



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2M

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2M

Unit 2M: Life in Nazi Germany, 1933–1945

General Comments

This paper seemed to differentiate reasonably well, proving to be accessible to weaker students whilst offering more able students sufficient opportunity to demonstrate a broad range of knowledge and understanding.

The compulsory Question 1 focused on the war years, which in some previous papers had seemed less thoroughly covered than other aspects of the specification. It is encouraging to note, therefore, that students' depth of knowledge on this period proved to be very good indeed in some schools and colleges, indicating that coverage of the specification was becoming more uniform.

Most students (3:1) chose Question 2 as their optional question. However, there was very little difference in terms of overall range of performance between the two, though Question 05 performed better than Question 03.

There were clear indications that the format of the paper is now well established and no significant rubric infringements were found. Indeed, many students seem to be very well prepared in terms of both technique and the conventions inherent in responding to the questions. It is increasingly rare to find a student who does not use the sources in Question 02, for example, and even rarer to see examples of students who do not at least show awareness of the need to balance responses in Questions 02, 04 and 06.

Question 1

- 01** As in previous papers the recognition of the requirement to identify difference **and** similarity of view continues to improve and an increasing proportion of students reached Level 3.

However, students need to be reminded that the focus of comparison is on the similarity and difference of **viewpoint** expressed in the sources. Commentary, for example, that identifies the sources as similar because they refer to the same event or that they are both from the same time or that they are the same type of source, will not receive credit. This report has commented previously that too many students still feel that it is necessary to discuss reliability or bias in trying to explain difference. This is almost uniformly poorly done and ought, on the whole, to be avoided. Provenance can, of course, be used to explain similarity or difference, but comments need to show greater insight than the simplistic 'this is more reliable because it is from the time'. Students ought also to avoid speculative and unsupported assertions about provenance. For example, too many students in this question assumed that von Karsdorff, the author of Source A, was likely to be a Nazi supporter – because she was of 'high social class' – or that as a young woman she would probably have been a member of the League of German Maidens and so a victim of indoctrination, hence why she retained a sense of 'defiance'.

It is worth continuing to emphasise to students that it is the **quality of explanation**, through own knowledge and, if applicable, provenance, that often will distinguish whether a response is placed in a lower or higher level. In addition, students need to give greater

consideration in their answers to the **degree** of difference and similarity between the sources in order to progress to Level 4. This ought to go further than simple statements that the sources are 'mostly' similar or different.

- 02** Students who did well in this question were able to develop their answers significantly from merely what appeared in the sources. Good answers took their cue from Source C and were able to develop thorough and balanced discussions about the degree of resistance towards the regime which developed in the later years of the war. Many students appreciated the difficulty of assessing 'loyalty' but were able to reach judgement by considering the attitudes to the regime of a range of groups.

Many students were able to identify a range of examples of resisters and some developed interesting and balanced discussions about the degrees and gradations of loyalty that this suggested, whether this be 'genuine' or 'reluctant' loyalty or 'loyalty through fear'.

Students who relied solely on the source content would be extremely unlikely to reach Level 3.

Question 2

- 03** This question proved surprisingly challenging to many students for what seemed a number of reasons. A few seemed not to have covered this at all and wrote about unconnected matters such as policy to the Jews; others had only the vaguest appreciation that it had something to do with the Reichstag Fire and the communists. Some confused it with the Enabling Law or had learned about the 'Emergency Decree' or 'Reichstag Fire Decree' and did not make the connection to the official name of the decree.
- 04** This question was accessible to many students but performance was very variable. It seems for many, as soon as a question on 'consolidation' appears, a whole host of previous 'model' answers emerge from the woodwork and students, anxious to show their full repertoire of knowledge, immediately go into 'list' mode and run through a range of factors with diminishing sense of the focus of the question. Too many students, therefore, ended up with a list of factors but with only basic or limited commentary about the significance of Hitler's action against the SA.

Students were given credit for balancing the SA purge against other factors but the judgement of the quality of their response focused on the strength of their evaluation not just on the number of 'other factors' they might come up with.

Some, for example, concluded that 'terror' was instead the most important factor in the consolidation process but were not able to draw any link between this conclusion and Hitler's action against the SA, whereas the best students recognised change over time and saw that by the early months of 1934 Hitler's priorities were changing.

Question 3

- 05** This question was largely well done and most students chose it because they had been well prepared. Some weaker students, however, seeming to choose the lesser of two evils between Question 2 and Question 3, offered more generalised responses, often focusing on loosely linked 'employment' issues rather than factors linked to co-ordination, indoctrination, control and support.

- 06** Again, performance here was variable. The best, however, showed very good knowledge and understanding, were able to balance the propaganda against the reality and reached some very thoughtful conclusions about the degree to which economic circumstances had improved for a range of groups in Nazi Germany. Others were able to reach very sound reasoned judgements about whether the Nazis fulfilled the pledges they had made, particularly in respect of the promises to eliminate unemployment. Many focused on the manipulation of statistics by the regime and again were able to differentiate between different sectors of the economy. For example, many pointed out the benefits that accrued to those businesses involved in rearmament industries at the expense, for example, of the needs of farmers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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