



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

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 pleasing number of students had clearly prepared well for this examination and they displayed some excellent subject knowledge. A noticeable trend was that students seemed better prepared for questions covering the first half of Louis XIV's reign, and on Colbert, in particular, there was some impressive supporting evidence. Answers covering the years 1685–1715 were generally less well evidenced. It is important to ensure full coverage of the specification when preparing students for this examination. Most students were aware of the need to provide a range of reasons for the 12 mark questions. However, a number resorted to making bland statements about linkage or prioritisation without actually demonstrating how two factors linked together; simply stating that 'this factor links to the previous factor' does not gain more marks. This did limit some marks. To reach Level 4 students need to be able to demonstrate that the factors have clear connections. With regards to the 24 mark questions, the majority of students 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 students did resort to description and narrative, often of material that did not link directly to the question. Where questions have specific dates, students should be encouraged to pay attention to these, as only minimal credit can be given for examples used outside of the time frame required. The best answers were well structured and sought to provide a clear judgement at the end. Some students 'concluded' by simply repeating what they had already said in the main body of the essay; this is time consuming and not especially effective as a method. Students should aim to provide a clear answer to the question with some justification. It might be worth emphasising to students that they do not need to agree with any statements made within the question – they can disagree if they wish as the best answers consider more than one point of view.

Question 1

- 01** There were a large number of pleasing responses to this question which displayed good knowledge of the weaknesses within the French economy. Many students talked about backwardness of agriculture and noble reluctance to engage in trade, for example. However, a number of students did not focus specifically on the economy and spent time talking about the inequitable taxation system or the corruption of Fouquet. This is related to finances rather than the economy. It is valid to suggest that the taxation system overburdened the Third Estate and so they had less money to invest in agriculture and less disposable income to buy consumer goods, thereby affecting the economy; but this link did need to be explained. The differences between the finance system and the economy should be clearly explained to students so that they can distinguish between them if the question requires it.
- 02** There were a large number of excellent responses to this question. Students generally displayed precise and wide-ranging knowledge about the work of Colbert, both in terms of his work on the taxation system and his attempts to improve the French economy. The majority of answers showed good awareness of a range of interpretations and answers were mostly well structured. There was, however, some confusion about the actual role of the intendants which might be worth clarifying and also, it should be noted that Colbert did not want or encourage the Dutch War; he was a reluctant supporter only once Louis XIV's determination to go to war became clear.

Question 2

- 03** There were some pleasing responses to this question which displayed good awareness of a range of relevant reasons. Popular examples included Louis XIV's belief that Carlos' will should be obeyed, because of the Divine Right of Kings, even though he knew it would anger Leopold as acceptance of the Will negated the Second Partition Treaty. The best answers showed that there was a long term desire to control parts of the Spanish Empire and to end encirclement by the Habsburgs and there were also short term reasons such as Louis' provocative actions in expelling Dutch troops from the Spanish Netherlands. However, there were also a fairly large number of answers which were quite vague. Some students resorted to describing the Partition Treaties, which in itself is not directly answering the question, and a surprising number claimed that Louis XIV engaged in the war in order to press his own claim to the Spanish throne. Louis XIV does not seem to have ever aimed to take the Spanish throne for himself; he simply wanted to gain control over some of the Spanish territories. Some students seemed to confuse events with those leading to the War of Devolution.
- 04** This question was not answered especially well by a surprising number of students. The best answers displayed good knowledge of both the 9 Years War and the War of Spanish Succession and attempted to assess the importance of a range of different reasons for failure. Some students argued that there were some successes for the French in this period, which was valid so long as the whole answer was not on this. To gain higher marks students did need to consider some of the ways in which Louis' enemies were strong; for example by looking at the quality of the leadership of men like Marlborough or by considering the impact of having to fight so many enemies at the same time. In order to achieve balance good students suggested other possible reasons for failure including Louis' aggressive policies which provoked his enemies or the inability of the French economy to support these long campaigns. However, many students were extremely vague in their answers and displayed little real evidence taken from the period 1685–1715. Some resorted to describing events prior to 1685 which often had little relevance. Every effort should be made to cover the whole of the specification.

Question 3

- 05** Answers to this question were generally pleasing and displayed some good knowledge of the impact of the Frondes and Louis' desire to assert his absolutism. Some students failed to focus specifically on the period at the start of Louis' personal rule and some resorted to describing what Louis did rather than why he did it. It might be worth re-emphasising to students that they need to focus clearly on the question set.
- 06** Again, the focus within this question on the second half of Louis' reign seems to have confused some students. There were a lot of answers which lacked specific reference to the period following 1685. Discussion of general features such as the role of the intendants is relevant but should be used alongside more specific evidence from the period; for example, the difficulties over Unigenitus. Reference to Versailles was well supported and valid, but it should be remembered that the importance of Versailles was much reduced in the last years of Louis' reign. There was some good discussion of religious matters, but some students focused on this to the exclusion of anything else. This question was primarily intended to cover domestic issues but relevant material on foreign policy was credited. The best answers sought to make a clear decision about whether Louis maintained royal authority or not.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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