



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2Q

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2Q

Unit 2Q: The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975

General Comments

The vast majority of candidates complied with the rubric requirements for this examination. Preparation for the examination was good and there was an impressive knowledge base evident in many of the candidates' answers. All the optional questions were attempted and there was a reasonable balance between the number of responses to Question 2 and Question 3. There was plenty of evidence of good analytical thinking and this bodes well for the demands of A2 which many of the candidates will move up to. There remains the issue of candidates being able to access Level 4 in those questions which carry 12 marks. There is a need to ensure that candidates are able to establish developed understanding and linkage in their responses. There were a significant number of answers which recited a range of reasons in answer to Question 2 (03) and (04), thereby reaching Level 3, but did not establish clear linkage. Knowledgeable candidates often did not move into Level 4, seemingly because they lacked developed examination technique rather than developed knowledge and analytical understanding.

Question 1

- 01** There was a tendency for some candidates to simply recite the content of each source. This often led to an assumption on the part of the candidate that the similarities and differences were self-evident from what had been described. This approach, based on two independent descriptions, is not productive and generally lead, to a limited performance. Some candidates seemed uncertain as to what a difference and a similarity was and often suggested a point as being a difference and then went on to suggest the same point was a similarity. This was evident in terms of the impact the invasion of Cambodia had on the strength of Hanoi. The majority of candidates were able to clearly identify both similarities and differences and this took them into Level 3. The best responses were those that not only established the similarities and differences but also developed a clear understanding based on extended knowledge.
- 02** Many answers displayed a good knowledge base. There were relatively few examples of answers which failed to use both the sources and the candidates' own knowledge. Generally it was the failure to use the sources which created a ceiling for the mark. There were some answers which were particularly good and suggested that the candidates had a real understanding but were stopped at 11 because there was no reference to the sources. Equally some candidates' answers were entirely source dependent. Such answers were less impressive but often still reached 11. The best answers were clearly ones that did not succumb to examination technique issues and remained focused on the specific question. These developed a sound evidence base and an analytical and balanced approach. Such answers produced a wide range of factors that underpinned the USA's withdrawal and were able to develop an evaluation of their relative importance.

Question 2

- 03** A number of candidates seemed to bring pre-prepared answers on Diem's regime to this question. There were often lengthy details of the nature of Diem's regime that led to an explanation of why he was an unpopular leader. This approach tended to result in an implicit response to the question asked and resulted in the appropriate reward. Better answers were able to refer to Diem's regime as the basis for political instability in South Vietnam and suggest that this was a contributory factor to the leadership crisis. Many candidates were able to comment on the significance of the uncertainty of US support and the lack of a clear successor to Diem and provide reasons as to why this was so. The best answers were those that identified a range of factors and showed how these were connected or were able to prioritise their relative importance.
- 04** The great majority of candidates were able to establish some balance in their answers to this question. Some less well focused answers embarked on a descriptive narrative of Vietcong tactics. There was much detail on the use of guerrilla warfare and its nature. Clearly this was relevant to this question but left in isolation it tended to result in limited reward. The approach that many candidates adopted was that of considering the failures of the USA. There were some impressive responses in terms of a balanced analysis between the VC tactics and their effectiveness and the contribution the USA made to facilitating VC success. Some candidates considered the premise and suggested that it was spurious to suggest the VC were successful at all during the specified period. This approach was often well rewarded. Overall this was a question that generated a significant number of good answers.

Question 3

- 05** This question was answered very well. The great majority of candidates had a good working knowledge of the origins of the Resolution. The better answers were those that analysed the reasons. Many such answers were able to place the Resolution into the wider context of containment and the political legacy left by Kennedy. A small minority of answers restricted the response to the immediate reasons, the attack on US naval vessels. A few answers focused on the escalation process and these appeared to have responded to a question that had not been asked, namely why did Johnson escalate the involvement of the USA in Vietnam. Candidates need to ensure that they focus on the question asked rather than adapting it to one they have prepared and answer for.
- 06** This question generated a significant number of good answers. The majority of candidates were able to establish balanced responses by considering the aspect of success for the Vietcong and the elements of defeat it experienced. Some particularly good answers addressed the key word 'overwhelming' and did so to good effect. These often viewed the offensive as a success but one that had limitations. This approach often showed a real sophistication on the part of such candidates and clear signs of very good A2 characteristics. Some candidates adopted the approach used for 03 and 05 questions. They presented an extended list of reasons for and against success but made little real effort to establish an evaluation. Candidates need to understand, and prepare themselves for, the different emphasis that is present between 03 /05 question and 04/06 questions. There is real mileage in referring to the generic mark schemes in order to ensure this outcome.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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