



General Certificate of Education

History 2041

Specification

Unit HIS3G

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Unit HIS3G

Unit 3G: British State and People, 1865–1915

General Comments

This was the first examination of this unit of the new History Specification. The paper was accessible to the vast majority of candidates. All scripts were marked in accordance with the Mark Scheme. The marks awarded ranged from the maximum of 90 to those in single figures. Those candidates who were awarded marks in Levels 4 and 5 for one or both of their answers received them because they had addressed the assessment objectives in answering the specific questions on the paper. In summary they had deployed appropriate historical knowledge and successfully communicated that knowledge with sound understanding, demonstrated that understanding through analysis and substantiated judgements, and made effective use of historical understanding. There was evidence of wide and in-depth reading well beyond the 'endorsed' textbook. The weakest scripts were those unable to demonstrate basic knowledge. Without that secure base of knowledge there was an inability to have appropriate understanding of the issues in questions asked and therefore to display other historical skills. Argument became assertion rather than substantiated analysis and judgement.

Perhaps surprisingly Question 1, the 'breadth question' covering almost the whole period of the Specification content, was the most popular, whereas the relatively 'narrow' Question 3 was the least popular by a large margin in terms of candidate choice. There was a significantly higher percentage of candidates gaining marks in Level 5 for Question 1 compared with the other two questions. On the other hand when the percentages of candidates gaining Levels 4 and 5 were taken together nearly 50 per cent achieved one of those Levels in Questions 1 and 2. Overall, Question 3 was less well done, although 44 per cent gained marks in Levels 4 and 5 with a few quite excellent responses receiving a mark of 45 or just below.

Most candidates found the time available (one and a half hours) for answering two questions manageable. Indeed it was quite surprising how much many managed to write in terms of length, but did so successfully. There was a minority, however, who sacrificed thought, organisation and care in an attempt just to fill the answer book with as much information or words as possible. Where there was a problem in managing time, it was mainly for those who had written at too great a length on Question 1 and then had to rush their second answer.

Quality of Written Communication was generally satisfactory. Only a few disregarded the instructions to 'use good English' and 'organise information clearly'. The main spelling mistakes of proper nouns were of 'Kilmainham', 'Balfour' and 'Grey', but regrettably a few misspelt 'Gladstone' and 'Salisbury' and even more 'Disraeli'. The tendency to use phrases such as 'this could have' or 'this may be' occurred in a significant number of scripts giving the impression that the candidate was unsure about the argument being advanced. Similarly the use of phrases such as 'I feel', 'I believe' or 'I think', often being repeated, gave the impression that the argument was assertive rather than based on evidence.

Question 1

- 01** Over two-thirds of candidates answered this ‘breadth’ question. Overall it was the best answered on the paper. Most responses indicated sound knowledge of British governments’ policies towards Ireland and how these varied between different governments and over time. Some of the very best responses took a thematic approach, for example taking religion, the land problems and political issues in turn. This approach had the great advantage that supporting evidence could be selective and used directly and explicitly in argument about the relative success (or otherwise) of Ireland being pacified. A further advantage was that such an approach made a more effective use of time compared with a chronological approach. Such thematic answers normally built a case as they progressed to reach an overall conclusion and judgement which were balanced and clear. Many, as did others taking a different approach, argued that Salisbury and Balfour achieved more pacification than did Gladstone. However, most candidates took a chronological approach and for some this was successful and manageable. They considered the policies of Conservative governments and the Home Rule issue right up to 1914 as effectively as they dealt with Gladstone’s policies and their results. For others too much time was devoted at the beginning to Gladstone’s Disestablishment of the Anglican Church (though few mentioned Disendowment) and the 1870 Land Act. This had the knock-on effect that information and argument about the complex situations in the early 1880s, over the Home Rule issue in 1885 and 1886, policies of Salisbury and Balfour (especially on the land issues) and the ‘Ulster problem’ at the end of the period were often rushed or inadequately dealt with. Indeed weaker answers which were awarded marks in Level 3 at best frequently ignored the ‘Ulster/Protestant issue’ completely even when it became so prominent from 1912 to 1914. Some responses stopped in 1886. Some were confused about how many Home Rule Bills Gladstone introduced, a few even believing he produced that in 1912. Overall the general standard of responses was good demonstrating sound knowledge, even on the complicated issues in 1880 to 1882 and just before the First World War, with many candidates having a grasp of the changing policies towards Ireland and an understanding of how (un)successful they were.

