



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1E**

***Report on the Examination***

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# Unit HIS1E

## Unit 1E: Absolutist States: The Reign of Louis XIV, 1661–1715

### General Comments

There were a large number of detailed responses to this paper which reflected good understanding of the set period and a good grasp of the techniques required. Most candidates focused clearly on the specific questions set and paid attention to any given dates or themes. Knowledge of the views of historians was mostly used judiciously and appropriately. There were some excellent responses which showed a good level of contextual knowledge and made some perceptive comments. A minority of candidates resorted to description of relevant material where they were clearly unsure of how to analyse the specific question. Most candidates attempted to analyse, although some resorted to assertion in places. Candidates seemed confident in how to approach the 12 mark questions, with most attempting to clearly outline a range of reasons with development. Where some candidates struggled was how to link the factors or to show why one factor is more important than the others and some candidates resorted to bland and assertive comments on this. Answers to the 24 mark questions were mostly well organised and at least attempted to provide some balance in the approach. Depth of knowledge and sophistication of analysis was the main determinant of level the of award.

### Question 1

- 01** Despite the focus on the very start of Louis' reign, there were a good number of well focused and clear answers to this question. Many candidates showed a good knowledge about the context of Louis' reign before 1661, for example many discussed the long-term impact of the Frondes. However, discussion of events prior to 1661 was not necessary and many other candidates used good examples of the structure of France and her government to argue that this will have limited Louis' authority. Popular reasons given included the financial necessity of selling offices and the downsides of this policy and also of the presence of the nobility within the system. Other candidates looked to later changes made by Louis, e.g. regarding the Right of Remonstrance, to suggest reasons for limited authority in 1661. Weaker candidates suggested factors which were rather tenuous, such as the fact that Versailles hadn't been built yet or that Louis wanted to be a Christian King so he couldn't rule tyrannically. Some attempts to link or prioritise were formulaic and verged on assertion, which did lower some marks. Most candidates attempted to answer the question, although a notable few did try to argue that Louis was powerful in 1661, which clearly lacks focus on the 'Explain why' element of the question.
- 02** Answers to this question generally displayed a very good level of knowledge about the domestic government in France. Most candidates engaged with the question and discussed the role of the intendants in some depth – some even chose to focus solely on the intendants and looked at the ways in which they were important and the ways in which they were not. Whilst this was a perfectly valid approach, other candidates balanced their argument by looking at other methods by which Louis extended his authority, for example improvements in the army and the roads or the building of Versailles. Some weaker candidates were unsure of the actual role of intendants and made fairly bland and unsupported statements about their importance. It is perhaps worth emphasising to students that the intendants did not collect the taxes themselves, they merely oversaw

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and tried to regulate the process. A minority of candidates had clearly prepared answers on the role of Versailles and talked of this to the detriment of other material.

### **Question 2**

- 03** This question was generally answered very well. Most candidates were aware of a good range of reasons for Louis's war against the Dutch, with many giving detailed and precise material to back up the factors chosen. A pleasing number of candidates also managed to successfully and convincingly prioritise one of the factors; most choosing desire for revenge after the Dutch involvement in the Triple Alliance. Many candidates discussed the possible desire to damage Dutch trade which is valid, although a large number suggested that Colbert was fundamental in persuading Louis to go to war. This should not be overstated; Colbert was generally against war as it would damage the French economy and he was persuaded only because he thought that it would be a short and easy campaign.
- 04** Many of the responses to this question showed excellent knowledge of Louis' foreign policy 1661–1685, with a good level of detail being used to support points being made. Many candidates could recall specific gains made by Louis in these years and why these would help France. Similarly there was a good awareness of the surrounding context, with a number of candidates stressing that by 1685 Louis had served the interests of France, but that the Reunion policy had created an international climate which was foreboding. Most candidates attempted to convey a balanced argument, with the majority deciding that Louis' policy did serve the interests of France in this period. A minority ignored the rubric and spent a large portion of time discussing events after 1685, for example the War of Spanish Succession, this obviously meant that their marks would be limited. Some candidates also failed to appreciate the difference between 'successful in serving the interests of France' and having a successful foreign policy; therefore it may be worthwhile re-emphasising to candidates that careful reading of the question is needed. Others did spend time vaguely discussing Louis' 'gloire' with little real focus on the question; so it may be worthwhile checking understanding of this concept.

### **Question 3**

- 05** The best responses to this question came from candidates who had clearly read the question. These answers clearly explained reasons for the failure to convert the Huguenots before 1685. A fairly large number of candidates seemed to have revised this topic in detail, but in their answer resorted to describing what Louis did rather than why it failed. Many candidates tried to argue that Louis could not persecute the Huguenots because they were protected by the Edict of Nantes. However, the fact that he did impose such policies as the Dragonnades suggests that the Edict did not prevent Louis from persecuting the Huguenots. With this question the number of candidates achieving Level 4 marks was not as high as in other questions and this is because many attempted to prioritise factors but by making assertive comments rather than giving evidence to prove their statements.
- 06** There were some good attempts made to answer this question but a number of candidates struggled to differentiate between Louis' motives and his methods for persecuting religious minorities. A pleasing number of candidates referred to a range of minorities, e.g. Jansenists and Quietists as well as Huguenots. However, a number also spent time discussing Louis' relationship with the Papacy which cannot be considered as a religious minority. Most candidates made frequent and clear links back to the specific question and a number made some pleasing judgements about the fact that Louis became more religiously motivated as he aged. Most candidates were aware that other factors, such as influence of the Jesuits and Louis' desire for political uniformity were also

important. A number of conclusions lacked a clear and convincing conclusion which did affect marks.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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