and studied in Italy, but few noticed that the area of interest was the classical past rather than the current Italian Renaissance. All could see a similar motive for travel in Source 6 but missed the point that 'they can already see our skill on canvas, in stone and on copper plates'.

Source 3 was least well used and interpreted. Candidates tried to link the architecture of the various buildings mentioned and the apparent civic pride expressed by Dürer to Italy without appreciating that there was already a well-developed Gothic style in the Netherlands.

In part (b) there were some very personalised responses, that candidates had found it difficult to analyse particular sources because they had not studied particular aspects in detail. The problem here is that the question is asking how 'a historian' would use the sources and interpret the evidence they contain, so these comments are not relevant. Candidates would be well-advised to avoid stating what they (not an historian) does not know about a source as this line of argument shows only what the candidate does not know.

Question 3: European Nationalism 1815-1914: Germany and Italy

This was the least popular option, but one in which most candidates showed a sound grasp of the issues and good knowledge of events and developments. Most answers contained a clear debate in relation to the interpretation, with the most common conclusion being that it suited Germany better than Italy, where other forces such as non-governmental leaders and organisations did more. What distinguished better answers was the ability to look at the issues raised by the sources as a whole, rather than treating the actions of each person in isolation.

Disappointingly few answers drew on ideas of change and development in either country, but comparisons between the two led to effective analysis. A more significant weakness of a number of answers was a lack of clear identification of who counted as a government minister. Some candidates assumed that any named person in the sources acted as a government minister. This led them to inappropriate new interpretations where Mazzini, Garibaldi and the Pope were placed on a par with Bismarck and Cavour.

Most candidates could question reliability, purpose and typicality accurately in (b) but saw 'enquiries' as synonymous with any general use of a source so usually posed factual questions: *"source 7 would be useful in an enquiry about what Bismarck achieved."* The distinction between a topic of enquiry and an enquiry that seeks to answer a question focused on an historical concept is what differentiates candidates. The latter is what examiners are looking for to reward as evidence of understanding of the historian's purpose. The example above needs to be developed around a question that focuses on the results or consequences of Bismarck's actions rather than simply what he did.

Question 4: Race and American Society, 1865-1970s

This question produced a very wide range of responses. Some candidates did (b) first – these answers were often of the same length as (a) despite (b) being worth less than half the marks of (a). More surprisingly, having completed (b) candidates then read sources in answer to (a) entirely at face value.

More candidates than usual did not use all seven sources in (a) – often just four or five. This means that any new interpretation can hardly be seen as a satisfactory conclusion in relation to the set of sources. Most commonly candidates ignored sources where they knew little or nothing about the racial group concerned, such as Source 4 or Source 5, but some answers were based purely on sources about African-Americans.

The best answers were structured as a discussion of the attitudes demonstrated by white Americans towards the various racial minority groups, only moving on in the conclusion to develop a new interpretation. This kept close focus on the question. Weaker responses dealt with the sources one at a time making no connections between them. The evidence supporting and challenging the interpretation is therefore jumbled together randomly, making it far harder than it needs to be to move from testing to amending the interpretation. This approach also precludes higher level skills in AO2a such as generalising from and cross-referencing sources.

It was common to see weaker answers wandering off the point of 'attitudes to racial minorities' (see heading of the question) and looking more at the attitudes of racial minorities. Weaker answers struggled with the interpretation – looked for the word 'fear' in the sources and did not infer reasons for white actions when they could not find face-value evidence of it. The interpretation was read by a number of candidates to state that racial minorities feared white Americans. Clearly such a reading presents major problems when awarding marks in AO2b.

The best answers examined the concept of white fears – what they were afraid of, whether their fears receded, changed or continued over time. To do this, they showed excellent contextual knowledge, for example, that the Native American chief was speaking two years after Custer's defeat at Little Big Horn, making the threat implied at the end of the source more relevant for the white audience; or contrasting the claims made about Little Rock in Source 6 with the reality of what happened in 1957.

