



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1050–1087

General Comments

Students' knowledge of actual events still seems limited and it is important to stress yet again that this is a study of a period in depth. Understanding of the period and the part played by important events, as well as aspects of society, are still not being fully grasped. This leads to generalised assertion, which does not gain more than Level 2, especially when expressed in vague and imprecise language which only demonstrates an inadequate grasp of relevant concepts. Judgement is a requirement of questions 02, 04 and 06 and students are expected to show an awareness of the question through the use of relevant material and explicit comment. Links need to be made which may take a variety of forms such as distinction between long and short-term factors or results, themes or the relationship of factors. It is the overall awareness of these and the depth given to explain this that is important. In most answers the 'balance' required for the higher levels will be achieved by comparing material supporting the focus of the question or premise of the quotation, with other factors. Statements are presented to be challenged and conclusions are meant to answer the question, arising naturally from the arguments put forward. Instead, in the conclusion many students summarise what they have already written or even state 'I both agree and disagree with the statement' in contradiction of the purpose for which it was set, which obviously closes off the higher levels.

It is also important to remember that 'Explain why' questions 03 and 05, require a range of reasons, supporting evidence and the identification of some link, order or the ability to demonstrate why one factor is more important than the others in order to reach the higher levels.

Question 1

01 Source comparison questions are there to examine the extent to which the views within the given sources agree or disagree on the topic of the actual question. Students had few difficulties in identifying the basic differences and similarities of view. Those who did not score highly were those who made a summary of each extract and only then identified the relevant points, which was a substantial waste of time. A number also relied on identifying omissions; 'Source A does not mention the point made in Source B.' which is not actually relevant (and there are still those who look for differences of fact or turn the question into one relating to reliability), which is not the purpose of the question. Such a focus is only relevant when explaining the reasons for differences within the views. There were also a number of cases here where students failed to grasp the meaning of the actual question and saw it as an opportunity to test the sufficiency of the content of the sources against their own knowledge. 'Own knowledge' requires students to consider the issue in context, to display an understanding of why sources differ (or are similar) possibly with reference to provenance or type of source and use these in the actual question to possibly explain the reasons for similarity/difference. It is not additional factual information for its own sake. Failure to do this effectively led some students to provide material more suited to the following question. In order to reach the highest levels, they are expected to comment on the degree of similarity/difference between the views in a convincing answer. Lower scoring students were often those who seemed to be misreading and therefore misinterpreting the sources. They also attempted to take points and quotations out of context. Both of these actions appeared in an effort to justify or create non-existent

similarities or differences. Also at this level, which did not rise above Level 2, there was a failure to grasp that the difference could be explained by change through time, even though the dates were given in the sources.

- 02** Most answers were largely limited to the sources which, when not done effectively, limited students to Level 2 as the answers produced remain unconvincing and of insufficient depth. The sources provided arguments and some detail which students needed to extract and build on to provide a balanced view. Basic answers relied on paraphrase and misplaced source references, which was underlined by a lack of secure knowledge. Better answers considered the key words to provide debate, demonstrating a grasp of actual context and the nature of the power of the Marcher lords, as well as the effects of change through time. These answers showed a good level of understanding, providing precisely supported argument, which led convincingly to their chosen view, rather than a summary.

Question 2

As always with questions that relate to the events of 1066, this was the most popular question by a long way.

- 03** The best answers concentrated on the key words and relevant context, providing the linkage between the reasons, which was needed for the highest level. Very few unfortunately fail to do this or rely on an assertion relating to 'the most important reason' without explaining **why** it is more important than the others. A surprising number did not do well on this question and seemed to know very little. There is still also the tendency to stress **how** rather than **why**, which limits students to Level 2 only.
- 04** There was for the most part an attempt to enter a debate and put forward both sides of the argument. Weaker answers provided a list of the students to the throne with few, if any, links to the question. It was surprising that even quite good answers were not strong on the negative aspects of William's claim and seemed to have given this little real thought. It then appeared sufficient to say that it was not strong because he had lots of rivals. Cause and effect is a concept, which is not always sufficiently well grasped. What separated a good answer from the merely average was the degree to which students considered the range of reasons and presented an effective and well-supported debate, rather than just listing points. Such answers were well supported with precise detail and direct reference was made throughout to the key debate in the question, which enabled them to arrive at a secure judgement.

Question 3

There were few takers for question 3 overall.

- 05** This was reasonably well done, although after mentioning William's approach to the papacy in 1066, there seemed to be little that students could write, which rather limited them to low Level 3. Better answers were aware of the context of Gregory VII's attitude and the extent and nature of control William exerted by 1080.
- 06** Weaker answers relied on a description of the reform put in place by William, which failed to rise above Level 2 for the most part. Those who could at least place it in the context of perceptions of the English Church in 1066 did rather better, but the best answers were those which, in addition to this, actually went beyond simply reform and considered William's motives of control and exploitation. There were few of these but they proved very effective.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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