

## **General Certificate of Education**

# **A2 History 2041**

### **Unit 3: HIS3K**

#### **Triumph and Collapse:**

#### **Russia and the USSR, 1941–1991**

## **Mark Scheme**

**Specimen mark scheme for examinations in June 2010 onwards**  
**This mark scheme uses the [new numbering system](#)**

The specimen assessment materials are provided to give centres a reasonable idea of the general shape and character of the planned question papers and mark schemes in advance of the operational exams.

Further copies of this Mark Scheme are available to download from the AQA Website: [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

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## Generic Introduction for A2

The A2 History specification is based on the assessment objectives laid down in QCA's GCE History subject criteria and published in the AQA specification booklet. These cover the skills, knowledge and understanding which are expected of A Level candidates. Most questions address more than one objective since a good historian must be able to combine a range of skills and knowledge. Consequently, the marking scheme which follows is a 'levels of response' scheme and assesses candidates' historical skills in the context of their knowledge and understanding of History.

The levels of response are a graduated recognition of how candidates have demonstrated their abilities in the Assessment Objectives. Candidates who predominantly address AO1(a) by writing narrative or description will perform at Level 1 or low Level 2 if some comment is included. Candidates who provide more explanation – (AO1(b), supported by the relevant selection of material, AO1(a)) – will perform at Level 2 or low Level 3 depending on their synoptic understanding and linkage of ideas. Candidates who provide explanation with evaluation, judgement and an awareness of historical interpretations will be addressing all 3 AOs (AO1(a); AO1(b); AO2(b)) and will have access to the higher mark ranges.

To obtain an award of Level 3 or higher, candidates will need to address the synoptic requirements of A Level. The open-ended essay questions set are, by nature, synoptic and encourage a range of argument. Differentiation between performance at Levels 3, 4, and 5 therefore depends on how a candidate's knowledge and understanding are combined and used to support an argument and the how that argument is communicated.

The mark scheme emphasises features which measure the extent to which a candidate has begun to '*think like a historian*' and show higher order skills. As indicated in the level criteria, candidates will show their historical understanding by:

- The way the requirements of the question are interpreted
- The quality of the arguments and the range/depth/type of material used in support
- The presentation of the answer (including the level of communication skills)
- The awareness and use of differing historical interpretations
- The degree of independent judgement and conceptual understanding shown

It is expected that A2 candidates will perform to the highest level possible for them and the requirements for Level 5, which demands the highest level of expertise have therefore been made deliberately challenging in order to identify the most able candidates.

## **CRITERIA FOR MARKING GCE HISTORY:**

### ***A2 EXAMINATION PAPERS***

#### **General Guidance for Examiners (to accompany Level Descriptors)**

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##### **Deciding on a level and the award of marks within a level**

It is of vital importance that examiners familiarise themselves with the generic mark scheme and apply it consistently, as directed by the Principal Examiner, in order to facilitate comparability across options.

The indicative mark scheme for each paper is designed to illustrate some of the material that candidates might refer to (knowledge) and some of the approaches and ideas they might develop (skills). It is not, however, prescriptive and should only be used to exemplify the generic mark scheme.

When applying the generic mark scheme, examiners will constantly need to exercise judgement to decide which level fits an answer best. Few essays will display all the characteristics of a level, so deciding the most appropriate will always be the first task.

Each level has a range of marks and for an essay which has a strong correlation with the level descriptors the middle mark should be given. However, when an answer has some of the characteristics of the level above or below, or seems stronger or weaker on comparison with many other candidates' responses to the same question, the mark will need to be adjusted up or down.

When deciding on the mark within a level, the following criteria should be considered *in relation to the level descriptors*. Candidates should never be doubly penalised. If a candidate with poor communication skills has been placed in Level 2, he or she should not be moved to the bottom of the level on the basis of the poor quality of written communication. On the other hand, a candidate with similarly poor skills, whose work otherwise matched the criteria for Level 4 should be adjusted downwards within the level.

