



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1B**

***Report on the Examination***

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# Unit HIS1B

## Unit 1B: Britain, 1483–1529

### General Comments

There was a large number of very pleasing responses to this paper which displayed both a good grasp of the skills required and also a good depth of subject knowledge. Most impressively, the majority of candidates appeared to be comfortable using specific detail from their knowledge to support analytical commentary. This resulted in a range of very impressive marks indeed. However, there were a number of heavily assertive responses from candidates that, although prepared well in the production of balanced assessment, lacked the background knowledge necessary to advance beyond Level 2 on the essay type responses. In contrast, there were relatively few solely narrative responses, although there were a number that seemed overly concerned with historiography and consequently produced little more than a précis of the opinions of others rather than a focused and argued response to the set question. Some candidates seemed to have carefully prepared vague comments about ‘traditional’ or ‘revisionist’ history which they were determined to include no matter the context. It is worth noting that there is no expectation in AS units that candidates have any knowledge of the historiography of the period.

The ‘explain why’ questions were usually done very well although candidates should be reminded that the objective here is to provide an explanation for an event – lengthy description of the event itself is thus often only providing an implicit response. The very best answers link together a range of reasons for an event occurring, perhaps by referring to long term or short term, or by prioritising. Simply stating ‘this was the most important reason’ is however little more than assertion.

There remains a need for candidates to take care with dates, especially when they are part of the set question to be answered. No credit can usually be given to candidates that include material outside the parameters of the question so it is vital that the precise terms of each question are fully appreciated before a response is undertaken.

There were very few examples of poor time management as most candidates were able to give complete answers to all questions. It was also very pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates allocated their time between the different types of question well. There was no overwhelming preference for a particular question, although Questions 1 and 2 did prove marginally more popular.

### Question 1

**01** Many candidates did very well on this question. The best responses were able to offer a range of different reasons for failure and were able to link them appropriately, perhaps by suggesting long term and short term reasons or alternatively by prioritising into the most and least significant with reasoned judgment. Unfortunately, a number of candidates with a good deal of knowledge of the period saw this question as an opportunity to display it. Hence there were lengthy assessments of why the rebellion took place, or descriptions of events of the rebellion but relatively little on reasons for failure. There were also a number of quite vague assertions such as Henry VII was better prepared, but there was little justification or evidence in support of this view. The best responses tended to be those

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with a clear focus on reasons for failure and that were able to offer specific support from knowledge, for example accurate knowledge of the numbers of each army during the Battle of Stoke.

- 02** The very best answers to this popular question were truly outstanding. These responses established a clear argument at the outset and maintained it throughout. In addition there was a consistent focus on the degree of success. There were relatively few scripts that had little or no knowledge of events of the period; much more common was the response that confused the events of various rebellions or that had little specific support such as dates, names and titles. It was very disappointing that a number of highly capable responses spent a considerable amount of time discussing matters outside of the dates given in the question. It remains absolutely vital that candidates take the time to read through the question and to consider its precise demands. The temptation to provide a narrative account of the rebellions in this period was largely avoided, but there was some scope for even more comparison between events perhaps to establish the most successful event. It is clear from responses to this question that candidates were largely very well prepared for the demands of a good, balanced and analytical response.

### **Question 2**

- 03** This question was done very well indeed by a few candidates, but in the main it did challenge most. A few responses struggled to emerge from generic or vague statements such as Henry VII wanted more money, or Henry VII wanted to establish better relations with foreign powers. Whilst these statements of course have validity, they also needed much more development. Developing the idea that better foreign relations, for example, made Henry more secure from overseas support for pretenders would have seen quite an elevation in the level awarded to some scripts. Knowledge that Henry backed voyages of exploration seemed quite strong, but there was much less appreciation of why Henry may have done this and how this may have linked with trade. Conversely, there were some very good examples of knowledge of the importance of the cloth trade and why it was essential to see it prosper. Candidates were less certain on establishing clear priority or linking factors together on this question than on any other.
- 04** Candidates had obviously prepared well for this topic. At the very top end there were some exceptionally impressive, well-structured accounts utilising specific subject knowledge. Candidates were especially strong in detailing the exploitation of crown lands and the beginning of Henry's reign – but were less so towards the end. It is perhaps worth emphasising also that many of the policies mentioned by candidates were designed more to secure Henry's throne than to advance his wealth. Most candidates were able to evaluate a range of policies, and almost all were able to at least mention avoidance of war, although fewer could provide evidence of this as a policy. The scripts that mentioned a change in policy over time were comparatively rare with very few able to differentiate between the achievements in the early years and the last years of apparent greed. Yet this was not a requirement for the higher levels of which a very good number of candidates obtained. Perhaps the largest indicator of the difference between the average and the good was an ability to provide balance. There were a number of very knowledgeable responses that unfortunately did not give any thought – even if to dismiss the argument – to the suggestion that Henry's attempts to increase wealth failed or had only limited success.

**Question 3**

- 05** A popular question, but one which resulted in a full range of quality. It was clear that the vast majority of candidates had a sound knowledge of what the Field of the Cloth of Gold was, although there were some highly speculative accounts, even getting the date wrong despite it being mentioned in the question. Most scripts gave descriptive accounts of the events, often focusing on entertaining stories of jousting competitions or mentioning the construction of temporary castles. Yet, it was rare for a candidate to focus exclusively on reasons for the event happening. Where the candidate did give sufficient focus on motivation, it often lacked the range of reasons one might have hoped for. Candidates should be reminded that the 12 marks questions require a focus on the reasons for something, i.e. an explanation. Whilst detail of the actual event can provide contextual knowledge, it should really be used in support of an answer to the question 'Explain why'.
- 06** This question was answered very well by those who had clearly dedicated quite some time to factual revision. These candidates were able to spend time considering the role of the annulment in causing Wolsey's fall but then provided balance by considering other factors, the most popular of which were the Amicable Grant and rivalry within Court. The obvious pitfall here was one that some of the weaker scripts fell into, namely the temptation to simply describe the events of the annulment. Most commonly there were very detailed assessments of the reasons that the annulment became a royal objective, but this of course had very little relevance to the set question. Some scripts gave a very detailed description of the annulment – some still referring to it as a divorce – and tagged on 'and so this led to the downfall of Wolsey' as an assertive link. It is very difficult to credit the candidate with much in these circumstances. The requirement was obviously a good focus on reasons for Wolsey's fall, and some candidates very impressively argued from the outset that the annulment problem was merely the culmination of a much longer push of Wolsey to the periphery.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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