



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2Q

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2Q

Unit 2Q: The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975

General Comments

This examination revealed the high knowledge levels that many students had reached in preparation for it. This was reinforced by a growing awareness of the importance of examination technique. In addition to the compulsory question, the vast majority of students answered Question 2. This may be a consequence of the fact that Questions 1 and 2 relate to the earlier part of the specification and many students were more focused on that rather than the later material. It is worth noting that such an approach could undermine students in future examinations, particularly since Question 1 is a compulsory question and there is no absolute requirement to fix questions in the earlier part of the specification. This is clearly apparent from past papers that have been offered on this specification. In addition, it is important that students have a knowledge and understanding of the whole period in which this specification is fixed.

Question 1

- 01** There were relatively few examples of students identifying only similarities or only differences. The vast majority were able to explore both the similarities and the differences within the two sources. What was particularly encouraging was the fact that most students focused on the **views** expressed in the sources rather than simply on the factual detail. This is a central element in the question and addressing it directly is an essential factor in attaining the highest level. It is the extent of the differences in the views that is being evaluated and explained, not merely the differences in the detail. Although many answers remained in Level 3 because they tended to identify the extent of the difference and develop some relevant knowledge, there were a large number that entered Level 4 by virtue of the depth of the explanation and the use of relevant and focused knowledge to support it. The inclusion of additional knowledge is not in itself enough to move the reward up to Level 4. The knowledge must be focused and it must enhance the explanation and be linked to the sources. This approach would clearly suggest good understanding and that is a key element for entry into Level 4. As always, weaker answers were characterised by simple descriptions of the sources' contents with only implicit indications of similarities and differences or they identified a similarity or a difference and added no clear relevant knowledge beyond this.
- 02** There were very few examples of answers which failed to use the sources or were totally source dependent. For the most part the sources were well used and many students drew some sound conclusions from them. Relevant references were made to Kennedy's commitment to containment and this was often balanced against his limited and controlled involvement in Vietnam. Many students developed some sound arguments around Kennedy's desire to establish a diplomatic solution rather than engage in a protracted military entanglement. Some sophisticated responses focused on the idea of protecting the USA's vital interests, both economic and strategic, in the Far East and went on to link this to Kennedy's commitment to South Vietnam. Some excellent contextual detail was used. It is certainly the case that a working knowledge, and some understanding, of the condition of the Cold War by 1961 is useful, particularly in the early part of this specification.

Question 2

- 03** This question was answered well. Many of the answers suggested that students had a wide range of factors available to them. Although there were a number of examples of students merely listing these factors there were also many answers that displayed the students' ability to develop explanatory detail. Some answers established categories of factors. Some referred to the economic motives that drove Johnson and went on to consider the military superiority of the USA and its impact on strengthening the USA's diplomatic position. The best answers connected these categories rather than simply itemising the factors and leaving them isolated from one another. It was clear that most students were fully aware of the importance of identifying at least three factors but did not then link these factors in a way that would take the answer into level 4. Simply attaching a sentence which suggests that factor x is linked to factor y is not sufficient. There must be some clear linkage that is supported in the body of the answer.
- 04** Many students were able to display a wide range of detail that they often used to establish balance in their answers. There were some sophisticated answers which revealed an understanding of the different anti-war groups. Such answers often used this knowledge and understanding to comment on the relative effectiveness of these differing groups. Many answers focused on the role of the media as a crucial factor and on key individuals such as Walter Cronkite. There was sound knowledge of the military failures of the USA and this was most effectively illustrated through detail on Johnson's bombing campaigns. The Tet offensive figured largely in many answers. This detail was frequently linked to the focus of the question rather than simply emerging because student knew a lot about the Tet offensive. Clearly, the great majority of students were ready for the focus of this question and were well prepared to address it. There were many well balanced responses founded on sound and well selected evidential detail. It is worthy of note that very few responses were meagre or narrow and imbalanced or drifted into extensive descriptive detail or irrelevancy.

Question 3

- 05** Only a very small number of students attempted this question. Most of those who did were able to identify a number of factors that motivated Nixon's attitude towards the USA's role in Vietnam by 1969. There was some good contextual detail developed that linked Vietnam with Nixon's own personal political agenda. Some students had an awareness of the condition of the Cold War in 1969 and this understanding and knowledge was often used very effectively.
- 06** Those who attempted this question were often able to examine the outcomes of the Paris Agreement in terms of the USA's, and Nixon's, aims and objectives. There were very few examples of answers which simply took the view that the agreement was a success for the USA because it enabled the USA to free itself from involvement in Vietnam. Most answers remained focused on the question and very few drifted into purely narrative detail on the USA's role in Vietnam during the Nixon years.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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