Candidates should look for more than one issue in each source and consider the possibility that evidence can be inferred both in support of, and to challenge, the interpretation. The best answers did exactly this. They saw different ways of reading sources and so built a genuine debate – Source 5 shows that Truman had no fears about immigration at that time but it also shows that there had been opposition in the past and that there was real opposition now as he

was reacting to a bill passed by Congress; Source 3 refers to an unusually large KKK lodge which might suggest fear as people come together for defence, but it also shows lack of fear of African-Americans as they are judged weaker than other minorities so can be attacked.

Cross-referencing of sources is highly rewarded because it is a good way of finding evidence to demonstrate either continuities or changes in fears or by seeing themes in the sources such as white fears of African-Americans gaining education in Sources 1 and 6. This immediately strengthens the argument.

Weaker answers often contained misunderstanding of sources – Source 1 referred to 'freedmen', but many thought the mob had to be African American despite it attacking a teacher at a night school for freedmen – here the lack of contextual knowledge of the viewpoint and standing of the writer was also an issue. In Source 7 the parents' fears were of white violence against their son during Freedom Rides, not that he 'married a black woman'. Some were mystified by Source 4 despite the reference to the Second World War, claiming that a weakness of the source was that it had no date and providing interesting but inaccurate and implausible reasons about what was going on.

Some candidates made simple assertions about the provenance of sources – the purpose of Truman's speech was to win votes at the next election (despite the fact he was challenging a bill agreed by Congress which in fact did become law over his opposition); Source 7 was written long after the events so he may have forgotten what actually happened; Source 4 is a photograph but it might have been staged or tampered with. These sorts of comments raise a valid issue, but without any supporting evidence. In the case of Source 7, the freedom rider is hardly likely to have forgotten his role in such a celebrated event. Besides this, it fits with what candidates might be expected to know about who was involved and their motives. The experience was of personal importance to him since it led to him marrying an African American. In the case of the photograph, it would be more productive to ask why the photographer chose (or was asked) to record this event – and to suggest some historically plausible reasons for such a record.

In (b) candidates can choose which sources to discuss, so it is best to avoid those they know nothing about. The examples above show how speculative answers – one candidate even discussed the possibility that the writer of Source 7 was a woman in a same-sex marriage – are unproductive.

F985/F986 Historical Controversies

General comments

The number of candidates entered for these units remains steady, as does the overall quality of the answers. Examiners saw much excellent work and it was fascinating to read so many mature attempts at grappling with complicated historical interpretations and theories. These units are demanding but nearly all candidates were able to respond in a constructive way and had clearly benefited from their studies.

The entry for the Non-British options remains much higher than that for the British options. Witch-hunting and the Holocaust were the most popular choices but a reasonable number of candidates were entered for both the Crusades and the American West. Of the British options, Imperialism was popular, with smaller numbers of candidates studying the 17th Century Crises or Appeasement. No candidates used the Norman Conquest extract.

There were clear signs that many centres had responded to guidance in previous reports. Answers, on the whole, were shorter and many showed signs of careful thought and planning. There were notable examples of the shortest answers being amongst the very best. In response to part (a) more candidates focused their answers on the extract and more part (b) answers attempted assessment of the named approach rather than a description of it.

Part (a)

In part (a) the best answers focused, at first, on the main argument of the extract. This should be started in the first line of the answer and is best reached by a careful reading and annotation of the extract, and a bringing together of the sub-arguments. This should be done during the planning stage and not as part of a candidate's answer. When candidates write about the extract paragraph by paragraph they tend to end up writing about a series of arguments without ever bringing them together to form the overall argument. It is very effective, and impressive, when candidates can start their answers with a clear statement of the main argument of the extract and then spend the rest of their answers analysing the extract to explain this main argument. Of course, this can only be done after the answer has been planned involving careful examination of the extract.

Candidates should not try and guess who the author of the extract is. This never works to the candidate's advantage. Those that think they know often spend the rest of the answer writing about the author and their works rather than focusing on the extract. Bringing in one's own knowledge and understanding of the main argument of the extract is an important skill in its own right. The best answers strike a careful balance. They refer to their own knowledge of the main argument, and perhaps some historians, to enrich their analysis and explanation of the extract. This is best done directly and briefly. They avoid writing long accounts of the work of historians that leave the extract far behind.

