



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1060–1087

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 2

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 2 papers were noted:

- In the compulsory source question, 1(b), some candidates failed to use both the sources and their own knowledge in responding to the question. Candidates must be reminded that unless they refer to the sources, by explicit comment on detail or views, paraphrasing or direct quotation (or if they use the sources only and show no additional knowledge), their mark will be limited to a maximum of the top of Level 2.
- Although there were fewer problems of timing than in Unit 1, some candidates clearly spent considerably longer than 15 minutes on the (a) questions and 30 minutes on the (b) questions, and consequently failed to complete their final answer. They should be reminded that even a couple of focused paragraphs could enable them to reach a Level 2 mark, whereas a string of notes would be unlikely to show skills above Level 1.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates were not familiar with the complete content requirements for their alternative. Candidates must be reminded that they need to revise all of the content of these 'depth' units, particularly since this paper features one compulsory question which can be drawn from any part of the specification content, as can the remaining two questions, from which they have to choose one.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

This paper proved to be accessible to most candidates and good judgement in allocation of time was seen with all attempting two full questions and their respective parts. Most scripts were quite well presented and the majority paid attention to the wording of the question and tried to address it in their answers. There were very few purely narrative answers. Overall the demands of Question 1 were mostly understood and Question 2 was far more popular than Question 3; there was only one taker for Question 2 and conceptual understanding relating to the Norman Church still remains a problem.

Most scripts showed signs of preparation and good time management with the length of answers generally appropriate to the marks allocated. It was pleasing that very few candidates made the mistake of failing to use the evidence of the sources in their answers to 1(b).

Lower level answers were those in which there was inadequate knowledge/use of evidence to back up arguments or failure to address the full range of the question. Most of the weaker scripts relied on vague assertion, demonstrated by the continued use of 'I feel' or 'I believe' rather than presenting a substantiated argument. Similarly the use of the phrase 'some historians' simply underlines the fact that candidates are not really *au fait* with the views of ACTUAL historians. There also remains some worrying trends in the quality of written English. Far too many candidates write 'of' instead of 'have', as in 'could of' rather than 'could have' and are under the impression that 'a lot' is one word rather than two. However, there were some very good responses at the higher end demonstrating a good grasp of context, strong factual

knowledge and some excellent essay writing skills, reflecting both the evident enthusiasm of the candidates and effective teaching and preparation.

Question 1

- (a) This question was, on the whole, well tackled. Almost all candidates identified a number of similarities and differences which enabled them to judge 'how far', although this was not always explicit in all cases. However, the focus remained on William's attitudes and it was obvious in the majority of answers that the context of the situation was well grasped which meant that some high marks were seen.
- (b) This question was also tackled well by some candidates and it was pleasing to see the level of integration between the sources and own knowledge. There were few who failed to reach Level 3. On the whole, answers were well organised and attempted judgement. They were however rather limited in the range of own knowledge used. Candidates were strong on the situation relating to Edwin, Morcar and Waltheof but there was little that related to other, lesser landholders which limited the scope of answers to c1076. The aristocracy needs to be considered as a larger class than was seen here. Credit was given, however, for well written and well supported answers which nevertheless may have shown this limitation in scope and as such could reach Level 4.

Question 2

Almost all candidates answered this question.

- (a) The majority of candidates demonstrated sound knowledge on the circumstances of 1066, that Edward had died childless and were able to identify various candidates for the throne and the nature of their claims. These responses reached at least Level 2. Those who expanded more successfully the basis of Harold's own claims reached Level 3, while those who were able to rank the issues to provide a degree of supported judgement reached Level 4.
- (b) For many candidates this was their best answer. There was strong knowledge and understanding of the reasons for William's success at Hastings and Harold's decision making was sufficiently covered. Other reasons for success such as the impact of the Norwegian invasion – though many still persist in identifying it as Danish! – William's tactics and the element of luck all featured to gain Level 3. Those who began to formulate a balanced argument and placed the issues within the context of the actual situation in 1066 and the argument relating to good/bad luck were awarded Level 4. Responses that showed impressive detail and evaluation of reasons such as Harold's refusal to listen to his brothers' advice, the nature of the fyrd in the autumn of 1066, the thoroughness of William's preparations and the quality of his generalship – including how closely fought the battle actually was – and the problems associated with a prospective war on two fronts, reached Level 5.

Question 3

Only one candidate answered this question.

- (a) There was little knowledge of this issue and a lack of understanding of context. Some description of the incidents was provided.
- (b) The response to this question was also poor, lacking focus and far too general. There was some description of Church reform in this period but little beyond that.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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