



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**History 2041**

**Unit HIS3G**

***Report on the Examination***

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## *Unit HIS3G*

### **Unit 3G: British State and People, 1865–1915**

#### **General Comments**

This was the second examination on this unit. As in the previous examination the paper proved accessible to the vast majority of candidates. All scripts were marked in accordance with the Mark Scheme. The marks awarded ranged from close to the maximum to just a few with marks in single figures. Responses which received marks in Levels 4 and 5 for one or both of their answers received them because candidates were clearly in control of their material. Answers included amongst their qualities sharp focus on the demands of the question(s) revealing good or very good understanding, were analytical, made links between arguments and relevant evidence and offered some judgement. Those which achieved marks in Level 5 also included a sustained and convincing overall balanced argument with a high degree of synopticity and conceptual depth. There was clear understanding and use of historical interpretations. In responses which gained marks in Level 3 and especially in the two highest levels there was evidence of knowledge and reading beyond just the 'endorsed' textbook. Answers which were awarded marks at the lower end of Level 2, or in Level 1, were those unable to demonstrate basic accurate knowledge and thereby lacked understanding of what were the requirements in answering a question. Examples included vague generalisations in answering Questions 01 and 03, and focus on Liberal social reforms rather than the Constitutional Crisis in Question 02. Assertion dominated instead of argument supported by evidence.

Most candidates chose to answer Questions 01 and 03, the latter being the 'breadth question' covering almost the whole period of the specification content. Across the whole range of answers the level of performance was similar in both questions, although rather more achieved Level 5 for Question 01. For both questions almost half were awarded marks in Levels 4 and 5 taken together. For responses in Level 3 and below the main weakness in both questions was failure to cover adequately with selective knowledge/evidence the whole period. The relatively 'narrow' Question 02 was by far the least popular and the least well done, although nearly one third of those attempting it did gain marks in Level 4 or 5. Those responses in Levels 2 or 1 displayed very limited knowledge and understanding. Where there was a problem in the management of time, it was mainly for those who had written at too great a length in their first answer and then had to rush their second response, some of these having been finished in notes, for which not many marks could be awarded.

Quality of Written Communication was generally sound. The small minority who wrote in ungrammatical English, or made little use of appropriate punctuation, tended to penalise themselves with statements lacking clarity and/or being ambiguous.' The main spelling mistakes of proper nouns were of 'Chamberlain' and 'Salisbury', and a few misspelt 'Disraeli'. Perhaps surprisingly 'Campbell-Bannerman' was usually spelt correctly. However, a worrying trend has been the inability of a significant number to spell 'Britain' and writing 'Britian' instead. There was less usage of phrases such as 'this could have' or 'this may be' giving the impression that the candidate was unsure about the argument being advanced. Similarly the use of phrases such as 'I feel', 'I believe' or 'I think', giving the impression of assertion rather than argument, had declined.

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**Question 1**

- 01** This proved to be the most popular question with 80 percent of responses awarded marks in the top three Levels. Those in Levels 4 and 5 considered in depth the consequences of Gladstone's policies on Ireland and in particular his Home Rule policy and the split in the Liberal party. The future role of Chamberlain as a Liberal Unionist and his increasingly close links to the Conservatives were emphasised. Such sound answers also pointed out that there was not a monocausal explanation of unpopularity of the Liberals and saw Gladstone's foreign policy, and especially the death of Gordon, as significant at the beginning of the period. They pointed out the lack of effective leadership after the final retirement of Gladstone. They also emphasised the positive factors accounting for Conservative dominance: the leadership of Salisbury; policies on Ireland of him and Balfour which achieved more than Gladstone's in terms of quietening unrest; Conservative organisation especially by Middleton; the appeal of 'Villa Toryism' and to some extent 'slum Toryism'; the popularity of Conservative policies around imperialism and even to some extent social reform, compared with the perceived single issue favoured by the Liberals. Sound responses covered the whole period to 1905, those in Level 5 more substantially than those in Level 4. They noted the factors leading up to the end of Conservative dominance during the period that Balfour was Prime Minister, and the Liberal Party reviving under Campbell-Bannerman and re-uniting around opposition to the Education and Licensing Acts and above all to Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign. The Liberals were no longer a single issue party just promoting Home Rule, a policy which had faded in importance over nineteen years. Answers in Level 2 and to some extent at the lower end of Level 3 displayed two main flaws. One was to ignore the end of the period with the changing fortunes of the Parties. The second, which was mainly a feature of answers in Level 2 and particularly Level 1, was to write extensively about Gladstone's policies on Ireland before 1886. Whilst there was a certain relevance, lengthy accounts of Disestablishment and the Land Acts, or events at the beginning of the 1880s were not and dominated answers rather than focus on the period of the Question. Indeed it may have been possible that some candidates misread '1886' as '1868', though it was more likely from most of these answers that their authors knew much about Gladstone's and Disraeli's domestic, foreign and Irish policies from 1868 to 1885 and were determined to get down their knowledge. This undue focus on Gladstone and Disraeli in these years was also evident in some responses to Question 03, most often from the same candidates. Indeed they gave the impression they were, at least to an extent, answering the questions from the 2010 paper.