When it comes to commenting on the approaches and methods implicit in the extract, the best answers just focus on the most significant ones. They do not try and find every conceivable approach in their extract. For example, just because an extract mentions peasants does not necessarily mean it is using a 'from below' approach. Candidates should also avoid forcing pre-learned approaches on to the extract. The best answers scrutinise the extract and infer approaches and methods. Their knowledge and understanding of the approaches and methods helps them to make the inferences. This is a much more effective approach than forcing approaches such as Intentionalism, Structuralism and Marxism on extracts that contain little evidence of them.

Having decided that certain approaches can be discerned behind an extract, in the best responses candidates explain what it is in the extract that persuades them of this. Only then might they add something briefly from their own knowledge about the approach. This is done to enrich the analysis of the extract. Candidates do not score good marks for writing down everything they know about the approach.

The top level in the mark scheme does refer to 'alternative approaches/methods'. This is not an invitation for candidates to explain in detail every other approach they are aware of. An effective way of referring to alternatives is to point out how there are other ways of approaching the topic in such a way that the contrast provided improves the explanation of the approach in the extract. When done well, this was done in a focused and concise way.

The top level of the mark scheme also mentions 'explaining how the approach/method of the historian has led to this interpretation being written'. The best answers did not do this in a mechanical way and certainly did not make simplistic causal statements suggesting that a certain approach was bound inevitably to lead a certain interpretation. Instead, links between approach or methods and the interpretation were explained.

There were far fewer attempts this year to evaluate the extract. This was a definite plus. It was encouraging to see only a small minority of candidates asserting that an extract was deficient because the historian had been remiss enough to fail to use all the other approaches and methods. Strong answers simply stuck to the main tasks: to understand and explain the big argument/interpretation of the extract and to explain what evidence there is in the extract for certain approaches and methods having been used.

Part (b)

The key to good answers to part (b) is assessment. Candidates are being asked to assess the usefulness, to the study of the relevant topic, of the approach named in the question. There was a big difference between the strongest and weakest answers. The former briefly explained the main features of the approach and then went on to explain what insights and understandings have been gained through the use of this approach. It is important that candidates explain how these have been achieved because of the nature of the approach. For example, the approach might lead to new types of questions being asked, or questions being asked for the first time about a particular aspect of the topic, or sources being scrutinised in a new way to yield new evidence. It is not enough to summarise the work of historians who have used the approach. For good marks it is essential that candidates link the nature of the approach with the new understandings. The weakest answers simply describe the work of historians who they think have used the named approach with little or no assessment of the approach itself. In fact, the approach is often forgotten, with answers being about particular interpretations instead. These interpretations can be referred to as a way of assessing the approach but sometimes they become the main focus of the answer.

Candidates also need to explain the shortcomings of the named approach. This is done well when candidates show how the very essence of the named approach makes other insights or understandings unlikely because of the nature of the approach. For example, one would not expect to learn much about the relationships between Charles I and his court through a 'from below' approach. The best candidates developed their answers by showing how a different approach, by asking different questions, does give us insights that the named approach does not. In these answers the focus remained on the named approach rather than on the alternatives. In the worst cases candidates wrote at length on other approaches with no reference to the named approach for pages.

There are two basic lessons to be drawn from all this. Firstly, candidates need to understand that no one extract, or one approach, can explain everything about a historical topic. Nor do they claim to. They are focusing on one aspect to deepen our understanding and to add to what was

known before. This means that answers that claim extracts or approaches can be dismissed simply because they do not cover everything are not going to get much credit. Secondly, answers must be focused on the extract in part (a), and on the named approach in part (b).

Comments on specific questions

F985

The Debate over the Impact of the Norman Conquest, 1066-1216

There were no candidates for this option.

The Debate over Britain's 17th Century Crises, 1629-89

A good number of candidates were able to identify the key points in the extract: the importance of personal monarchy and therefore Charles' own actions and the problem of the three kingdoms. The best answers were able to unite these through the, for the author, overriding issue of religion. In response to part (b) there was much description of the debate over the gentry but not enough assessment of how much light it has thrown on the issue of Britain's crises.

