



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1G

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1G

Unit 1G: Britain, 1815–1865

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 1

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 1 papers were noted:

- Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three, each consisting of a part (a) and a part (b), i.e. 4 sub-questions in total. Whether due to timing issues or to a misunderstanding of the rubric, a few candidates either answered all six sub-questions or answered only one question. The format of Unit 1 papers is significantly different from AQA's legacy units, so it is vital that all candidates are aware in advance of what they will be required to do.
- Timing issues caused other problems too. This is a one hour 15 minute paper, thus allowing roughly 12 minutes in which to complete the (a) questions and 25 minutes for the (b) questions. A number of candidates failed to complete the paper and in addition to those who attempted only one question, there were others who missed out a part-question or lapsed into notes. Selecting relevant material and maintaining a strong focus on the question is part of the skill being tested in this examination and candidates need to realise that they will penalise themselves heavily if they fail to tackle the two questions required, in full. Furthermore, since they are asked to write in continuous prose – which is the only way any sense of argument can be conveyed – notes will never score highly.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates had not studied, or revised, the full specification content for their chosen alternative. It must be emphasised that the three questions may be drawn from any part of that content. Without a secure understanding of the complete content, candidates will find it extremely difficult to perform well.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

There were relatively few entries in this initial assessment but there are a number of general points which centres will find helpful in preparing candidates. There was significant continuity between this paper and previous papers (2Q) on the old specification. The result was that centres were clearly already familiar with the demands of teaching early nineteenth century British history.

The (a) questions.

In answering the new (a) questions, candidates usually tried to provide a range of three reasons and this meant that many were clearly in Level 3. There were some Level 4 responses and these differed from those on Level 3 because they linked the reasons together. Conclusions that simply re-state the list of reasons or just assert the primacy of one do not add to the analysis offered and do not merit Level 4. However, candidates should also be aware that links or a hierarchy can be introduced into the main body of the answer and will be credited.

The (b) Questions

The traditional characteristics of a strong essay were demonstrated by those who reached Levels 4 and 5. It is important to address the question clearly in setting out the introduction. There needs to be specific evidence to support the points made and the conclusion should provide a direct answer to the question.

Question 1

- (a) This question was answered well. A few candidates devoted time to discussing wartime conditions which were not relevant.
- (b) In general this question led to good answers though some candidates restricted themselves by either ignoring pre-1822 or, more often, not getting beyond 1822. It is not necessary for coverage to be equal but the question must be addressed as a whole.

Question 2

- (a) Where this question was not answered as successfully, it was mainly because candidates focused exclusively on the Whigs and their failings. Stronger candidates showed very good knowledge on the Tories. Few candidates mentioned Peel's pledge to protect the Corn Laws.
- (b) This question drew many good responses showing considerable knowledge of Peel's ministry.

Question 3

- (a) It is fair to report that there was some confusion over the Holy Alliance with it being led by the Pope and Prussia and Russia being labelled as Roman Catholic powers. However, this was a popular question and most were able to explain the tensions over trade, intervention in foreign countries and the balance of power.
- (b) Candidates were obviously well prepared for this question though sometimes over-dependent upon a few examples which they could not always credibly stretch to make their point. It was good to see that the inclusion of Palmerston in the new specification has been duly noted in centres; though some candidates did not go beyond 1830.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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