



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1H**

***Report on the Examination***

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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# Unit HIS1H

## Unit 1H: Tsarist Russia, 1855–1917

### General Comments

With over a thousand entries, this is a popular unit within the January examination series. It is clear that many centres now teach the course in a linear fashion, with relatively large cohorts of students entering the exam in January. While some were well prepared, others struggled with the factual content and the skills base required to deal well with this paper. Some candidates had clearly not revised well, and their depth of knowledge was superficial and general; these candidates of course performed relatively poorly. Others had memorised a lot of information, but found it difficult to manipulate and deploy that knowledge in a focused answer and lapsed instead into description. A proportion of candidates struggled to manage their time effectively and their answer papers overall were imbalanced. Many approached the paper in their own order of preference, taking the questions out of order. This is perfectly acceptable, but candidates must remember to indicate clearly in the margin which question they are attempting and where their answer begins. Some candidates lacked the depth of knowledge or breadth of understanding needed to answer the 24 mark questions well, and tackled only part of the question. However, the best prepared wrote fluent and focused answers with good factual support.

### Question 1

Overall, this was the least popular question among candidates and the one done least well.

- 01** Question 01 posed some difficulties for a good proportion of the candidates, who did not read the question properly or understand what it actually asked. They were asked to explain reasons why Tsar Alexander II slowed the pace of reform in the mid-1860s, but many submitted irrelevant material about why he launched a programme of reforms in the first place. In some cases, these were extended answers and factually correct, yet they did not pertain at all to the question and could not be credited. It is clear that these candidates had prepared an answer for the question they thought would appear, and had not attempted to adjust their ideas to fit the question posed. This ability to deal with the demands of a new and unseen question is central to the assessment of History at AS and candidates should be advised strongly to read the question carefully and quickly identify the reasons they will explain. Many candidates were able to identify and explain a range of reasons and scored within levels three and four.
- 02** Question 02 attracted a range of answers, many of which were impressive in their depth and deployment of knowledge. Good candidates were able to make an assessment of the regime's level of success in dealing with opposition and could comment on the different approaches of reform and repression adopted by these two Tsars. Most candidates knew about a range of opposition groups and some could explain their difficulties in stirring popular support. Too many candidates described the opposition groups, often at some length, without enough reference to the focus of the question and these candidates scored low marks within the mark scheme.

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**Question 2**

- 03** Question 03 posed no particular difficulties and candidates wrote confidently about Stolypin's reasons for introducing these reforms. Some of the more able candidates wrote about a range of political, social and economic motives and were able to link well the themes of delivering economic progress alongside political stability. These answers were credited highly. Many candidates could develop and explain only a limited number of reasons and candidates should be reminded of the need for range: as a rule of thumb, examiners are looking for at least three separate themes in the answer, each one explained well.
- 04** Question 04 distinguished well between the candidates. The best answers addressed the whole period, often in a chronological way but with an analytical focus. Typically, they assessed the level of success in the 1880s and 1890s, went on to acknowledge the recession of the early 1900s, then delivered an assessment of economic policy between 1906 and 1914. Answers like these scored highly within the markscheme because they had balance and range across the period alongside some focused assessment of what the question asked. Other answers were less effective. Many candidates were eager to demonstrate their knowledge of economic policy in the 1880s and 90s and had clearly revised and memorised their material diligently. However, in many cases candidates did not extend their answers beyond the 1905 revolution, so lacked the balance to score well on a question asking for assessment of the period to 1914. Others wrote a narrative account of the period with little reference to the question itself and candidates should be reminded to refer frequently to the words in the question, in order to ensure they address it with some assessment and evaluation not just description.

**Question 3**

This was the most popular question and the one which candidates did best overall. Even though many candidates had completed the course between September and January, they had clearly had enough time to address this last topic effectively within their course.

- 05** Question 05 attracted some very good answers. Candidates were comfortable with the focus and could identify and explain a range of reasons. Many good answers made links between various factors, showing a developed understanding of how military issues became political. Other effective answers analysed the relative importance of factors, developing for example the central issue of the Tsar's loss of support and credibility.
- 06** Question 06 was also done well and almost all candidates coped with the concept of popular dissatisfaction as a cause of revolution. Most answers were balanced and provided some assessment of the various causes, and many did so in good detail. Here, there was a good link between factual depth and focused analysis: the candidates who had revised well performed well, and that might be a reflection of their familiarity with evaluative questions on this topic. The ability to weigh reasons and to assess why some are more important than others is central to the AS mark scheme and many candidates did just that. Answers could only be rewarded highly when they focused sufficiently on popular dissatisfaction, even if only to dismiss it as a significant cause. Some candidates demonstrated a good understanding of historiography on this issue and, when used appropriately, references to the views of particular historians can enhance an argument.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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