Different Interpretations of British Imperialism, c1850-c1950

Many candidates were able to identify some of the key points in the extract, eg class, 'men on the spot', collaboration and indirect rule and hierarchy. These were less often brought together into an overall reading of the extract. The key to this was the statement by the historian that he wanted to 'recover the "world view" of social assumptions of those who dominated and ruled the empire' and wanted to understand empire on its own terms and in its own time. Once candidates had understood the importance of these statements the rest of the extract fell into place and a holistic reading was possible. A number of candidates claimed there were five or six different interpretations in the extract. Part (b) was generally answered well, especially the shortcomings of a focus on the metropole.

The Debate over British Appeasement in the 1930s.

The best answers focused on the argument that appeasement was very popular at the time with many different groups and individuals (far more popular than was admitted later). The author has little sympathy for some of the reasonable explanations that have been put forward to explain support for appeasement. Less effective answers took the extract paragraph by paragraph and thus got further and further away from reading it holistically. Part (b) was generally answered well although some candidates had so much to tell the examiner they sometimes lost sight of the requirement to focus on assessment of the named approach.

F986

Different Approaches to the Crusades, 1095-1272

There was a small but a strong entry for this option. The extract was a challenging one and many candidates rose to the challenge, understanding that the historian was arguing that many contemporary accounts gendered the Crusades and that some parts of these accounts, especially those about women, were symbolic and were written to make a point rather than to describe actual events. Part (b) about 'just war' was generally answered well with advantages and shortcomings of the approach being discussed.

Different Interpretations of Witch-hunting in Early Modern Europe, c1560-c1660

The best responses were able to focus on the key argument of this extract which is that witchcraft and witch-hunting was one way that peasants in southern France expressed themselves and their discontent. The other way was through social revolt. They were two sides of the same coin and were closely linked, especially through their shared practice of turning the world upside down. There are many other aspects to this extract but this was the central one. Weaker responses tended to respond to the extract paragraph by paragraph and ended with a series of disconnected but valid points. In part (b) the better answers focused on gender while weaker answers were based on the assumption that 'gender' meant women's history – which of course it does not.

Different American Wests, 1840-1900

In the better responses candidates understood that the author is attacking the focus there has been on the frontier and questions its usefulness as an analytical tool for the historian. They went on to explain that the historian thinks the West should be seen as a place in its own right and a place of conquest and struggle. Once this is done the West's story can be read as a whole and its importance in American history appreciated properly. In less effective responses candidates were able to understand parts of the extract but struggled to read it as a whole. Part (b) was answered reasonably well although there were a number of answers not getting beyond the argument that this approach tells us a lot about Native Americans but not much about other groups.

Debates about the Holocaust

The two keys parts of this extract, as the better answers explained, were the claims that 'deep-seated eliminatory anti-Semitism' and group psychology do not fully explain the Holocaust, and that those involved saw themselves as a minority with a special mission which was based on a strong sense of morality and on certain attitudes about race. Those candidates that started with these ideas were able to produce a holistic reading of the extract. Weaker answers quickly jumped to the conclusion that the extract is a confirmation of Goldhagen – which it is not. Some candidates knew a lot about 19th century colonial practices and how some historians have argued for links with the Holocaust. Even those candidates who did not know so much were able to make some interesting and valid observations.

F987 Historical Significance

General Comments

- As we reach completion of the fifth year of Spec B Coursework (F987), it would perhaps be useful to remind centres of the accumulated wisdom of the first four Principal Moderator Reports – simply because the things that go wrong tend to repeat themselves to a greater or lesser degree.
- Other sensible precautions would seem to suggest themselves. One is to make use of the Coursework Consultancy Service, which is generally praised for its good advice on proposed titles. Another is to encourage candidates to use historical journals such as *History Today* or *History Review.* Apart from giving candidates a quick start to their choice of topic, the format is likely to be more accessible than that of 'big books' (though both should, of course, be used).
- It is also important to give candidates an opportunity to present the progress of their research and to defend their developing ideas and arguments against the constructive challenges of their peers. The PowerPoint presentation is a regular feature in the coursework programmes of several centres.
- This links to the formative value of the Research Diary. It is worth repeating yet again that the surest route to a good study is a good diary.

