



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2Q

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2Q

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

General Comments

Overall the responses produced suggested a sound improvement in examination technique and an implicit awareness of the assessment system and the generic level descriptors. Few candidates adopted a descriptive approach to the sources and there was real evidence of candidates seeking to develop balanced responses to questions 04 and 06. The area that candidates need to develop a more focused approach to is that of reaching the highest level of marks. There is a need to make the presence of judgement more apparent in responses to 02, 04 and 06 questions. Similarly with questions 03 and 05 candidates need to establish well supported links between the factors.

Question 1

- 01** Most candidates addressed the question directly and avoided the temptation to simply describe the content of each source without focusing on differences and similarities. Although some only identified differences the majority were able to balance these against the similarities present in the sources. Despite the limited focus present in some answers this was often offset by the development of relevant own knowledge. This enabled many candidates to enter Level 3 despite the absence of clear references to similarities. A significant number of answers did reach level 3 because they were able to define differences and similarities in the context of sound knowledge. It was apparent that some of these candidates failed to move into Level 4 because the detail was rather descriptive and did not, therefore, suggest clear contextual understanding.
- 02** Very few candidates failed to consider both the sources and their own knowledge as the foundation of their answers. This meant that many answers had the potential were to access Level 3 and beyond. The majority of candidates were able to deploy detail from all three sources although some limited their responses to two sources. Many candidates displayed a good knowledge of the nature and range of public opinion although it was the better ones that were able to assess the importance of this as a form of pressure on Johnson. There were some good examples of answers which achieved this and balanced it against other factors which served to influence Johnson. The weaker answers tended to be characterised by descriptive material drawn from both the sources and the candidates' own knowledge.

Question 2

- 03** There were many very good responses to this question. Clearly many candidates were well prepared and were able to not only establish a range of reasons for the development of the Strategic Hamlets programme but were also able to do so in some detail. Many answers remained focused and offered precise supporting evidence in order to develop the explanations. This often enabled such candidates to make links between the factors by means of prioritisation. This was achieved by more than simply stating that one factor was more important than another. Some good answers were able to develop contextual detail and thereby establish links through short term and long term factors. Despite the existence of good knowledge and understanding displayed by many candidates a surprising number of others simply did not address the question or, as was often the case,

overwhelmed the answer with irrelevant detail. What characterised almost all these answers was the extensive detail included in them that was focused on why the Strategic Hamlets programme failed and why it was unpopular amongst the South Vietnamese peasantry. It appeared that some candidates were determined to use what they knew even if that knowledge was not relevant to the question.

- 04** Although some answers lacked balance and focused entirely on the reasons why South Vietnam was unable to protect itself, the majority were able to establish some degree of balance which enabled them to reach at least Level 3 and beyond. Very few answers suggested a real lack of knowledge and understanding. The great majority of answers were able to establish the weaknesses facing South Vietnam by focusing on the instability created by Diem's regime and the limitations of the South Vietnamese army. This was often supplemented by a good understanding of the nature of the growing threat from the VC and the north. Many candidates were aware of the role of containment and Kennedy's personal commitment to maintaining it as the foundation of US policy. The best answers were those that measured the need to protect South Vietnam because of its own limitations against those factors which suggested a purely self-interested approach by the USA. Some candidates displayed a sound understanding of the economic, political and strategic interests that were important to the USA in South East Asia.

Question 3

- 05** This question produced some very good answers. Many candidates were able to develop a good range of relevant factors and there were very few examples of irrelevancy or the identification of a narrow range of reasons. There were some sound examples of answers which effectively prioritised between the reasons and founded these comments in well selected supporting evidence. Many candidates were able to show they understood the inter-relationship between the factors. There were examples of less developed responses which often merely referred to the aim of eliminating the support the north received from Cambodia through the Ho Chi Minh trail. Other narrow responses referred to Nixon's aim of strengthening the USA's diplomatic position against the north. Overall this question was well answered and it was clear that many candidates had good relevant knowledge and understanding.
- 06** The more effective answers were those that were able to sustain a balanced argument. Many candidates were able to make effective reference to the bombing campaigns developed under Nixon and to comment on the rationale behind these. Some arrived at the conclusion that these attacks constituted a fundamental factor in delaying the end of the conflict and therefore the USA was solely responsible for this. More developed and balanced answers addressed the role of the north in delaying a final agreement. Many referred to the continued aggression of the north against South Vietnam despite the Paris Agreement. Some candidates displayed sound knowledge and understanding of the barriers presented by both sides to a rapid resolution of the conflict. Overall the quality of the responses to this question was good although relatively few responses suggested clear indications of candidate judgement. Many candidates had mastered the importance of developing precise detail that underpinned their understanding and enabled them to construct balanced responses.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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