



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 2041

Unit HIS3N

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS3N

Unit 3N: Aspects of International Relations, 1945–2004

General Comments

It was noticeable this year that the number of overt references to historiography, and the descriptions that often follow, were far fewer than in previous years. It is apparent that students are more aware of the implicit indication of the historiography in their answers rather than the need for explicit detail. This has moved the approach away from the danger of answers becoming dependent on historiography and in the process failing to develop any degree of independent judgement. The knowledge base of the majority of students was impressive. As referred to below, too many students failed to focus on the specifics of the questions. If a start date and an end date are defined in a question then students must ensure that they remain faithful in their detail to that question. Failure to do so may lead to the inclusion of irrelevant detail and this will not be rewarded. This is a relatively simple examination technique but one which is fundamental. This point also has some relevance to the approach taken to the breadth question. References to this have been made below but the overarching point is that students need to try to cover as much of the period as possible, not through finely tuned and continuous detail but rather through indicative content and exemplars that facilitate an analysis relevant to the question.

Question 1

01 The quality of responses to this question varied significantly across the entry. There were some weak answers which relied on a small range of issues. These generally included references to the Soviet response to the uprising in Hungary in 1956, the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. There was often considerable descriptive detail included on these events and this was particularly so for Cuba. Some answers were so heavily weighted towards Cuba that they appeared to lose sight of the focus of the original question. It appeared that some students had studied the missile crisis in some depth and they were determined to present their knowledge regardless of the question. Better answers, although restricted in terms of their analytical content, placed more focus on the specific question. These often dealt with the question by establishing a list of evidence that supported the notion that Khrushchev was committed to peaceful co-existence and a further list suggesting the opposite. These were supported by varying degrees of analysis. This approach tended to lead to 'bolted on' comments rather than an analysis backed by well selected supporting evidence. Nevertheless they did at least move the answers towards some degree of balance and focused detail. The best answers were characterised by carefully crafted analyses of Khrushchev's motives and how these applied to a range of relevant issues during the period. Some answers, for example, simply identified the Austrian State Treaty as an indication that Khrushchev was committed to peaceful co-existence. The best answers used this agreement to explore Khrushchev's total agenda and they considered the Treaty from within Khrushchev's own head. They explored why he agreed and the range of subtlety involved in that decision. Those students who were able to conduct this type of in depth analysis scored highly on this question and there were a significant number of them. By the same token, a number simply offered unquestioned acceptance that an incident was evidence of commitment to peaceful co-existence, or the lack of it.

Question 2

- 02** Too many answers to this question simply ignored the end date and developed often extensive detail on Reagan and his Presidency. The end date in the question was 1980. Since this was very specifically stated it was not appropriate to reward what was effectively irrelevant material. Reagan certainly was against détente because he believed that it prolonged the Cold War and undermined the USA's means to achieve victory over the Soviet Union. However, extensive detail drawn from his Presidency goes well beyond this view. Many answers restricted their coverage to some key events such as the Arab-Israeli crisis in 1973, Angola and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. A relatively small number of responses simply focused on Afghanistan and suggested that this meant that the USA had little or no culpability for the collapse of détente and that it was all the result of this invasion. Better responses attempted to explore the varied and differing motives held by both the Soviet Union and the USA for their participation in détente. Such answers often considered events in terms of whether these motives were being met. Many students appreciated the view that détente was a form of control for the USA and when that control system was seen not to be working then the attitude towards détente changed. Other answers approached the question by exploring a range of factors that were seen as relevant to the collapse of détente. In doing this they were able to create the opportunity to establish balance and develop a comparative analysis between the different components. Inevitably, some answers simply listed the factors and then bolted on a comment. This reflected the approach of less developed answers referred to in the comments relating to Question 1. The best answers were those that analysed the USA's position at the start of détente and showed by well selected detail how and why it changed. Some suggested that there was no real change because the fundamental motives of the USA never changed. Others explored the idea that détente was flawed from the outset and was doomed to failure regardless of any shifts in the USA's position. Overall this question generated a very wide range of responses and a wide range of outcomes.

Question 3

- 03** Clearly a breadth question does not demand the same degree of in depth coverage that is expected for the depth questions. What is very relevant to answers to a breadth question is an appreciation of change over time and the ability to cite examples of key points in that process. It is also relevant to consider continuity and the pace of change. There may be crucial events which stand out as determinants of change and which lend themselves to in depth analysis. A number of answers to this breadth question found it difficult to move very far from the origins of the Cold War in Europe and move beyond 1949. A few such answers managed to reach 1961 and the Berlin Wall. These answers were narrow not only in terms of their complete focus on Europe but also in terms of addressing the range that inevitably appears in a breadth question and, as such, makes it a breadth question. Other similar responses sometime went beyond 1961 but turned to rather isolated incidents that were not always presented as convincing factors in the longevity of the Cold War. References were often made to the Angolan civil war and superpower involvement in it for example. Despite these limited responses there were many excellent answers which were able to develop in depth analyses of the importance of Western Europe and a wide range of other issues that caused the Cold War to continue for so long. Well selected indicative evidence was presented to support these comparative analyses. A few answers simply offered an extended list of reasons why the Cold War lasted so long and others slightly lost sight of the question by including descriptive detail on why it came to an end.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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