



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS1J

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1J

Unit 1J: The Development of Germany, 1871–1925

General Comments

The quality of response from candidates was mixed. Most candidates used the available time efficiently, providing relevant answers of appropriate length to all four questions attempted; standards of organisation and presentation and organization were generally sound. A number of candidates produced work that was directly argued, fluently written and supported by confident knowledge. 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, signs that many candidates had not covered the whole specification. Many candidates avoided *Question 3*, on the years 1919–1925, when it was apparent they were very uncertain how to tackle *Question 2 04*, on the army and political stability in the years 1890–1914. Of those who *did* choose the question on post-war developments, few knew enough about the election of Hindenburg and the state of Germany in 1925. Another widespread weakness was a failure to observe the key dates in the question and to stray into irrelevant material. A secure sense of chronology is an important part of the skills required for success in this subject. These shortcomings should not be overstated. The work of many candidates was highly creditable.

Question 1

- 01** Answers to *Question 1 01*, on the reasons for Germany's economic expansion in the 1870s, often provided sound explanation of a range of contributory factors. Many candidates made effective links between economic growth and the consequences of political unification. Less successful answers relied heavily upon generalized assertions. One issue that might have been considered more closely was chronology; many otherwise good answers made use of material relating to new industries (such as chemicals, electric power and motor cars) that developed rather later than the 1870s.
- 02** In *Question 1 02*, on Bismarck's attempts to contain the rise of the SPD in Germany, many well-informed answers showed a solid understanding of the 'twin-track' policies followed by Bismarck in his anti-Socialist laws and social welfare measures. Such answers were also able to present balanced arguments about the relative successes and failures of these policies – and several candidates presented skilful retrospective assessments of situation at the time of Bismarck's removal from power, and of the later growth of the SPD by 1912. Weaker answers provided generalized relevance but lacked precise evidence or clarity of expression.

Question 2

- 03** In Question 2 03, on the reasons why Hohenlohe replaced Caprivi as Chancellor, most answers were based on sound knowledge of the 'New Course' and Caprivi's relationship with the Kaiser. Too many candidates, however, opted to describe events from 1890 onwards without focusing directly enough on his dismissal and replacement by the 'straw doll' Hohenlohe in 1894. It was pleasing that many answers were able to explain the ways in which Conservative pressure groups and well-placed courtiers such as Eulenburg influenced Wilhelm II.
- 04** Answers to Question 2 04, on the extent to which political stability within Germany was threatened by the influence of the Army, were mixed. A number of good answers showed sound grasp of the militaristic nature of the ruling elites in Wilhelmine Germany and of the political tensions in the Reichstag that resulted from SPD campaigns against excessive military spending. Such answers showed good knowledge of the Zabern Affair of 1913, although this knowledge was too often deployed as narrative description rather than analysis of the political consequences. There were, however, all too many answers that revealed limited understanding, based on vague assertions about foreign policy and often straying beyond the end date of 1914 to include irrelevant material on the war years, or even later. In many instances it was difficult to see why the candidate had opted to attempt this question at all.

Question 3

- 05** Answers to Question 3 05, on the election of Hindenburg in 1925, were often vague. Surprisingly few related the election to the death of President Ebert; surprisingly many contained material about the post-war economic crisis up to 1923 with no evident awareness that the economic and political circumstances had significantly improved by 1925. A few better answers were able to explain the importance of Hindenburg's status as a war hero and the extent to which he represented continuity, stability and legitimacy in the new republic. 1925 is, after all, the end date of the specification and candidates need to be equipped with adequate knowledge of the state of Germany at that time; and with the ability to explain its significance in relation to previous developments.
- 06** In Question 3 06, on political extremism in the early years of the Weimar Republic, many successful answers provided secure evidence about the threats from Left and Right and the complex relationship between the new government and the military. Weaker answers offered either descriptive narrative accounts of rebellions 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 believe that the Spartakist revolt of December 1918 and January 1919 was against the Weimar Republic – far too many candidates seemed unaware of the fact that Germany was ruled by a temporary Provisional Government until the Weimar Republic was formally established later in 1919. Another small point concerns the regrettably widespread use of the term 'the Weimar' – 'the Weimar Republic' makes sense, so does 'Weimar' but 'the Weimar' emphatically does not. Another small disfigurement resulted from the almost universal (and incomprehensible) failure to spell accurately the name of Gustav Stresemann. It can be argued that such inaccuracies are mere details but key individuals and proper names are the basic currency of the specification and candidates who fail to get them right reveal lack of appropriate preparation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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