Presentation of Studies

Coursework studies are generally very well presented. Where they are not, it is usually for one or more of the following reasons:
- There is no front sheet (CCS363).
- The front sheet is attached but the checklist at the bottom is ignored. This may mean that actions associated with the checklist have not been carried out – ie active page-by-page monitoring of the word count; demonstrating that the work is authentically that of the candidate (CCS160); and ensuring that there is no overlap between any of the study topics and content covered in other modules (Record of Programme of Study). Whilst all of these are of great importance, it is worth stressing that moderating cannot begin until the latter has been received – one copy to accompany each study.
- It is still the case that occasionally scripts are not stapled together. Whilst separate diaries are permissible (and clearly preferred by several centres), the conventional format is for the study to be printed on several A4 sheets (single or double sided, double line-spacing), followed by a few pages of diary – all stapled or paper-clipped together and placed inside a poly-pocket.

The word count continues to cause problems for a minority of candidates. A few studies were surprisingly short and slightly more were in excess of the word limit. Where this latter occurred it was pleasing to see that centres marked off the study at the 3,000 word limit. It would be even more helpful if candidates would remember that they need to include a word count *for each page* as well as the final figure.

Marking

This is a maturing specification. As a result, centre marking seems generally to become more accurate with each passing year. According to one Moderator, *Overall, I do think centres are more settled, attuned, engaged both with the work and with the marking. Some of the marking and internal moderation is painstaking and very thorough. Teachers understand the requirements of the component better and so, too, the needs of their candidates.*

Against this broader context, however, it may be useful to point out one or two shortcomings that tend to persist in a minority of centres.

- There is the classic coursework fault of being slightly generous at the top end and slightly mean at the bottom. Whilst this may be motivated by the entirely worthy desire to stretch the range of marks (suggesting a discriminating coursework component), it may also be a result of more subjective judgements that are not entirely consistent with level criteria.
- Where higher level generosity is evident, this comes from a tendency either to inflate the AO1 mark when significance 'over time' is less clear and less well developed (ie awarding L4 instead of L3), or to inflate the AO2 mark for 'critical evaluation' of sources that struggles to reach beyond that commonly seen at GCSE level (again awarding L4 when L3 – or less) would be more appropriate (See also below).
- It is worth repeating that half of the available marks for the whole unit are allotted to AO2a and AO2b taken together. Consequently, stock evaluations of the type mentioned above – be they of primary or secondary sources – cannot be rewarded beyond L3 (See also below).
- Identifying this or that level achievement in formative margin annotation is of course permitted but the practice needs to be approached with caution. The problem is that eg 'L4' is at best a blunt instrument and at worst misleading – ie it does not *on its own* make it clear whether the candidate has *begun* to operate at a particular level of an AO; is offering *further evidence of familiarity* with the concept or skill; or has *mastered* one or other – or both. On balance, it is better to deploy level descriptor words or phrases in the margin (eg 'beginning to make critical use') and only use the level numeration to indicate that the level has been *achieved*.
- Moreover, careful formative annotation helps the Moderator to see how the original Marker is thinking. This offers maximum assistance to both people. It follows that use of summative comments *on their own* cannot be in the candidate's best interest.
- Partly with this in mind, it is not really helpful for centres to work from 'translations' of the Generic Mark Scheme (GMS). These may be useful for assisting candidates' understanding of what is required but levels should be awarded and justified only against the GMS.
- Finally, it is worth remembering that the mark for the Diary is included in the mark for the main study – it is not a separate item.

Titles

The basic requirements here have not changed. They are (i) to find an individual, event or site whose impact can be measured both synchronically (ie at the time) and diachronically (ie over time) and (ii) to find a topic whose significance is in some sense problematic, or 'capable of negotiation' Hence, it is not particularly useful to choose a subject that is either so significant that it is difficult to find a counter argument (eg The Holocaust), or one that virtually disappears from view following its synchronic impact (eg The Blitz). However, the diachronic possibilities of topics like these can, of course, be explored by means of a 'resonance' approach – or one based on a changing historiography.

