



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS1E

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1E

Unit 1E: Absolutist States: The Reign of Louis XIV, 1661–1715

General Comments

A high proportion of candidates sitting this paper had a wide knowledge of the period and had clearly prepared well for the examination, with a good grasp of the techniques required. The majority of candidates focused clearly on the specific wording of the questions and tried to use detailed information to support their answers. A minority of candidates relied upon vague assertion or description of the views of historians. However, whilst historiography *per se* is not required, there were some pleasing references to relevant historical debate which, when relevant to the question asked, can improve answers. Most candidates were aware of the need to provide a range of reasons for the 12 mark questions. However, a large number resorted to making bland statements about linkage or prioritisation without actually demonstrating how two factors linked together. This did limit some marks to Level 3. To reach Level 4 candidates need to be able to demonstrate that the factors have clear connections. With regards to the 24 mark questions, the majority of candidates attempted to make an assessment, with depth of knowledge and sophistication of response being the main determinant in the level of award. A minority of candidates did resort to description and narrative. Often this was very detailed, but it failed to achieve many marks as it was recorded indiscriminately and not used to analyse the issue within the question. Where questions have specific dates, candidates should be encouraged to pay attention to these, as only minimal credit can be given for examples used outside of the time frame required. Also, it might be worth reiterating to candidates, that their answers should endeavour to cover the full period required by some of the questions, as failure to do this might mean an answer which lacks depth.

Question 1

- 01** There were many good answers to this question, with candidates choosing a variety of reasons as to why Louis wished to promote the Divine Right of Kings. Candidates mostly developed these reasons clearly. Many mentioned the aftermath of the *frondes*, or the desire to establish himself as his own minister after the fall of Fouquet. A large proportion of candidates also talked about Louis' own religious beliefs and how they will have impacted.
- 02** Most candidates who attempted this question had an impressive knowledge about Versailles and the key features of the palace. Many candidates managed to link this detail clearly back to the question; for example arguing that the very site upon which Versailles was built was a swamp and so it showed Louis' absolutism that he could build a magnificent palace wherever he wished. However, a significant number of candidates did not engage with the key debate required by the question and instead chose to look at why Louis built Versailles. Alternatively a large number of candidates simply described key features of the palace. The best answers to this question were ones which made a clear link to Louis' image. Some candidates chose to look at the ways in which Versailles helped Louis' image and the ways in which, especially towards the end of his reign, Versailles hindered it. Other good answers considered other ways in which Louis improved or damaged his image. Examples of valid lines of argument could be the impact of Louis' foreign or religious policies. There was some good knowledge about how Louis used Versailles to try and control his nobility.

Question 2

- 03** There were a large number of excellent responses to this question. Candidates were aware that Louis had a range of reasons for wishing to engage in foreign affairs. Popular answers referred to his desire to fill the power vacuum in Europe and to test out his newly reformed army. Many candidates referred to *gloire* as a reason. This is perfectly valid but should be explained as often reference to it was quite vague and did not seem to be fully understood. Perhaps candidates could be encouraged to provide examples to illustrate – for example, the desire to fight the War of Devolution was motivated in part by a desire for *gloire* as Louis wished to gain the dowry which Spain had not paid to him, which was an affront to his glory. It is perhaps worth emphasising to candidates that they should be cautious when talking about Louis' aims with regards to the Spanish Throne. At the start of his reign Louis wanted to gain certain strategic Spanish territories but he does not seem to have desired Bourbon control of the Spanish throne until much later in his reign.
- 04** There was an impressive range of knowledge on display in answers to this question. Many candidates could provide a wide range of examples to illustrate their analysis of the success of Louis' foreign policy. A large number of candidates took a chronological approach but this was perfectly acceptable and often gained good marks when the links back to the question were regular and clearly developed. Some impressive candidates structured their responses by considering Louis' different aims in foreign policy and the extent to which he achieved them. This more thematic approach tended to be more sophisticated and consistent and so achieved the highest marks. A minority of candidates failed to appreciate the dates given within the question and so spent time talking about the 9 Years' War and the War of Spanish Succession which could not be credited. Some candidates also limited their marks by only looking at the war of Devolution and the Dutch war with no reference to the Reunions.

Question 3

- 05** Answers to this question were mostly well-developed with a good range of reasons given with clear development. Candidates seemed to have a good appreciation of the limitations within the taxation system; ranging from the burden falling mainly upon the Third Estate and the differences in the collection of taxes across the country.
- 06** Many candidates produced well-considered responses to this question with good supporting evidence. The majority of answers featured a large section on the reforms of Colbert, with precise figures and statistics being quoted. However, some candidates failed to go beyond the death of Colbert in any real depth and this obviously limited their marks given the scope required by the question. The best answers considered later issues such as the introduction of the Capitation and the *Dixieme* and their relative lack of success. Many valid answers argued that Louis relied upon other methods to raise income, such as forced loans and sales of offices, thus proving that the taxation system was ineffective.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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