



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1G**

***Report on the Examination***

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# Unit HIS1G

## Unit 1G: Britain, 1815–1865

### General Comments

As has become usual for this paper there were a large number of very good answers and it was clear that very many candidates had worked hard and were very well-prepared in their centres. There were, however, a number of weaker responses and the average mark achieved reflected the fact that some candidates seemed to have been hoping for different approaches, especially to question 1 and question 6.

### Question 1

- 01** This question focused upon the period after 1822 and it was clear that a large number of candidates had only prepared material relating to the period 1815 to 1822. Stronger candidates were able to adapt to the timeframe of the question or were able to utilise this material effectively to explain changes made after 1822. There were a number of instances where candidates either failed to score or scored only in Level 1 by simply downloading prepared material on the years 1815 to 1822. Although the specification starts in 1815 they cannot always be a question on the first seven years, otherwise other parts of the specification would not get examined regularly. One of the pleasing aspects of the responses seen this year was a growing awareness of the variety of reforms introduced under Lord Liverpool and there was certainly greater understanding evident of the financial reforms and a recognition of the limitations of the moves towards free trade amongst the better answers, rather than the bland assertions about the introduction of free trade which had been identified in previous examiner's report as superficial. In addition to excellent teaching, it is clear that stronger responses emanate from centres that have studied the Principal Examiner's Report.
- 02** This question was generally done better by the majority of candidates than question 01 as candidates did focus on the reasons for the passing of the Great Reform Act of 1832. The difficulty that some candidates found was in either locating Lord Grey in the process or in making sure that their answer was balanced. Some candidates found themselves stuck in Level 2 or at the bottom of Level 3 because they either did not mention Lord Grey or made only a token reference to him. The stronger candidate's responses recognised that Lord Grey was a key figure but that there were many other factors which contributed to the passing of Parliamentary reform.

### Question 2

- 03** In general this question was done well by candidates who understood the key role of Sir Robert Peel and relaunching the Conservative party after the 1832 Reform Act. It was a great pleasure to read stronger responses which knew more about the developments in Conservative party organisation but this was not the main route taken to higher marks. The majority of candidates included at least one point on the problems the Whigs had caused for themselves either through their mismanagement of the economy or their unpopular alliance with the Irish MPs. There did appear to be some confusion over Peel's attitude to the Corn Laws – weaker candidates seem to believe that he had pledged to repeal the Corn Laws where in fact he had reassured the landed interest in 1841 by

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pledging himself not to repeal the corn laws. Candidates might also benefit by being clearer that during the years 1835 to 1841, Peel and his party offered “constructive opposition” to the Whigs and this further enhanced his reputation as a politician.

- 04** This question was done well by the majority of those who answered it – it was clearly one which centres had covered in some detail; it was also clear that the range of reforms has now been covered more fully. This question proved to be as popular as question 02 and there was careful use by stronger candidates of material which might have been used in preparation for a potential Chartist question by adapting it to show how Peel had been successful – and indeed a number of candidates used Rostow’s index to argue that reform had been successful which was recognised to be good use of an analytical tool. For the avoidance of doubt, given the political structure of Great Britain in this period, candidates who drew examples from Ireland were given appropriate credit based on the quality of evidence produced and candidates who did not write about Ireland were not penalised for any lack of range as questions become bulky if they have to specify the inclusion or otherwise of Ireland. There were, however, some candidates who wrote about several topics that did not include references to the economy; the examiners did not wish to unduly penalise these candidates but it was felt that economic policy was so central to Peel’s government that it would be appropriate to place the candidate lower in the band. The question specified domestic challenges and since these included an economic recession and a budget deficit, as well as the crisis over the Corn Laws, it was felt that there should be some economic analysis.

### **Question 3**

- 05** This question saw some very good answers but also quite a number of weaker answers due to either an inappropriate focus on the Congress of Vienna or a limited understanding of the nature of the Congress system itself. Candidates need to read the question carefully as always, however, the nature of these 12 mark questions is to focus on particular points in the specification. The Congress System is a central term in the study of foreign policy in this period, as many stronger answers showed, but candidates who decide to write about a single Congress cannot hope to gain the marks that are awarded to those who look at the system itself. Better responses linked support for the Congress system to Castlereagh’s broader aims; for example, it was pointed out that Castlereagh wanted to see a balance of power in Europe and therefore engineered the creation of the Quintuple Alliance through the medium of the Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle, or they argued that Castlereagh wanted peace in Europe and therefore needed a forum by which the Great Powers could regularly consult with each other.
- 06** In general, this question was understood well and the majority of candidates were able to give examples of how restricting Russian power was important to British foreign policy. One of the reasons why some candidates did not gain higher marks than they eventually did was that they seemed unready to go beyond 1829, having perhaps prepared themselves for an 1815 to 1829 question. Where candidates did extend themselves into the latter part of the question, it was clear that Palmerston was generally understood well and certainly students seem to have grasped that British foreign policy was motivated by a range of concerns. One way in which candidates can be encouraged to consider the full chronological range of the period during their revision is to create a matrix of the key motives/objectives of British foreign policy on one axis and a list of the Foreign Secretary’s on the other axis and then get candidates to fill in the boxes and therefore establish a broad overview.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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