- This year, studies of Charles Dickens, Lincoln's Assassination, Robespierre, Peterloo, Charles Booth and Peter the Great offered fresh alternatives, running alongside some successful re-cycling of eg Oliver Cromwell, The French Resistance and Emmeline Pankhurst.
- Titles that are essentially 'causal' in demand continue to cause problems – in particular for the diachronic calculation. Part of the problem is that they tend to be well disguised. For example, 'How significant was the Indian Mutiny in the changing role of the East India Company?' seems to be a perfectly acceptable question; however, on further inspection it is easy to see how this could lead to the candidate weighing the *importance* of the event *against that of other factors* in explaining the changing role of the east India Company. In other words, this inevitably becomes a causation exercise. The more open-ended 'What was the significance of the Indian Rebellion?' would work much better.

- The same virtually applies to any topics that are 'locked inside' a larger event such as a world war. For example, Stalingrad, Dunkirk and/or El Alamein all had an obvious immediate impact on the conduct and/or course of the larger war but their longer-term significance tends to be constrained by the duration of the war itself. Hence a 'developmental' approach is difficult (eg within a span of 50-100 years around the event) but can be circumvented (see above), if a 'resonance' or 'historiographical' approach is taken.
- This raises a similar point about open-endedness and flexibility. Perspectives can be constrained by adding eg '...in the Russian Revolution' or '...in the Cold War' etc. It is generally advisable to as, simply, 'What is the historical significance of...?' On the other hand, there are variations on this particular theme – eg 'Does 'X' deserve her reputation as...?' How far have claims about the significance of 'Y' been exaggerated?'
- It is generally not a good idea to compare the significance of two historical figures because, obviously, this halves the attention which can be given to each. Far better to focus on one of the two and deploy formation about the other as part of the evidence supporting or challenging the main argument (ie about the significance of the chosen figure).
- Recent topics can work, but need to be chosen carefully to open up a definite historical aspect. Whilst it would be unwise to set a cut-off date, it is unlikely that that anything happening after the fall of Mrs Thatcher of the Berlin Wall can provide sufficient time span for a 'developmental' diachronic narrative.
- Some centres give candidates a completely free choice; others prefer to base all of their coursework titles on *different and distinctive* facets of the same historical figure or event (eg Peter the Great, The Renaissance, Napoleon). There is no clear evidence to suggest that one approach is more successful than the other.
- The key to turning a good title into a successful investigation is wide reading, evidenced, recorded and organised in a good Research Diary. The usual sign of a less successful investigation is a bibliography full of Internet items (see also below).

Attributing Significance

AO1:
- Wide reading opens the door to confident writing, plentiful source material, a range of historians, and the personal engagement of the writer. When this works, the results are tremendous, and fully justify this course.
- Some studies suffer from a cumbersome introduction, which, though well intended as contextual background, can lead the candidate away from what he/she is trying to do. It is advisable, therefore, to *combine* in the opening paragraph a contextual framework *and* an outline of the argument about significance that is about to occur.
- Whilst weaker pieces of work provided little more that descriptive narratives with occasional explanation and analysis, stronger work managed to fashion complex narratives, interweaving judgements about significance and critical use of sources.
- There are still some dangers of delivering the potted biography where individuals are the focus, or else fast-forwarding 'then and 'now' assertions about reputation that lack critical reasoning or assessment.
- It is important that candidates remain focused on their main argument about significance. In some cases, they get a little carried away (possibly as a result of a surfeit of source material) by showing that *any and every* statement is capable of evaluation by the various means available – whether or not it is germane to the central argument about significance. Similarly, studies of an individual can easily slip into 'yes/no' judgements about non-essentials. The focus has to be on assessment of *impact* – at the time or over time.

- Perhaps the most salient feature of over-generous marking is the award of L5 for the production of two well written but essentially separate narratives laid out side by side. If the candidate produces two successful narratives of this kind and concludes that 'X' was more significant at the time than over time, he or she is operating at L4 at best. However, if the same candidate goes on to show eg how/why the impact achieved at the time could not be sustained over time (eg the execution of Charles I), or why circumstances were such that the true significance of the event could only be revealed over a longer period (eg Pasteur's germ Theory), he or she is actually establishing a relationship between the two narratives, *which has more explanatory power than either of the originals* – either separately or in juxtaposition. Another word for this desired outcome is <u>synthesis</u>.
- Several candidates announced that they intended to make their assessments of significance in line with criteria promulgated by this or that educational pundit. On balance, it is better for candidates simply to employ the criteria (by all means) but keep the provenance to themselves.

