



General Certificate of Education

History 2041

Specification

Unit HIS3N

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS3N

Unit 3N: Aspects of International Relations, 1945–2004

General Comments

Perhaps the most significant issue that emerged in this, the first year of this examination, was candidates' understanding of the importance of historiography. An awareness of historical interpretations is clearly evident in the generic descriptors which make up part of the mark scheme and many candidates exhibited knowledge of relevant historiography. Some candidates simply described the historiography and recited the differing interpretations and the names of those historians who argued a particular view. This approach to historiography is very much a Level 2 response. To reach the higher levels candidates need to show evidence of understanding the historiography and the ability to apply this to their own analyses. Some answers, particularly those responding to Question 1, were almost entirely based on a descriptive narrative of the historiography. Such an approach tended to limit candidates' ability to display evidence that may elevate them into the upper levels of the mark scheme. Despite this there were a large number of responses which subtly used the historiography to reinforce their own analyses.

Very few candidates were unable to understand the focus of individual questions. There were some impressive levels of knowledge displayed and candidates should be congratulated on their wide ranging knowledge and, in many cases, the depth of knowledge at their disposal. Many answers were well organised and well communicated. Relatively few candidates presented purely descriptive accounts of the relevant events and it was clear that the great majority of candidates had come to this examination aware of the importance of grounding their answers within an analytical framework. The key to reaching the higher levels of marks lay in maintaining a sustained analysis which would in turn contribute towards the maintenance of a sustained argument. The best answers were those which established a position from the outset and went on to systematically argue that throughout the answer. Such answers would also have a sound basis of well selected substantive detail which underpinned the analysis and contributed towards the validation of a well reasoned judgement.

It may be worth noting that the candidates for this examination, and those charged with their preparation, should see this specification in a holistic way. Although this may be self-evident in order to address the breadth question that will always appear on the examination it is also relevant in providing candidates with an opportunity to understand the events pertinent to a depth question and to place such events in a wider context. This may well aid the analytical thinking that candidates could apply to the depth questions. It was clear that many candidates answered Questions 1 and 2 and such an approach may well have enabled them to develop more sophisticated responses than those that were presented in many cases.

Question 1

- 01** This was the most popular question of the three. Many candidates brought an impressive knowledge base to this question. The period 1945–1949 was particularly well known. One rather odd issue did emerge. A significant number of candidates seemed unaware that Stalin died in 1953. Many referred to Stalin’s support for the Warsaw Pact in 1955. Some answers were narrative and simply outlined the events, often stopping by 1949. The majority did attempt to present varying degrees of depth to the analysis that was established. The most effective answers were those that not only established the significance of Soviet expansionism into Eastern Europe in terms of the development of the Cold War but also presented an analysis of US intentions in response to it. Some candidates presented sophisticated commentaries based on the view that the USA sought to establish itself as a global power and in doing so acted as the primary factor in the intensification of the Cold War. Such answers often referred to the involvement of the USA in Korea and used this as an example of the globalisation of containment and the deliberate US intent underlying this.

There was some sound understanding of the importance of the nuclear arms race and the contribution of nuclear weapons to the development of the Cold War after 1949. Some candidates made effective use of the concepts of roll back and the domino theory to explore the importance of the USA’s contribution to the Cold War and were able to use this to develop a balanced analysis in response to this question.

Question 2

- 02** A number of candidates approached this question with some pre-conceptions. Such answers often addressed the question in terms of the causes of the Cuban Missile crisis. Quite detailed answers emerged about whether the Soviet Union or the USA was primarily responsible for the crisis. There were relatively few examples of pure narrative but there were a number of examples of candidates wanting to answer a different question from that offered up to them.

Despite this many candidates were focused on the specific question. The knowledge base was good and many candidates were able to identify the factors which suggested a Soviet triumph and those which countered this with detail supporting a US triumph. A number of such responses were undermined, in terms of the depth of their analytical comments, because they presented the detail in the form of extended lists. Such candidates were clearly well informed but they did not tend to deploy their knowledge and understanding as the basis for an analysis which would lead them to a reasoned judgement. The most effective answers were those that not only remained focused on the specific question but also developed an integrated commentary. Some candidates argued a convincing case for the crisis being seen as a Soviet triumph. These often suggested that the crisis forced the USA to review the basis of its Cold war foreign policy thinking. Although many candidates referred to the fact that Cuba remained secure and Communist, the best answers were able to conclude from this that containment had failed and that this simple reality made the crisis a watershed in Cold War relations and one that significantly advantaged the Soviet Union in the medium to long term.

Question 3

03 There were many very good answers to this question. Some candidates were able to present very balanced analyses which suggested that fundamentally the USA was interested in its own self-interest but also saw this in terms of international co-operation. Such answers often argued that the USA's commitment to global self-interest and international co-operation were not mutually exclusive concepts. Many such answers supported the analysis with a sound evidence base. There were some sophisticated analyses of détente and the USA's motivation behind subscribing to it. Equally many candidates in this category were able to explore the role of Reagan and his link to the so called 'Second' Cold War.

Less developed responses often suggested that the USA was only interested in global power. Such answers were vulnerable to a lack of balance and analytical depth. There were examples of an unquestioning acceptance that the USA was only interested in its own power. This often led to a lack of range in the detail. The knowledge base was generally very good. The majority of those who attempted this question had a good knowledge of détente, both in Europe and beyond, the Reagan years, the involvement of the USA in immediate post-Cold War events and the impact and consequences of 9/11. This knowledge base was not always deployed as the foundation for an analytical response that would lead to a reasoned judgement in response to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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