



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2E

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit HIS2E

Unit 2E: The Reign of Peter the Great of Russia, 1682–1725

General Comments

This was the first June session of this specification. The responses were generally pleasing. However, it is worth reiterating that this is a study in depth and candidates are expected to be able to give specific examples and details to support their arguments. In addition, candidates must try to ensure that they answer the specific question asked, and not the question that they hoped would be on the paper; this is particularly true in the second part of each question. Candidates also need to show awareness of timing; some wrote over two sides on Question 01 followed by four or five sides on Question 02, sometimes including much description, and then did not have sufficient time for their answer to Question 2 or 3. All the questions were attempted by candidates although Question 2 proved more popular than Question 3. Comments aimed to assist the future preparation of candidates are as follows.

Question 1

Question 01

Candidates found this question challenging and many struggled to reach the highest level. Much of the problems seemed to stem from technique and in particular four issues became apparent.

Firstly, many candidates summarised Source A and then summarised Source B; comparisons were then either implicit, or explicit only in a brief concluding sentence. Candidates are also reminded that this question is asking them to compare the views not the information contained in each source.

Secondly, candidates seemed unsure of how to deploy their own knowledge. Some therefore ignored the instruction altogether. Others wrote paragraphs of factual information without really relating this to the question. Candidates are reminded that own knowledge in this question means showing contextual understanding in order to develop the comparison; not knowledge for its own sake. Unfortunately, many candidates did not notice that Source A was about 1695 and Source B about the situation in 1711 and so were not able to use their contextual knowledge to develop the comparison of how reasons for war with the Turks had changed and this might be seen in the views expressed in the sources.

Thirdly, candidates are reminded that this is not a question about validity or utility. Comments about the value or use of the source are only relevant if they are developing the comparative element of the question.

Finally, in order to address the 'how far' part of the question candidates should seek to include similarities as well as differences.

Question 02

Candidates were much happier with this question and were generally able to show their knowledge and understanding of the change in Russia's position in Europe during Peter the Great's reign. Some candidates did follow a rather narrative structure, which in some cases hindered their ability to assess the reign as a whole. Likewise, some candidates did not go further than 1711 in their answer. Candidates should have knowledge of foreign policy events after the Pruth Campaign and this should include both military action and diplomacy. Some candidates were also confused about the broader European context, particularly in terms of Russia's relationships with states other than Sweden and the Ottoman Empire. However, all but a very few candidates referred to the sources and some candidates were able to integrate them into their arguments in a sophisticated fashion. A few candidates misunderstood the phrase 'great European power' and tried to turn it into a 'westernisation' question. In these cases credit was given where their points were made relevant to the question but these instances tended to be limited.

Question 2**Question 03**

Candidates found this question accessible and most knew some reasons for the building of St Petersburg. Responses were differentiated by the range and level of development of the explanations. The very best answers showed awareness of the links between the different factors and thus were able to come to reasoned conclusions.

Question 04

This question required candidates to assess the motives for westernisation and to consider whether Peter's desire to increase his personal power was the most important. Some candidates did not select policies of westernisation and instead wrote generally about Peter's reforms; in addition many candidates found it difficult to assess increasing personal power as a motive. However, some very good answers were able to do this and to compare this against other motives, such as the need to modernise Russia and the demands of war.

Question 3**Question 05**

This was the less popular of the two optional questions though it was answered marginally better than Question 2. Most candidates were able to put forward some reasons for the reform of the church and the best were able to prioritise these.

Question 06

Some candidates answered this in a very general way making assertions about the impact of control of the church on loyalty to Peter. Better answers were able to support their arguments and assess control of the church against other factors such as suppression of opposition and the rewards available to those who followed Peter. Some candidates challenged the notion of loyalty to Peter. This was acceptable and credited, as long as it was supported, and if it was part of a consideration of the methods that were used to illicit loyalty, even if the candidates concluded these methods were not successful.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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