



General Certificate of Education

History 2041

Specification

Unit HIS3B

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS3B

Unit 3B: The Triumph of Elizabeth: Britain, 1547–1603

General Comments

It is gratifying to report that the first examination of the new specification elicited such a positive response from many candidates. Approximately half of all answers were awarded marks at Levels 4 and 5 and only a few very weak scripts were noted. (Indeed, very few candidates appear to have gone into the examination under-prepared). Many candidates demonstrated a mature conceptual grasp as well as detailed knowledge and an ability to organise material very effectively within the constraints of a relatively short examination, though some candidates did suffer because timing issues ensured that they had little opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in their second answers. Where wider problems were seen these were caused either by conceptual shortcomings (in answers to Questions 01 and 02) or limitations in material (in answers to Question 03), though in general there was a consistency of performance between questions.

It has to be reported, however, that there was one irritating feature which was common to some scripts: unfocused historiography. Historiography, used effectively to advance an argument, often featured in very good answers. This was not the case with unfocused historiography, which had three main features: the patent misattribution of historians' views, the presumed equivalence of the importance of great historians and the writers of A level textbooks, and the blanket use of the term 'revisionist', which was often bandied by candidates who clearly had not the slightest idea of what the term signified.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude the general comments on such a negative note. Centres had, by and large, firmly addressed the demands of the new specification and candidates had responded effectively to the requirements of writing two substantial essays in a relatively short period of time. They should be justly proud of their efforts.

Question 1

01 The mean mark for this question was slightly higher than those of the other two questions. The most successful answers adopted an integrated approach, identifying key aspects of good government, evaluating those in respect of the whole eleven years of the question and marshalling substantial amounts of evidence to bolster their arguments. Such answers were invariably placed in Level 5. However, it was also possible to get into Level 5 by candidates offering separate analyses of the periods of Somerset, Northumberland and Mary – with appropriate integration and synthesis provided in conclusions. In general, there was better understanding of the rule of Somerset than that of Northumberland, often concluding that the combination of rebellions, debasement and inflation experienced in 1549 showed the weaknesses of Somerset's administration. Many candidates were, in addition, aware of the structural weaknesses of Somerset's rule, though fewer were aware of the limitations associated with the later stages of Northumberland's governance. Most candidates had an understanding of all of the key aspects of Mary's reign, though there was some confusion about the respective roles of Gardiner and Paget. Some candidates did struggle with the concept of 'government' as it applied in this period, and this caused problems with analysis.

Question 2

- 02** Many candidates showed themselves well-prepared to answer this question. The vast majority of candidates could offer relevant insights on the Elizabethan Settlement, ranging from sensible comment to sophisticated evaluation. The main variation thereafter in candidate performance was in the ability of candidates to develop an evaluation across the whole reign. The best answers showed an awareness that the term 'half-reformed Church' was essentially a 'puritan' criticism of the English Church and evaluated the puritan perception of the Church's shortcomings: an unreformed ecclesiastical structure, 'popish' survivals in the Book of Common Prayer and in clerical dress and inadequate provision of preachers. Candidates who understood these factors also tended to have a sharp grasp of the difficulties in which Grindal found himself on his translation to Canterbury. There was less understanding of the divisiveness of Whitgift. In particular, there was little understanding that the requirement to subscribe in the Three Articles that the Book of Common Prayer contained nothing in it contrary to the word of God imposed a condition which many could not in conscience accept, as Burghley well knew when criticising Whitgift for this. Candidates should also be more aware of the extent to which many of Elizabeth's most devoted followers, including both Leicester and Burghley, considered the Settlement inadequate and were quite prepared to protect clergymen who criticised it. It was perfectly acceptable, of course, for candidates to argue, as many did, that the church was *not* 'half-reformed' on the basis that the Settlement represented Elizabeth's own final and complete version of what the Church should be, which also enabled such answers to demonstrate an awareness of Catholic objections to the reformed nature of the Church. Examiners did, however, differentiate between those perspectives and those which simply listed plots against Elizabeth, which were deemed to have little relevance.

Question 3

- 03** This question was answered slightly less well than the Questions 01 and 02, even though it did not create the same conceptual demands of Questions 01 and 02. It did, however, require candidates to have a substantial range of knowledge of late Elizabethan foreign policy. The best answers identified Elizabeth's policy objectives towards Spain and were able to evaluate the level of Elizabeth's success in achieving these. Such answers drew their material from the defeat of the Armada in 1588, the continuing war at sea in the 1590s, Spanish support for the Tyrone rebellion in Ireland and English opposition to Spanish military involvement in the Netherlands and France. The knowledge of well-prepared candidates was often very impressive. Some candidates did, however, struggle either because of inadequate definition of objectives, narrowness of material or lack of clarity about strategic objectives. (This was especially the case with English involvement in the Netherlands from 1589, with some candidates seeming erroneously to think that English involvement ended with the failure of Leicester's expedition). A minority of candidates were unprepared to answer this question. Instead, they tended to offer analyses of the decline in Anglo-Spanish relations from 1567.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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