



General Certificate of Education

History 2041

Specification

Unit HIS3C

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS3C

Unit 3C: The Emergence of a Great Power? Spain, 1492–1556

General Comments

The work of candidates was generally good and sometimes outstanding. Most scripts revealed a good awareness of the demands of the questions. The length of answers was almost always appropriate to the marks allocated. Only a minority of candidates failed to produce two complete answers. Many candidates were evidently well prepared, both in knowledge and skills. Their work was presented with care, well organized and expressed in clear and cogent language. The standard achieved in the best answers was impressive.

Despite these generally favourable impressions, there were some failings that contributed to under-achievement. Although most essay answers were substantial and well written, a significant minority relied upon generalised and uncritical assertions, often making points of relevance and potential value that were let down by inaccuracy and vagueness. It was also noticeable that many candidates lacked an adequate grasp of chronology. Many answers got key events in the wrong order, or did not respond appropriately to the key dates in the question, leaving significant gaps or including irrelevant descriptive material. Such answers frequently betrayed an inflexible approach by candidates who were too fixated on what they wished to write about rather than responding directly to the demands of the question.

Question 1

01 Answers to *Question 1*, on the taming of the nobility by Ferdinand and Isabella, were mostly competent and effective, making the most of the opportunity to take a comparative view of relative importance of the wider achievements of the reign. For many candidates, this approach became rather rigid and pre-determined, so that the key issue of the nobility was pushed to the sidelines until it suddenly re-appeared in a rather token conclusion. In the substantial number of good and excellent answers, the 'taming' of the nobility was evaluated with analytical depth and continuously linked to the assessment of a range of other achievements, such as religious unity or the launching of Spain's empire in the New World. A few such answers also showed a good grasp of chronology and change over time, differentiating precisely between policies and achievements before or after 1504.

Question 2

02 Answers to *Question 2*, on religious unity in Spain between 1504 and 1516, were of mixed quality. A disappointingly large minority of candidates failed to keep a clear focus on the key dates of the question – including extensive descriptive material on the reign of Isabella, for example, and having little evidence to offer about developments under Charles I. Many answers betrayed all too obviously the fact that the candidate would have preferred this question to be focused on the years from 1492 to 1516; answering the question that was hoped for rather than the one in the question paper is bound to be unproductive. In contrast, there were many well-directed and well-informed answers showing an excellent grasp of the legacy of Isabella and of the long-term consequences of actions already taken by 1504. Several candidates wrote very effectively on the growth of censorship and control as Charles I attempted to suppress heresy. It was also pleasing to

note the synoptic understanding shown by answers that differentiated between the special geographical and cultural circumstances of Spain compared to other parts of Europe. Those candidates who struggled to cope with the demands of this question would have benefited from familiarity with Chapter 11 on 'the Spain of Charles I/IV' in the Nelson Thorne textbook.

Question 3

03 Answers to Question 3, on the extent to which the Crown was financially secure between 1516 and 1529, were generally good, although there was often a failure to differentiate between financial issues and the general health of the Spanish economy. Some candidates also ignored the end date and went on to include substantial descriptive material relating to the later years of Charles I's reign. Overall, however, the response to this question was very convincing. There was confident knowledge of the role of the Council of Finance and also of the dominant role of Castile as the financial hub of Spain. Many answers provided balanced and in-depth assessments of the positive and negative consequences of the flow of gold and silver from the Americas.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.