



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2L

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2L

Unit 2L: The Impact of Stalin's Leadership in the USSR, 1924–1941

General Comments

Student response to this examination was very positive and better than the response to the equivalent examination in January 2011. This was because the majority of students were well prepared, and the majority also appeared to find both the compulsory questions and their optional choices accessible. There were many high-scoring scripts which demonstrated a good range of knowledge, secure understanding and the full range of analytical and evaluative skills. Students appeared to cope well with the time pressures of the examination: there were few unfinished or 'rushed' answers and the Principal Examiner identified no rubric offences.

Question 1

- 01** Most students coped very well with this question, and it produced the best response of the three twelve-mark questions on the paper. Students found the three sources accessible, and comprehension was good. As in previous examinations, students appeared to be well-prepared for the demands of this type of question. They recognised the need to combine source analysis and evaluation skills with their own knowledge and understanding of the topic. Students recognised the difference in tone as well as in the content of Sources A and B, the fact that one was very negative and one much more positive about the 1930s Terror. There were many answers which integrated source analysis with students' own knowledge very effectively. Equally important, students managed to find the obvious points of similarity and difference between the sources. As has been customary with recent examinations, attempts to discuss the provenance of sources were variable in quality. Explaining provenance is not a requirement of answers, although if it is addressed effectively, it is credited. Too many students still take a simplistic view of provenance, in particular the supposed reliability of sources. Comments about the nature of primary or secondary sources are not significant unless the sources are carefully explained in context, rather than focusing on whether one source is inherently more 'reliable' than the other. Good answers did consider the context of the anti-Stalinist nature of Source A, and compared it with Source B, which of course was written by a prominent member of Stalin's own government. Students often showed a good level of knowledge, for example when considering Source B and the issue of the extent to which there were links between some elements in the USSR and the German military leadership.
- 02** Most answers met the requirements of this question by using the sources and applying their own knowledge in their answers, although some answers failed to make use of all three sources, thereby forgoing the possibility of achieving the highest level. A small number of answers made no use of any of the sources, which meant that the answer could not get above Level 2. Some students ignored the wording 'in the years 1934 to 1941', writing material, for example, about Stalin's rise to power in the 1920s, which was accurate but not relevant. This material was simply not credited. However, many answers were broad and balanced, considering a range of relevant factors. Whilst historiographical knowledge is not required at AS, many students did deal quite well with issues such as the extent to which Stalin personally controlled the Terror and the extent to which the Terror gathered its own dimension or was controlled by other forces such as the NKVD, working independently of Stalin. This was good history, as long as the answers did

not forget to focus on Stalin's leadership. Many answers got into Levels 4 and 5 by a judicious mixture of source analysis, own knowledge, and supported analysis and judgement. Answers which dealt with 'labels' such as revisionism and structuralism were effective only if they went beyond the labels and explained what these interpretations meant in practice, for example when considering the arguments of an historian such as Arch Getty. The question did allow students to discuss 'other' factors such as propaganda which had an effect on Stalin's leadership. However, answers like this were also expected to discuss the impact of the Terror itself if they were to be awarded the highest levels.

Question 2

- 03** This question was more popular than the equivalent question 05, and it was answered better than the latter question. Most students were very knowledgeable about the events surrounding Lenin's death, his Testament and the succession. As always, answers to this type of question do not have to be lengthy, but they must be relevant and focused. Weaker answers focused purely upon personalities, ignoring other pertinent facts such as the Communist Party not having an agreed procedure for appointing a leader. Also, several answers strayed too far beyond 1924 and were essentially about the struggle for power and disputes over policies in the later 1920s. High-scoring answers were those which briefly identified three or four relevant factors surrounding the leadership situation in 1924, and then linking them or analysing them with an overall perspective. The majority of answers did achieve Level 3, and got into Level 4 if they made effective links and showed good understanding.
- 04** The overall quality of answer to this question was similar to that of responses to the equivalent Question 6, although Question 04 was a more popular choice. There were many impressive answers, showing considerable knowledge and analytical ability. However, there were also many knowledgeable answers which did not achieve the highest levels. This is because they treated the answer as an opportunity to describe Stalin's career in the 1920s and analyse the reasons for his rise to power. In so doing, the activities of the Opposition groups were treated as an adjunct to the answer rather than its central focus. A minority of answers suffered from confusing the membership of the two Oppositions; or else they treated the question just as a prolonged competition between Stalin and Trotsky. Students need to be aware that the Left and Right Opposition groups are an important part of this specification. Students are generally knowledgeable about them, but when answering questions on the 1920s, they do need to take careful note of what exactly the question is asking.

Question 3

- 05** There were many sound responses to this question, with students understanding the attitude of peasants to the onset of Collectivisation: the fact that the peasantry as a whole was uncertain about the future, peasants had already undergone the trauma of requisitioning and procurements, they resented interference by the government, and so on. They also of course had been unhappy with some aspects of NEP, as explained for example in a source such as V. Brovkin's *Russia After Lenin*. Weak answers unfortunately did not focus on the immediate implementation of Collectivisation, but instead wrote about the process of Collectivisation and then its impact, the answers going deep into the 1930s. Some students did almost challenge the assumption of the question, by pointing out that not all peasants did resist Collectivisation, and they were credited for this. As with Question 03, the best answers briefly analysed a few relevant factors, and then linked them, or prioritised their importance, and thus reached the highest level.

- 06** Of the three 24-mark questions on the paper, this question produced the most mixed response. Many students were very knowledgeable about the process of Collectivisation, and described it or analysed it in some detail. Unfortunately, too many answers ignored the precise question, which asked for an evaluation of the impact of Collectivisation by 1941. Too many answers effectively finished around the mid-1930s, focusing on events such as the elimination of the kulaks and the Ukrainian Famine, and describing thereby the human misery and the drastic falls in output. In these answers there were only sweeping generalisations about the later period, or no reference at all to the situation in 1941. There was no indication of the way the rural economy had 'settled down' to some extent by 1941, and production levels had risen. The specification ends in 1941 and students are expected to know material from the 1941 period. The work of historians such as Thurston does indicate how the rural economy and peasant attitudes were affected throughout the 1930s as well as during the first period of Collectivisation. Many students got credit for what they knew, but did not reach the higher levels if they concentrated just on the earlier period. There were some good analyses which examined the contribution of agriculture in the context of other events such as industrialisation, which may also have weakened or strengthened the USSR.

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