Criteria for deciding marks within a level:

- Depth and precision in the use of factual information
- Depth and originality in the development of an argument
- The extent of the synoptic links
- The quality of written communication (grammar, spelling, punctuation and legibility; an appropriate form and style of writing; clear and coherent organisation of ideas, including the use of specialist vocabulary)
- The way the answer is brought together in the conclusion

**Specimen Mark Scheme for examinations in June 2010 onwards**

**A2 Unit 3: The State and the People: Change and Continuity**

**HIS3K: Triumph and Collapse: Russia and the USSR, 1941–1991**

**Question 1**

- 01** 'Stalin's leadership was the most significant reason for the Soviet victory over Germany in the 1941–1945 war.'  
Assess the validity of this view. (45 marks)  
(45 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b), AO2(b)*

**Generic Mark Scheme for essays at A2**

- L1:** Answers will display a limited understanding of the demands of the question. They may **either** contain some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question **or** they may address only a part of the question. Alternatively, they may contain some explicit comment but will make few, if any, synoptic links and will have limited accurate and relevant historical support. There will be little, if any, awareness of differing historical interpretations. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-6**
- L2:** Answers will show some understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be primarily descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they may contain explicit comment but show limited relevant factual support. They will display limited understanding of differing historical interpretations. Historical debate may be described rather than used to illustrate an argument and any synoptic links will be undeveloped. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **7-15**
- L3:** Answers will show a good understanding of the demands of the question. They will provide some assessment, backed by relevant and appropriately selected evidence, which may, however, lack depth. There will be some synoptic links made between the ideas, arguments and information included although these may not be highly developed. There will be some understanding of varying historical interpretations. Answers will be clearly expressed and show reasonable organisation in the presentation of material. **16-25**
- L4:** Answers will show a very good understanding of the demands of the question. There will be synoptic links made between the ideas, arguments and information included showing an overall historical understanding. There will be a good understanding and use of differing historical interpretations and debate and the answer will show judgement through sustained argument backed by a carefully selected range of precise evidence. Answers will be well-organised and display good skills of written communication. **26-37**
- L5:** Answers will show a full understanding of the demands of the question. The ideas, arguments and information included will be wide-ranging, carefully chosen and closely interwoven to produce a sustained and convincing answer with a high level of synopticity. Conceptual depth, independent judgement and a mature historical

understanding, informed by a well-developed understanding of historical interpretations and debate, will be displayed. Answers will be very well-structured and fluently written.

**38-45**

### Indicative content

**Note: This content is not prescriptive and candidates are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.**

Candidates will need to assess the contribution of Stalin's leadership to the Soviet victory and balance this against other factors which account for Soviet success.

Candidates may refer to some of the following material:

- Stalin overcame his initial loss of nerve at the time of the German invasion in 1941 and succeeded in presenting himself, for example through propaganda, as a great war leader, symbolising resistance against Germany
- Stalin was closely involved in economic and military planning as well as political leadership and diplomacy, exercising wider control and involvement than any other war leader
- Although Stalin made several mistakes, especially in the early days when insisting on 'no retreat' and causing enormous loss and damage, he learned to promote and give scope to skilled individuals such as Marshal Zhukov
- The unfired command structure, *Stavka*, run by Stalin, proved effective in directing the war effort. Political, military and economic strategy was coordinated
- Stalin learned to appeal to patriotism rather than Communism to galvanise popular resistance to the Nazis
- Stalin also gave scope to other able individuals such as Molotov in diplomacy, Khrushchev in administration and Voznesensky in economic planning
- Stalin was ruthless in his approach, e.g. in his deportation of 'suspect' national groups, but he was also pragmatic when it was called for, e.g. reducing political influence over the army when it was necessary to rely on the professionalism of the soldiers
- Stalin's prewar policy of economic planning, particularly the Five Year Plans, proved adaptable to the needs of war and allowed the USSR to engage in total war from the start, greatly outproducing its enemies.

Other factors which might be considered as contributing to the Soviet victory include:

- The role of Germany: in particular Hitler's faulty decision making and strategic mistakes such as Stalingrad, German unpreparedness for a long winter war, or indeed for total war itself, and German brutality which alienated potential allies amongst some Soviet people
- The material support given by the Western allies to the USSR, e.g. under Lend Lease
- The bravery and determination of the Soviet people themselves – both military and civilian
- The contribution of other factors such as the winter, overstretched German supply lines etc
- The ruthless control over the Soviet population exercised by the Soviet security services
- The activities of partisan forces

Although the focus of the question is on Stalin's leadership, a full and balanced answer should take some account of 'other' factors.

