



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 2041

Unit HIS3B

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS3B

Unit 3B: The Triumph of Elizabeth: Britain, 1547–1603

General Comments

Many students responded very well to the challenges posed by this examination. In all, over half of answers were assessed at Levels 4 and 5, thereby demonstrating the ability of a wide range of students not only to marshal the knowledge necessary for success at this level but also the ability to deploy that knowledge effectively in order to support relevant argument. Some students performed less well. In some cases this was a specific issue regarding Question 2 where a poor performance contrasted significantly with a very good performance elsewhere on the paper. There was some evidence of students offering excessive amounts of descriptive historiography which did not advance the arguments which they were trying to put forward. There were some instances where students offered descriptive responses which could not take them out of Level 2 and, in a few cases, there was some lack of relevant knowledge on Question 3. Only a small number of students appeared to suffer significantly from timing problems. Overall, the performance on individual questions was similar with Question 1 answered marginally the most successfully and Question 3 answered marginally the least successfully.

Question 1

01 This was answered successfully by many students. The key criteria in evaluating student performance were the confidence with which the key theme of authority was addressed and the skill with which supporting evidence was deployed. Well-prepared students who had a clear view of what constituted authority often achieved Level 5. A range of relevant hypotheses was put forward with students making sensible comments about the problems of minority government, the issues raised by Somerset's protectorship and whether or not Northumberland and Mary enhanced royal authority. Most students appeared knowledgeable about both reigns covered by the question and there were very few answers which either began or ended in 1553. A few students appeared to misread the question and wrote almost exclusively about Elizabeth's reign.

Question 2

02 The best answers to this question were excellent, with over 16% of answers achieving Level 5 marks. Such answers showed considerable knowledge of the operation of Elizabethan parliaments – with evidence drawn from across the reign – as well as effective familiarity with a range of interpretations. At the other extreme, unfortunately, there was a small number of otherwise apparently well-prepared students who abandoned discussion of parliament at a very early stage to write general and usually irrelevant comments about Elizabethan government. Some students were hazy about what powers parliament did possess, assuming an executive power which did not exist and confusing this with its occasional use by members of the Privy Council as a body which could exert political pressure on the Queen on some issues.

Question 3

- 03** Many students were able to offer well-informed evaluations of the key theme. That did, however, presuppose some relevant knowledge not only of the political status of the Netherlands but also of its strategic and commercial importance. This was lacking amongst some students who also had little understanding of the civil conflict which had taken place in the Netherlands since 1567 and which was interpreted by some of Elizabeth's councillors as part of a battle for survival of the Protestant faith. Most students were able to place conflict in the Netherlands within a wider context of reasons for the decline in Anglo-Spanish relations.

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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