**Question 2**

- 02** This was the least well-answered question and was tackled only by a minority of the candidates. Nevertheless almost one third of the responses were placed in Levels 4 and 5. They considered the key issues of the People's Budget and the Parliament Bill and the difficulties faced, and overcome, by the Liberal governments in passing both into law. Answers were balanced in that they recognised the victories of the Liberals in terms of their financial and constitutional legislation, and their ability to introduce further reform especially National Insurance, but that they suffered setbacks because of the loss of their majority in the January 1910 Election and confirmed in that of December. The consequences were made clear, notably the reliance on the Irish Nationalists which entailed renewed commitment to Home Rule by the government once the Parliament Act was in place and the subsequent problems, both political at Westminster and in Ireland from 1912 to 1914. Some responses, mostly those in Level 5, also noted the dependence of the government on Labour and therefore it introduced payment of MPs and reversed the Osborne judgement through the Trade Union Act. Responses in the top two Levels,

and some of those in Level 3, pointed out that, although the Liberals removed 'the veto' power of the House of Lords, the upper chamber still had a delaying power which continued to frustrate the Liberals over Home Rule and had the potential to make a 'lame duck' of any future non-Conservative government during its last two years in office. Particularly strong responses also considered the Constitutional Crisis in the context of the historical debate over the longer term decline of the Liberal Party. Responses throughout the mark range did comment that overall Britain emerged with a more democratic political system, though some noted that the suffragettes were certainly not satisfied. Approximately one quarter of the responses to this Question fell into Levels 2 and 1 (though only a handful in the lowest Level and mostly having misinterpreted the Question by writing about social reforms). The main flaws were to write about the Constitutional Crisis in narrative terms, some with confusion about the role of the monarchs with a few believing that the vast number of new Liberal peers was actually created, and/or to argue that the Crisis resulted in a complete victory for the Liberal governments and thus did not provide balance. The results of the 1910 Elections, or in some cases that these had happened, were ignored as were the consequent relationships of the governments with the Irish Nationalists and Labour.

### **Question 3**

- 03** Although not quite as popular as Question 1, many candidates chose to answer this Question. The overall standards and spread of marks were similar to those in Question 1. Not quite as many achieved Level 5, but some very competent answers were produced to this 'breadth' Question. Some of these took a thematic approach which avoided the main danger of a chronological one when overdue concentration on the beginning of the period could lead to imbalance in later developments being dealt with too summarily or missed altogether. The themes chosen by very good responses dealt in depth with 'concern for the Empire', but balanced this against other concerns and in particular a desire for peace, the balance of power, naval superiority, and threats from France and especially from Russia and Germany. Whilst the threat from Russia was seen as mainly to the Empire, especially India and in the Near East, that of Germany was regarded as primarily to Britain itself in the European context. Thematic responses were able to use exemplar material in looking at the Empire such as policy in Afghanistan, southern Africa, or Egypt and the Sudan. Some emphasised the support for imperialism in Britain, usually mentioning Chamberlain. In considering other concerns themes included problems over the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire from c1875 to the beginning of the First World War, the change in British policy following the 'Scramble for Africa' and the period of 'splendid isolation' to improved relations with firstly France and then Russia because of the perceived threat from Germany with its move from being a European power to implementing 'Weltpolitik'. Emphasis was placed on the building of its fleet. The best answers were able to make a convincing case that, whereas concern for the Empire dominated at various times, at others, notably at the beginning and end of the period, other concerns were to the fore. There were also some responses in Levels 4 and 5, and many in Level 3, which did adopt a chronological approach, but were able, in varying degrees, to focus on some evidence in depth such as the Balkans crisis of the 1870s or the Boer War, whilst presenting an overall picture and argument. Some were aware of the overlapping nature of concerns, for example Lloyd George's reaction to the Agadir crisis was over both concern for the Empire and the naval threat from Germany. However, the main feature of most answers in the lower part of Level 3 and especially those in Level 2, was to adopt a chronological approach and write at some length about Gladstone's foreign policy in his first two ministries (and especially the first) and that of Disraeli from 1874 to 1880 (with often detailed accounts of events in the Near East from 1875 to 1878). What then followed because of time constraints was very brief material on Salisbury's period and little, if

anything, on the years of the 20th Century. Indeed some candidates, as also indicated in their answers to Question 01, were familiar with the policies of Gladstone and Disraeli especially until 1880, but then largely ignored the following period up to 1914. Sound description of Gladstone ensuring Belgian neutrality during the Franco-Prussian War, his negotiations over the 'Black Sea clauses' and the 'Alabama' dispute was no substitute for an answer demanding an overall view of policy in the years 1868 to 1914 and a judgement of the importance of concern for the Empire during that whole period.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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