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**Question 2**

- 02** To what extent was Destalinisation responsible for Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964? (45 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b), AO2(b)*

**Generic Mark Scheme for essays at A2**

- L1:** Answers will display a limited understanding of the demands of the question. They may **either** contain some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question **or** they may address only a part of the question. Alternatively, they may contain some explicit comment but will make few, if any, synoptic links and will have limited accurate and relevant historical support. There will be little, if any, awareness of differing historical interpretations. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-6**
- L2:** Answers will show some understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be primarily descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they may contain explicit comment but show limited relevant factual support. They will display limited understanding of differing historical interpretations. Historical debate may be described rather than used to illustrate an argument and any synoptic links will be undeveloped. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **7-15**
- L3:** Answers will show a good understanding of the demands of the question. They will provide some assessment, backed by relevant and appropriately selected evidence, which may, however, lack depth. There will be some synoptic links made between the ideas, arguments and information included although these may not be highly developed. There will be some understanding of varying historical interpretations. Answers will be clearly expressed and show reasonable organisation in the presentation of material. **16-25**
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- L5:** Answers will show a full understanding of the demands of the question. The ideas, arguments and information included will be wide-ranging, carefully chosen and closely interwoven to produce a sustained and convincing answer with a high level of synopticity. Conceptual depth, independent judgement and a mature historical understanding, informed by a well-developed understanding of historical interpretations and debate, will be displayed. Answers will be very well-structured and fluently written. **38-45**

## Indicative content

**Note: This content is not prescriptive and candidates are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.**

Candidates will need to explain what Destalinisation was and Khrushchev's part in it. The following factors will be relevant:

- Destalinisation had begun even before the 1956 'secret speech' denouncing Stalin, with a 1955 Commission investigating Stalin's abuses of power, although it commended his overall policies. Khrushchev's approach was not popular with all Communists – even though there was no attack on the Party's past role as such, Khrushchev's apparently radical approach caused concern to Conservatives
- The limited cultural freedom allowed by Khrushchev threatened to open a can of worms and also caused concern amongst those who believed that the state had a monopoly on freedom of expression
- Khrushchev had enemies left over from his struggle for power after Stalin's death. He also created enemies by reforms such as limiting the powers of the KGB and making it more accountable, and attacking elitism in the Party
- There was now an implication that the Party itself was no longer infallible
- Destalinisation had profound consequences in Soviet controlled Eastern Europe, with national unrest particularly in Hungary and Poland. Khrushchev appeared to be taken unawares, despite earlier signs of unrest in 1953
- Opposition to Destalinisation in China caused a rift in the Communist camp and was blamed on Khrushchev. There seemed a danger that Khrushchev was starting a chain of events that might result in a collapse of the Soviet system
- Whilst Khrushchev upset conservatives, he equally had few friends amongst liberals at home or abroad – since whilst he did have some genuine reforming zeal, it was clear that he himself was not a liberal and had no intention of dismantling the Soviet system, which in essence was still Stalinist.

There are other factors responsible for Khrushchev's downfall, which although not necessarily part of 'Destalinisation', are also relevant:

- Khrushchev's economic reforms, whilst having some successes, e.g. the production of more consumer goods, did not solve the basic problem of an increasingly rigid, centralised, stagnating command economy. There were also specific failures such as the Virgin Lands scheme. Other successes such as space achievements could not disguise underlying economic and social weaknesses
- Structural reforms to the economy and bureaucracy were not successful
- Many conservatives in the Party resented Khrushchev's attempts to decentralise the Party, reduce its privileges and make it more accountable. There was bureaucratic obstruction and Khrushchev created dangerous enemies
- Failures or perceived failures in foreign policy, particularly over China and Cuba, discredited Khrushchev
- Khrushchev's rather crude, populist style of leadership was unpopular with colleagues, who thought it destroyed the dignity of leadership
- Khrushchev failed to isolate his opponents or promote enough supporters, leaving him vulnerable to a coup.