Question 2

- 02** This Question was answered by a large number of candidates and overall was done well with almost half of the responses receiving marks in Levels 4 and 5 combined. Such answers considered a wide range of reforms introduced by both governments. As in Question 1, some of the best responses were those which followed a thematic approach, for example comparing the ministries on educational, trade union, health and licensing reforms as well as dealing with matters such as political and Army reforms or housing and factory acts introduced by only one of the governments. However, there was also a high proportion of sound higher level responses which considered each ministry in turn, but did not lose sight of the key issue about the extent to which reforms did more to improve the condition of the working classes. Most argued in favour of Disraeli’s government in terms of both specific individual reforms and in overall assessment. However, many noticed the permissive nature of much of the Conservative legislation, not least in relation to the Artisans’ Dwellings Act and how this restricted effectiveness. Reference to Chamberlain’s use of the Act in Birmingham was frequently made. Other sound responses argued that, though many of the measures of Disraeli’s ministry may have had more of an immediate effect, some of the Liberal reforms were more effective in terms of the working classes in the longer term through the opportunities provided in elementary education, through the Ballot Act and even in the ‘meritocratic’ provisions of potential opportunities in the Army and Civil Service. A few answers in Level 5 did pick up on the use of ‘working classes’ in

the plural in the question to show awareness of different gradations within ‘the working class’ as a whole, for example the skilled artisans or more respectable benefiting most from educational and political reforms. About one fifth of responses received marks in Level 2 or below (though not many were in Level 1). The main characteristics of these answers was either to consider a limited range of reforms (and quite often without depth of knowledge of those identified), to be unbalanced in that there was knowledge of the reforms of one ministry but none or little of the other, or to lack insight and substantiated argument about the effects of legislation on the working classes. Some were confused, for example attributing the 1870 education reform to Disraeli’s government, or about the relationship of the Employers and Workmen Act with the trade union legislation. Also in weaker answers many knew of Gladstone’s Licensing Act but, whilst pointing out how this upset the brewers, forgot to point out the unpopularity with working class men for their recreational activity being curtailed. Yet, overall in responses to this Question, there was a fair degree of knowledge deployed effectively to assess the relative impact of each government on the condition of the working classes.

Question 3

- 03** As the least popular Question this was also the least well-answered, though not by a wide margin. It was responded to by approximately one fifth of the candidates. Whilst there were relatively few outstanding answers of Level 5 standard, almost half of the responses were awarded marks from the very top of Level 2 upwards. The best answers dealt in depth both with the significance of Salisbury’s foreign policy and changes which took place not only between 1902 and 1907, but also whilst Salisbury was still Prime Minister. Several questioned whether ‘splendid isolation’ was ever an established policy and pointed out that Salisbury himself had never used the term. Reference was made to the Mediterranean Agreements and colonial agreements with Portugal, Germany and France as evidence that Salisbury had dealings with other states. However, the main emphasis in questioning the degree of isolation was that Salisbury’s policy was mainly to avoid entanglements with foreign powers and especially not to have commitments in firm alliances, hence his opposition to joining the Triple Alliance. All answers, whether in the higher or lower levels, agreed that policy did change from 1902. The stronger responses saw the clash with France at Fashoda and particularly the Boer War as events which raised questions about the policy of isolation or ‘splendid isolation’. They understood that the change from a relatively isolationist foreign policy was caused by concern initially about France and Russia, the traditional enemies, and only then turned into more of a concern about the perceived threat posed by Germany. Such responses examined the reasons for the Anglo-Japanese alliance in its efforts to oppose Russian expansion in the Far East, the nature of the threat posed by Germany and especially its expanding navy, the moves towards the entente with France by Lansdowne (and Edward VII), the significance of the 1905–1906 Moroccan crisis and the entente with Russia given the demise of the Russian threat after the Russo-Japanese War. Weaker responses and especially those in Level 2 displayed various shortcomings. One was to assert that policy under Salisbury was completely one of isolation but that suddenly changed totally in 1902. Others believed that splendid isolation was a policy only jettisoned in the year 1907. Several believed that the 1902 alliance with Japan was aimed at Germany. Many were not aware of the differences between an entente and a firm military alliance.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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