



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **History 1041**

## *Specification*

### **Unit HIS2E**

# **Report on the Examination**

## *2010 examination – January series*

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## Unit HIS2E

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

#### General Comments

In January a relatively few number of candidates took this examination. However, it was pleasing to see that candidates appeared better able to focus their answers to the demands of the question; this was particularly apparent in the (a) parts of questions and allowed many answers to reach Level 3 at least. In (b) parts, however, there is a tendency for some candidates to be insecure in their knowledge. Answers often lack range either chronologically or by subject matter. They also sometimes lack depth, specific examples are not given but general comments made which are sometimes little more than assertion. Finally, candidates are not always secure in their understanding of the chronology of this period: i.e. sometimes candidates seeking to exemplify their argument, make general comments about 'Peter's reign' which are only true for part of the reign and not necessarily valid for the particular area/reform/policy/time they are writing about. Candidates should be aware of change that occurred over Peter's reign which affected what he did and how he did it.

#### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to make some valid comments about the similarities and differences between the two sources and it was pleasing to see that candidates were better prepared to *compare* the views rather than assess their validity. Weaker answers still tended to summarise the content of the sources with some brief comparative comment. Some candidates were also able to pull out Peter's words from Source A and make comments about his apparent concern in the context of their own understanding and knowledge. The best answers not only recognised that Peter's concern was about revenue but were able to put these comments into the context of what was happening at this time; the situation of peasants fleeing and attempts to make collection of taxes more efficient (due to Peter's orders) which worsened the situation of the peasant tax-payers.
- (b) This question asked candidates to assess the success of Peter's financial reforms. All the sources contained information which was useful and almost all candidates were able to identify at least some relevant information. Most candidates tried to integrate both sources and knowledge into an argument although there are still a few who summarise each source and then use own knowledge. Some candidates did not have very much knowledge outside of what was contained in the sources but others were able to expand on this information and/or, mentioned other financial reforms such as debasing coinage or church reform. The best answers clarified how they were measuring success, i.e. what Peter's aims were and produced focussed and well-supported arguments.

## **Question 2**

Candidates chose to answer both Question 2 and Question 3, though Question 2 was probably slightly more popular

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a number of reasons for the failure of the Pruth campaign, the unpreparedness of Peter, his faulty intelligence, his over-reliance on allies and his under-estimation of the Turks. Weaker answers tended to fall into two categories. Either they narrated events and often included much irrelevant material on the subsequent peace terms, or, they wrote very generally, not giving specific details appropriate to this particular campaign (some candidates wrote more about the reasons Charles XII lost at the battle of Poltava, than why the campaign at Pruth was a failure). Better answers were able to link reasons and produce convincing conclusions that prioritised the reasons they identified.
- (b) Most candidates had appropriate knowledge and understanding to answer this question. There were some answers which assumed there was no diplomacy when Peter was at war, but there were other answers which showed a high level of sophistication in their comments about the importance, for example, of the relationship with Augustus, in the years between Narva and Poltava.

Weaker candidates tended towards a narrative approach with some links to the question though there were a few who did not even make these linking comments. Others made largely irrelevant comments about Peter's military reforms.

The best answers were able to give some evidence refuting the statement whilst still recognising that military methods were most paramount, partly because of Peter's character and Russia's position. Candidates are reminded that the foreign policy part of the specification goes beyond the Battle of Poltava and to the end of the Great Northern War in 1721 and that part of the significance of the Battle of Poltava is the impact it has on Russia's diplomatic status.

## **Question 3**

- (a) Most candidates were able to provide reasons for the introduction of the college system into Russia in 1718. There were a few candidates who were confused and wrote about education reform but the majority were able to make relevant comments regarding westernisation and modernisation. Sometimes these were a little general, but better answers developed their explanations and linked or prioritised these reasons.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to concentrate on the college system (presumably because of part (a)) and so lacked range and often depth as well. Better answers were able to make clear valid points about other relevant reforms as well, for example the senate and local government. For some candidates there was a tendency to describe reform, rather than respond to the demands of the question. However, a more widespread issue was a lack of detail to support arguments or not wholly understanding the different areas of reform so getting confused between them; both of these issues indicated a lack of secure knowledge. A lack of a chronological perspective made it hard for some candidates to show any recognition of change during Peter's reign.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the

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