Therefore although candidates should focus on Destalinisation, a balanced answer should include some appreciation of the range of factors which led to Khrushchev's fall.



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**Question 3**

- 03** How far was the failure to achieve effective economic reform between 1941 and 1991 responsible for the break-up of the USSR? (45 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b), AO2(b)*

**Generic Mark Scheme for essays at A2**

- L1:** Answers will display a limited understanding of the demands of the question. They may **either** contain some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question **or** they may address only a part of the question. Alternatively, they may contain some explicit comment but will make few, if any, synoptic links and will have limited accurate and relevant historical support. There will be little, if any, awareness of differing historical interpretations. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-6**
- L2:** Answers will show some understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be primarily descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they may contain explicit comment but show limited relevant factual support. They will display limited understanding of differing historical interpretations. Historical debate may be described rather than used to illustrate an argument and any synoptic links will be undeveloped. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **7-15**
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- L5:** Answers will show a full understanding of the demands of the question. The ideas, arguments and information included will be wide-ranging, carefully chosen and closely interwoven to produce a sustained and convincing answer with a high level of synopticity. Conceptual depth, independent judgement and a mature historical understanding, informed by a well-developed understanding of historical interpretations and debate, will be displayed. Answers will be very well-structured and fluently written. **38-45**

## Indicative content

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Candidates are likely to debate, however briefly, why economic reform was necessary in the USSR from Stalin onwards. Answers will probably focus both on industry and agriculture:

- In industry, although Stalin had industrialised the USSR and greatly increased output of capital goods, there were problems around the lack of consumer goods, poor quality, inefficiency, lack of incentives and risk taking, imbalances between sectors, low labour productivity, lack of modern technology and so on. These problems became increasingly serious after Stalin. Although the economy recovered impressively from war by 1953, and there were further advances, stagnation set in particularly in the late 1960s and 1970s
- Agriculture remained the poor relation of industry. Farming suffered from low productivity, insufficient investment and mechanisation, climatic and geographical difficulties, lack of enthusiasm amongst the workforce.

The failure to achieve economic reform certainly was a major factor in the break-up of the USSR:

- Although Stalin ensured that the economy recovered from the devastation of war by 1953, this was achieved by the old methods of hard work and coercion and there was no significant reform. Advances in some areas hid the major deficiencies in other sectors
- Stalin's successors adhered to a belief in socialism and tinkered with the Stalinist economy without remedying its defects. Khrushchev made structural reforms, and attempted to rectify imbalances, e.g. by increasing production of consumer goods, but the essentials of the command economy remained. Under Brezhnev, there were initially proposals for reform such as the Lieberman Plan, but they were not adopted and the regime became increasingly resistant to real reform: there were tinkering with productivity schemes, bonuses etc, but nothing fundamental. Progress was made only in favoured sectors like defence, which almost bankrupted the USSR. Stagnation set in. Gorbachev seemed prepared to bite the bullet, but perestroika was half-hearted – Gorbachev was reluctant to destroy the system or move to a market economy. No Soviet leader was prepared to accept that fundamental economic reform could not be divorced from political reform
- Ultimately, the growing economic weakness of the USSR was a major factor in the USSR withdrawing from Eastern Europe, leading to the collapse of Communist regimes there and hastening the break-up of the USSR. The pressures and expense of the Cold War certainly contributed to terminal economic weakness.

Candidates should also consider other, sometimes related factors:

- Growing nationalist unrest within the USSR became a significant factor in political break-up after 1985
- There was always entrenched political opposition from within the Party to reform, including economic reform. The Soviet system was resistant to change
- Other difficulties such as foreign affairs problems in areas such as Afghanistan and the difficulty of competing with the USA were undoubtedly a factor.

However, it was ultimately economic failure which undermined the credibility of the Soviet regime, which clearly could not deliver the promise of a socialist or Communist paradise, and prevented the USSR from maintaining itself as a world power. Once reforms were started, particularly by Gorbachev, and they were half-hearted, misunderstood, not supported, or opened up a can of worms, particularly in the Republics, the continued existence of the USSR was always under threat.

A good answer will show balance, breadth, and an ability to link various factors convincingly.