



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **History 1041**

## *Specification*

### **Unit HIS2K**

# **Report on the Examination**

## *2009 examination – June series*

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

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## *Unit HIS2K*

### **Unit 2K: A New Roman Empire? Mussolini's Italy, 1922–1945**

#### **General Comments**

The response of candidates to this paper was in many ways convincing. Most scripts showed good awareness of the demands of the questions. There were relatively few cases of rigid factual description without appropriate relevance. The length of answers was almost always appropriate to the marks allocated, although a minority of candidates spent too much time on lengthy paraphrase of the sources in Question 01. Only a minority of candidates failed to produce complete answers to all the four questions attempted. Many scripts reflected a tangible sense of commitment and enthusiasm for the subject. Many candidates presented their work with care and thoroughness, showing depth of knowledge, good organisation and direct language. The standard achieved in the best answers was impressive.

Despite these generally favourable impressions, there were some widespread failings that should be addressed urgently by teachers and future candidates. Although many essay answers to Questions 02, 04 and 06 were substantial and well-directed, a significant minority relied upon generalised assertions and were expressed in vague and imprecise language. There were many examples of poor paragraphing, careless errors and a general lack of clarity and control. In some extreme cases, the quality of written expression was so poor that the answer lacked basic coherence. It was also particularly evident that many candidates lacked an adequate grasp of chronology. Many answers, especially to Question 04 and Question 06, got key events in the wrong order, or did not respond appropriately to the key dates in the question, leaving significant gaps. Some answers on the economy, for example, focused exclusively on the economic 'battles' of the 1920s and offered next to nothing on the key developments of the 1930s. Some answers on foreign policy were a jumble of chronological confusion. By far the most significant cause of under-achievement was lack of clarity and precision in the use of English – many candidates would have benefited from producing slightly shorter answers, written with a greater degree of control.

#### **Question 1**

##### **Question 01**

Answers to Question 01, comparing the views of de Grand and Duggan on the Matteotti Affair, were of mixed quality. Most candidates showed an appropriate determination to analyse both differences and similarities between the sources. There were many answers meriting a mark in Level 3 – though rather fewer at Level 4. One weakness, even in otherwise good answers, was the inclusion of extensive background knowledge of the Matteotti Crisis, without applying this knowledge to the comparison at the heart of the question. A number of answers also included stock speculation about the provenance of the sources – such an approach can only be effective if it helps to explain the comparison between the two views. Another weakness lay in the persistent attempts to go through the sources line by line, examining phrases that had no relevance to the comparison – such as Mussolini's comment about 'creating as much confusion as possible'. Many answers tried to base their comparison on extracts from the sources that simply did not match. A more selective approach would have been beneficial. The best answers took a direct approach, explaining precisely the elements of agreement about the extent to which Mussolini's regime was in trouble, or the importance of Conservative support for

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Mussolini, as well as the elements of disagreement. In such answers, own knowledge was used for a purpose, not described for its own sake.

### **Question 02**

Answers to Question 02, on the role of violence and intimidation for Mussolini's consolidation of power, mostly had an appropriate focus on the question. Many candidates attempted to provide a balanced argument, weighing the importance of violence against other factors. The best answers were well argued, backed by integrated evidence from the sources and their own knowledge. Only a few candidates ignored the sources altogether and paid a heavy price for doing so. A considerable number of candidates relied *too* much on literal and uncritical evidence from the sources – such answers often failed completely to address the crucial developments in the years 1924 to 1929, except for paraphrasing the section of Source C dealing with the Lateran Accords.

### **Question 2**

#### **Question 03**

Answers to Question 03, on the launch of the Battle for Grain, were generally sound on the drive for self-sufficiency and on the propaganda aspects of Mussolini's policy. A number of answers wrote effectively about the special issues relating to agriculture in the South – but it was disappointing that so many answers were vague on the economic situation and the precise expectations of the regime. One widespread weakness was the inclusion of extensive material on the successes and failures of the policy after it was implemented. Answers to Part a questions need to be concise and selective, focusing closely on the specific question.

#### **Question 04**

The response to Question 04, on the success of Mussolini's economic policies, was varied. Many weak answers lacked accurate knowledge and offered little beyond low-level narratives of the various economic 'battles' – the 1930s received little if any attention. A number of relevant and potentially effective answers lacked sufficient factual detail or suffered from rushed and inaccurate written expression. There were also notable weaknesses in chronology and the sequence of events. However, a minority of very good answers wrote fluently about a range of economic policies, offering in-depth assessment of the Corporate State and the gap between myth and reality in the economic performance of Fascist Italy.

### **Question 3**

#### **Question 05**

Many of the answers to Question 05, on the reasons why Mussolini entered the war in 1940, were extremely good, explaining a range of motives, especially the opportunistic hopes of easy gains in prestige and territory that would accompany a 'short, victorious war' without incurring heavy costs. Many answers were also highly effective in explaining deeper, long-term factors influencing Mussolini's decision. A surprisingly high proportion of answers spent far too much time and space on the long-term background and never got round to the all-important year of 1940 at all. In the first part of each question, it is essential to focus precisely on the specific demands of the question and its key date. Another significant weakness lay in the tendency to make general assertions about Mussolini's desire for territorial gains in 'Africa and the Mediterranean'. Better answers gave precise definitions of Mussolini's ambitions in respect of southern France and the western Balkans.

#### **Question 06**

Answers to Question 06, on Mussolini's foreign policies, fell into one of three categories. The weakest were based on weak descriptive accounts of policies in isolation, often lacking any

sense of chronology. Better answers focused properly on assessment of a range of policies but relied on a superficial level of comment and evaluation. The best answers showed a confident understanding of Mussolini's aims and of the factors that limited his success in achieving them. Such answers were often highly effective in differentiating between short-term successes and the price Italy paid for them later – it was pleasing to see many examples of skilful explanations of changes over time, especially after and because of the war in Abyssinia.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.