AO2:
- It is becoming increasingly evident that this is the part of the operation that is the most vulnerable to over-marking (the award of 7 or 8 marks in some centres can almost take on the appearance of a default position) and the most resistant to improvement. For example, writers are dismissed out of hand because their article appears in a 'left wing newspaper' or because they are known to be 'Marxist'.
- According to one Moderator, "*Sources are still often used merely to back up some statement from the writer, not brought into the argument. Usually quotations used in this way conclude a paragraph, rather than setting it up. I have used the words 'weight' and 'strength' in some of my reports. Candidates could be encouraged to 'weigh' the view they have just quoted. A quoted source should not be the last word. Candidates should be encouraged to disagree with a historian, or find historians who disagree with each other. They can then join in the fray.*
- Over-use of internet/websites does not lend itself helpfully to source evaluation. Whilst this was less prevalent this year than in the two preceding years, the practice does persist – and not always amongst weaker candidates. The point of this is that critical use of a source – primary or secondary – really does depend, partly at least, on knowing who wrote it and why, which information is not always available with internet sources.
- There is still a tendency to over-reward deliberate, formulaic evaluation of sources with unswerving focus on eg content, origin and purpose (C.O.P.), incorporating simplistic, knee-jerk judgements about authors. Perhaps it needs to be said that any of this is better than nothing, but it cannot be over-stated that the best examples of critical use involve 'natural' and 'intelligent' responses to any given source. This means eg treating each one on its merits, with an awareness of the circumstances of its production, and of the evidence it will bear in support of a line of argument.
- Moreover, the value of evidence contained in a source can be revealed by a wider range of techniques than is suggested by C.O.P. For example, tone, inference and context are particularly useful in the case of primary sources; cross and counter-reference in the case of secondary. Apart from the natural response (see above), the golden rule is to make sure that the evidence from any source (or set of sources) is used to advance the significance argument in some way (See final comment).
- It follows from this that excessive use of quotation when used simply to illustrate a point made in the narrative is unlikely to count as 'critical use'. In fact, a good idea would be for candidates to ask themselves of any quoted source they have used, "How did that help my argument?"
- Strangely, it is not unusual to find in the work mainly of weaker candidates that sources may be more critically used in the Research Diary than in the Study itself.

Footnoting and Bibliographies

- For fairly obvious reasons, Moderators have reported that they prefer to work with footnoted references than with a numbered list of references at the end of the study. If the latter is preferred, then it would be really useful if candidates could make sure that the author's name appears alongside the superscripted reference in the main text. In this way (as in the case of footnotes) the Moderator can see exactly where a cross- or counter-reference has been made.
- A Bibliography must also, of course, accompany each study, being a list of *the entire evidence base* – some of which may not have directly contributed to the Study itself.
- Though very few candidates are still guilty of this, the practice of providing detailed footnotes that reach beyond merely recording information or clarifying text, (effectively becoming an extension to the main argument), is deemed to be circumventing the word limit and must simply be ignored.

Diaries

- Diaries used merely as records of events in carrying out the assignment have little or no value. Diaries which *are* useful:
  - record changes to the course of the enquiry following self-reflection or discussions with teachers;
  - comment on the value – or otherwise – of books and articles that have been read;
  - organise these into a general resource bank, ready to use;
  - record thought processes; generate and test hypotheses.

- The following gives a flavour of a Diary well used:

  This is an example of expansion upon a source (or interpretation) which is something that I have been struggling with on my coursework, but now feel that I have achieved:

  [Source in question] "Robespierre assured the convention that the execution was no more than the manifestation of the people's justice, 'A people does not judge as does a court of law. It does not hand down sentences, it hurls down thunderbolts; it does not condemn Kings, it plunges them into the abyss...'

  Originally, there was no comment or development after this source – but I have now added the following:

  [Commentary to accompany the above source]   '.... This would have reassured the Convention that they were simply fulfilling the wishes of the people, and so would have greatly influenced the final vote on the King's sentence. The fact that Robespierre was renowned for his moral integrity would also have given his opinions greater significance'

- Needless to add, this is also a good example of what might count as a 'natural' and 'intelligent' response to a source', with an eye on the value and contribution of this piece of evidence to the overall argument.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning
Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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