



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2012**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1B**

***Report on the Examination***

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# Unit HIS1B

## Unit 1B: Britain, 1483–1529

### General Comments

There was a very pleasing standard of response to this question which was very much in line with that seen in January last year. Relatively few students struggled with time management and very few examples were seen of incomplete responses. Similarly there were few cases of rubric infringement.

The standard of subject knowledge was generally good, although there were some notable examples of students that lacked specific knowledge of the period and were thus unable to support their views with precise detail. Commonly, this type of student tried to make vague assertions that might have realistically applied to almost any period.

Stylistically, there were some very sophisticated answers, which in response to the essay questions saw consistent judgement being applied. It is clear that schools and colleges are also now very confident in guiding their students in the 'Explain why' questions; indeed there were some obviously very well practised responses. However, it is still quite common for students to recognise the need for linkage between factors – most commonly identified by means of asserting that one factor was more important than the others – but to fail subsequently to find support for this by means of specific subject knowledge. A sweeping statement, often confined to the conclusion, that X was the most important factor, often struggles to convince an examiner that the student is making a valid link as demanded at Level 4.

### Question 1

- 01** This question was answered very well indeed. The nature of the question gave students the opportunity to identify long term and short term and thus many students found it relatively straightforward to advance into Level 4. The small number of students that struggled here were those that failed to consider the date offered in the question and consequently spent a considerable amount of time discussing events at Bosworth. There was a clear split between those students that could confidently apply specific knowledge of the period and those that resorted to vague statements about Richard's personality, without much explicit reference to how this made his position insecure. It is worth reminding students to read the questions with care. Dates are crucial to producing an accurate response, as is a clear idea of exactly what the question is demanding. Commentary about Richard's unpopularity is useful but is much better linked to how this made his throne insecure.
- 02** Students found this the most challenging of the essay questions, which was a slight surprise considering how central and well-rehearsed the topic is. There were however a pleasing number of responses that acquired the highest level. Typically these responses were able to identify a role for parliament and were aware of exactly what parliament did in Tudor England. At the other extreme there seemed confusion from some about what parliament did, with a fair number claiming that it was responsible for victory at Bosworth without any clear indication of why this might have been the case. More confusingly, some students asserted that Parliament crowned the king or that parliament took charge of controlling the nobility during this period. In addition to some obvious factual confusion, there were again a number of students that went far beyond the date range stipulated in

the question, whilst some gave a précis of Henry VII's entire reign. The very best responses were very good indeed and they seemed to have a firm grasp of the subject matter and also a clear structure. Typically, these responses also referred to specific rebellions during this period and also to Stoke – this did much to confirm to the examiners that these students had a good factual grasp of the period.

### **Question 2**

- 03** This proved to be the most challenging of all of the questions for students. The very good responses were able to make specific reference to events of the Cornish Rebellion – for example the support of pretenders, or the proximity to London – and were able to develop these points. The key here was not to simply describe the events of the rebellion but to explain why it proved a threat. Unfortunately, some students resorted to vague commentary that might have applied to any rebellion at all. Commonly this meant that students referred to the cost of putting down rebellion, the fact that it showed Henry was not popular or that he still faced danger from abroad. Whilst some of these comments were accurate and could have been made very relevant indeed, the student lacked the means of developing these points in depth and making them specific to the Cornish Rebellion. Some students even wrote in great length about why the rebellion was not in fact a threat as Cornwall was a long way from London. These students had not only misunderstood the purpose of the explain why question – it is not to challenge the premise – but clearly lacked much knowledge.
- 04** This question was done reasonably well and was pretty much in line with the standard achieved on the other essay questions. The key here seemed to be a clear focus on the demands of the question. Whilst many students had obviously prepared their essay technique well, many simply had not spent the time thinking through what this particular question was demanding. Again, there were those that brought in material from outside of the date range set in the question – although this was less of a limiting factor here considering the chronological breadth stipulated. Some students did seem to struggle slightly with the concept of international recognition and why Henry might have wanted it. Others had clearly revised the events of foreign policy in some depth but had not considered motivation of the key players at all. It was this question which also saw the most narrative. Commonly, students seemed eager to describe Europe in this period or to offer a turn by turn account of the strengths and weaknesses of each monarch in Europe. This probably reflects the way their revision or class notes have been structured, but did little to advance them into the higher levels for essays which require judgement and evidence of analysis. The most commonly offered balance was the idea that Henry wanted security and that this motivated him throughout the period. It was however, only the exceptional student that suggested Henry's motives might not have been consistent over the period stipulated.

### **Question 3**

- 05** There were some really impressive responses to this question and it was readily apparent to all examiners that some students had thought through this question in some depth. Indeed, there were some excellent arguments about the most telling factor that accounted for Wolsey's rise to power. Unfortunately, at the other extreme, there were students that struggled to advance out of the heavily generalised. Comments such as 'Wolsey was willing to do Henry's dirty work' lacked obvious precision and also support. Likewise the suggestion that Wolsey rose to power because he was very talented and/or very lucky need to advance beyond this assertion to offer clear examples of where this may have been the case. In fact the factors offered by the top range scripts and those awarded much less highly, tended to be exactly the same – the crucial difference was that the higher level scripts were able to offer specific evidence. For example they were able to

name benefactors that assisted Wolsey, or mention specifically whose death assisted Wolsey in his rise to power.

- 06** This was the most successfully answered question on the paper and proved pleasingly effective in allowing students to display their powers of argument and also their factual understanding of the period. Rather unexpectedly, it was the significant minority that saw this question as an opportunity to talk about the annulment alone. Most impressively, many students were able to identify a good range of factors behind Wolsey's fall from power and were able to offer the type of precise evidence and in depth support that they struggled to find in response to Question 05. The phrase 'enemies at court' seemed to offer no problems at all to students – almost all referred to this before moving on to argue that other factors were more important. Impressively, quite a number wrote about long term and short-term causes and were able to explain how factors interconnected. It was quite rare for students to embark on a response that consisted of 3 or 4 separate paragraphs isolated from each other and only tied together in a conclusion. The only concern of note here was the tendency of even the better student to descend into a narrative of events, even to the extent of describing Wolsey's final journey. This often detracted from a well argued, judgemental response.

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