



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **History 1041**

## *Specification*

### **Unit HIS1B**

# **Report on the Examination**

## *2010 examination – June series*

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# Unit HIS1B

## Unit 1B: Britain, 1483–1529

### General Comments

The quality of response from candidates was mostly sound and often impressive. Most candidates used the available time efficiently, providing substantial answers to all four questions attempted; incomplete scripts were rare and standards of presentation and organization were generally pleasing. There was, however, a substantial minority of scripts that revealed limited language skills and poor preparation. An adequate essay technique is a key requirement for success at this level and answers full of basic errors and confused written communication inevitably fared badly in comparison to the rest. It was pleasing that most answers, at all levels of ability, showed willingness to respond to the specific wording of the questions; unrelated description for its own sake was relatively rare.

There were also, however, shortcomings leading to under-achievement. Too many answers were based on relevant but generalised assertions. Many candidates failed to observe the key dates in the question and straying into irrelevant material – this was particularly evident in answers to Question 3 (06). A secure sense of chronology is an important part of the skills required for success in this subject.

### Question 1

- 01** Answers to Question 1 (01), on the Buckingham rebellion in 1483, often provided sound explanation of the political situation leading up to the rebellion, and of Buckingham's personal motives. The best answers not only outlined clearly three or more reasons for the rebellion but also offered depth of knowledge about such issues as the Bohun inheritance, or skilful differentiation in assessing Buckingham's complex relationship with Richard III. Less successful answers were obsessed with background description of the situation at the end of Edward IV's reign and the fate of the Princes in the Tower that had only indirect and implicit links to the question. One other specific weakness should be noted – a very large number of answers relied on speculation about what Buckingham's motives 'could have been'. The key requirement of this question was to *explain why* the rebellion took place and candidates would have been better advised to commit themselves to such explanation rather than merely describing alternative views.
- 02** In Question 1 (02), on the reasons why Henry Tudor was successful in replacing Richard III as King, many well-informed answers showed a solid understanding of events on the battlefield at Bosworth and of the political situation leading up to the battle. Such answers were also able to present balanced arguments about the other factors involved and the methods Henry used to strengthen his position in the vulnerable early stages of his reign to 1487. Many candidates, however, failed to respond appropriately to the key word 'replacing' and the evident need to concentrate on how Henry Tudor gained the throne and consolidated his position immediately after doing so. Answers deploying extensive material about pretenders, or about Henry VII's foreign policies, or his relations with the nobility over the reign as a whole, lost any relevant focus on the question.

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**Question 2**

- 03** In Question 2 (03), on the execution of Empson and Dudley in 1510, most answers were based on sound knowledge of the Council Learned and the role of Empson and Dudley as financial enforcers for Henry VII – and of how unpopular they (and the King who employed them) became, especially in the later years of the reign. There were, however, two significant and widespread failings. The first was to generalise about the adverse reactions against Empson and Dudley from ‘the public’ instead of a more appropriate focus on the nobility. The second was a tendency to focus too much on Henry VII and too little on Henry VIII – the key question concerned the decision of the new King to execute the two men early in his reign in order to distance himself from problems inherited from his predecessor and to gain greater popularity among the nobility.
- 04** Answers to Question 2 (04), on the importance of Henry VII’s financial policies for his relationship with the nobility, mostly showed a sound grasp of the financial policies themselves but were too often descriptive in general terms, without making specific links to the question. Many effective answers showed good understanding of a range of other factors, such as law and order, or royal patronage. Attempts to use extensive material on foreign policies tended to drift into irrelevant description for its own sake. One issue to be addressed is accuracy of definition. For example, many candidates wrote very vaguely about attainders as if they were a daily occurrence and on the erroneous supposition they were chiefly a financial measure. The widespread failure to spell the word *recognisances* correctly was puzzling, since the term itself was generally well-understood.

**Question 3**

It was pleasing that the response to this question on the years to 1529 was more numerous and better prepared than in previous papers, when it appeared that many candidates had failed to give sufficient attention to the later years of the specification content.

- 05** Answers to Question 3 (05), on the downfall of Wolsey in 1529, were mostly well-informed about the failure to achieve an annulment of the royal marriage and on the consequences of that failure for Wolsey. Many candidates also provided skilful explanations of longer-term issues such as the adverse effects on Wolsey’s position of the Amicable Grant, or of the growth of politically-motivated opposition to Wolsey at court. Some high-quality answers showed conceptual depth in explaining how the personality of Henry VIII placed impossible demands on Wolsey and that it was not only his own mistakes that brought him down. Less successful answers relied upon lengthy description of Wolsey’s career without making specific links to 1529.
- 06** In Question 3 (06), on foreign policies and Wolsey’s success or failure in satisfying the ambitions of Henry VIII to 1526, many successful answers provided secure evidence about the policies and a balanced assessment of the extent of success or otherwise. Weaker answers offered either descriptive narrative accounts without enough direct argument in response to the question; or relied on generalized evidence and assertions. One specific failing that undermined otherwise promising answers was the widespread tendency to stray beyond the end date of 1526 – far too many candidates wrote at length about the search for a way out of Henry VIII’s marriage to Katherine of Aragon, using material from 1527 to 1529 that belonged in Question 3 (05) but was of no relevance at all to this question.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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