



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2012**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1F**

***Report on the Examination***

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# Unit HIS1F

## Unit 1F: France in Revolution, 1774–1815

### General Comments

In this January examination session, Question 1 was the most popular question, with a fairly even mix of takers for each of the remaining questions. The majority of students finished the paper, although some students spent too long on the 12 mark questions, leaving not enough time to complete the 24 mark questions satisfactorily.

There was a wide range of responses. Many students had a secure knowledge base and a sound technique in answering the questions, but there were also a substantial number of students who lacked precise knowledge and wrote very generally. Other students had a good knowledge but wrote descriptively and failed to identify clear reasons (01/03/05) or to clearly address the focus of the question and/or provide a balanced answer (02/04/06). Failure to take note of the dates was an issue for some students. Students should be encouraged to make detailed timelines as part of their revision so that they can more easily identify the focus of the questions. Another recurring problem was use of historians as a substitute for the students' own judgements; use of historians will only be credited where it is used as evidence to support an argument made by a student – though it must be noted that at AS level, knowledge of historiography is not required.

### Question 1

- 01** Although very popular, many students did not attain the top level because they spent too much time describing the faults of the Ancien Regime without directly linking these faults to the actual calling of the Estates General. The long-term financial problems are relevant but needed to be linked to the failure of reform and the actual bankruptcy of the government in 1788, which gave Louis no choice but to call the Estates General. The best answers focused more on the impact of the short-term factors leading to the calling of the Estates General; the failure of Calonne's and de Brienne's reforms in the Assembly of the Notables, the actions of the Parlement and the Nobles revolt.
- 02** Some students saw this as another opportunity to write about the evils of the Ancien Regime. For questions focused on the early part of the syllabus, students should guard against writing all they know from the beginning of the content of their unit in order to explain specific later events.

Many students, however, had a good knowledge of the reforms carried out the National Assembly and so were able to talk about the August Decrees, Declaration of the Rights of Man and specific tax, economic and political changes that all affected the Third Estate. Effective answers provided balance by pointing out that, although substantial reforms were made to eliminate the inequalities of the feudal system, overall the reforms did not equally benefit the bourgeoisie peasants or urban workers. Some students also developed balance in their answer by pointing out that the reforms did little to help the economic situation of many of the lower third estate. The divisive issue of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was also another strong argument put forward by some students as a reason for why the third estate did not always benefit from the reforms. Those able to sustain a convincing judgment were able to reach Level 5.

### **Question 2**

- 03** This was generally done well, though there was some confusion over dates and events with, for instance, the Brunswick Manifesto being put forward as a reason for France going to war. Many were able, however, to explain effectively the impact of the fear of foreign intervention and also to examine the different voices in France calling for war. Fewer students discussed the triggers for war – the replacement of Leopold with the more aggressive Francis II and the appointment by the King of the new ministry of pro-war Girondins.
- 04** The best answers to this question examined the impact of the war on dividing France and then looked at other factors that also divided France, such as religion, aspects of the Terror and/or the actions of Robespierre. Another effective approach was to discuss the ways in which the war actually united the population. The main issue separating the more successful from the weaker answers, whichever approach was adopted, was the student's ability to draw precise supporting information from the whole period of the question.

### **Question 3**

- 05** Students seem to have a sound understanding of the weaknesses of the Directory and so there were some effective answers which discussed the difficulties that the Directory had in maintaining support. As always, it was necessary for students to link the reasons they advanced, and some students effectively did this by pointing out that the Directory's increasing reliance on the army paved the way for Napoleon and for the success of the coup de Brumaire.
- 06** Students clearly enjoy writing about Napoleon, but as in previous examinations, there was a tendency for students to write everything they knew about Napoleon with little reference to the question. A substantial number of students failed to address specifically 'social' reforms – or were very unclear on what 'social' meant and so discussed economic or administrative reforms as part of their argument on social reforms. Students should make sure that they revise Napoleon's reforms under the headings of social, administrative, economic, religious to avoid this confusion. As with other areas of the specification, it is also important that they have a sound sense of chronology and that they know the dates of the reforms as well. The other key term in the question, which was sometimes ignored, was 'control'. There were many answers that provided generalist comments on the success and limitations of Napoleon's policies rather than analyzing the impact that they had on Napoleon's control, and students need to be reminded of the importance of focusing on the exact working of the questions set.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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