



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1060–1087

General Comments

The weaknesses remarked upon in the last report do not seem to have been rectified but have in fact increased exponentially. The grasp of chronology in particular was poor in many parts, which led to candidates coming to unsupported conclusions. Context is not always fully grasped, possibly as a result of the same problem and actual understanding of the period and the part played by important events, are not being fully grasped. As a result, answers lack depth. This is further exacerbated by the continued use of personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' and assertive phrases such as 'in my opinion' and 'some historians', few of which are supported by facts and relevant explanation. In addition, answers are poorly structured. Judgement is a requirement of (b) questions and statements are there to be challenged. Therefore, conclusions are meant to answer the question, arising naturally from the arguments put forward. Instead, many candidates simply summarise what they have already written or even state 'I both agree and disagree with the statement', which closes off the higher levels.

Question 1

- (a) Candidates continue to do badly on this question for the most part and very few achieved more than Level 2. Provenance and own knowledge are to be used to explain the reasons for the differences/similarities, not as a way of testing the reliability of the sources, but this is the route many candidates take. As a result, comparison of views remains implicit at best, which closes off the higher levels. Too many answers tended to pick out basic differences in content rather than views, or commented on William's attitudes, which was not the focus of the question. Others attempted to justify the views in Source A by using 'they did not dare to go into battle against the king' in Source B in order to underline his harshness, which simply showed a lack of any grasp of context and completely ignored the attitude of the English stressed in this source. The best answers had a real understanding of context and chronology and could explain that there was little real agreement between the sources and that the feelings of Ralph and Roger were personal only and seemed to bear little relation to the actual attitudes to William by 1075.
- (b) A surprising number of candidates continue to make very little use of any 'own knowledge' at all in this question and relied almost entirely on the sources, using them as evidence within themselves rather than looking for ways to support or contradict what they said based on events at the time. The reason for this is that very little was actually known about the events of 1075 or the people involved and as such, the situation was transformed into the Northern rebellion in spite of the dates and a rather different cast. Some of this depended on what appeared to be an almost deliberate misreading of Source C and claiming that Hereward's rebellion was the most dangerous; though again, chronology was shaky. Those who quite correctly considered that William's reactions could be an indication of the degree of threat, lacked sufficient knowledge of the circumstances of 1075 to make this an effective judgement. Others ignored the sources entirely to produce the same scenario. This limited them to Level 2 or low Level 3 as the answers produced were unconvincing and of insufficient depth. The best answers provided appropriate detail, comparing the material relating to the focus of the question with other factors to construct a case. These answers showed a good level of

understanding, providing precisely supported argument which led convincingly to their chosen view, rather than a summary. There were unfortunately too few of these.

Question 2

This was far more popular than Question 3.

- (a) Most candidates could present at least 2 factors to explain William's reasons but too many went off the point of the question by attempting to explain why he was in a position to invade in 1066 or they turned it into a discursive question, introducing the merits of the various claims. It is important to remember that too much background will cause candidates to run out of time and fail to concentrate on the actual question. Also, few could provide the required link necessary for the higher levels. There were some very good answers seen which could provide precise supporting evidence and conclude with links such as which reason could be considered the most important and why, comparing political, economic and religious motivation. Such conclusions arose naturally from the case presented and were well supported rather than being 'tacked on' at the end.
- (b) This question was not as well done as might have been expected. Again, lack of precise grasp of context and chronology limited the marks of some candidates. Far too many still insist that Hadrada was Danish and that Harold Godwinson fought at both Gate Fulford and Stamford Bridge – or they ignore Fulford altogether which affects relevant judgement. Factors are grasped only superficially which led to contradiction and a lack of any actual argument. Sections were written about Harold's 'bad luck' or William's 'good luck' without any attempt to consider that this might link to the theme of the question. Assertion also predominated in some answers which limits candidates to Level 2, while a 'list' approach of points without balance will not generate much more than Level 3. Good answers – of which some were excellent and received full marks – were those that acknowledged the factors relevant to the debate – the impact of Harold's decisions, the context of autumn, generalship and tactics – and presented a well argued case supporting their conclusion; that is, they presented an explicit answer to the actual question.

Question 3

Although not quite as popular as Question 2, this was better done.

- (a) The best answers here could produce a range of both political and theological factors and link them effectively to both William's aims and his personal piety.
- (b) Some answers here showed explicit understanding of the effects of the Conquest on the English Church but were not always sufficiently balanced. Less secure answers simply listed what was done and so provided no evaluation and were limited to Level 3. Knowledge has to be linked to reasons and implications. Others tried to turn the question into one of control, which was acceptable if evaluated but failed to develop effectively. The best answers were able to balance what might be seen as the advantages of England being brought into the mainstream of continental reform with the exploitation of the Church and the loss of some of its essential character.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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