



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2S

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2S

Unit 2S: Liberal Democracies: Power to the People?

General Comments

This was a small candidature but, nevertheless, a range of responses were produced and the paper proved to be both accessible and an effective discriminator. Students were able to demonstrate very secure knowledge and understanding and, to varying degrees, were able to relate this to the political concepts that were raised by the questions. The extent to which students were aware of the nature of liberal democracy in France after 1789 was a noticeable improvement on previous responses to this topic and it was understood by students that the French experiment was in some respects limited. Almost without exception responses were focused and relevant to the questions set. However, in some cases, students did not always have the depth and range of knowledge to develop a sound understanding as fully as they might have. All students, though, were able to attempt an answer to all of the questions.

Question 1

- 01** All students were able to draw out difference between the sources and the vast majority were able to add similarities to this. Inferences were well made, but selection from the sources to support these was not always as accurate as it might have been. There was at the lower levels a tendency to paraphrase relevant sections. In contrast, higher levels were reached where a secure contextual understanding was used to deploy and structure responses. A number of students pointed to the provenance of the sources to develop their answers, but overall use of own knowledge was limited. Here, students might have made reference to the Articles of Confederation or George Washington and his well-documented attitudes to government at this time.
- 02** Responses were invariably relevant with explicit understanding of the question. Very few failed to add their own knowledge, but, for a small number, there was a great dependency on the sources alone. Sources were understood and used well, but at the lower level, though well selected, such responses were not structured sufficiently to launch a developed answer. At higher levels, there was evidence of very good understanding, an ability to develop from the sources with, for example, by providing details of the problems of the Articles of Confederation.

Question 2

Question 03 and 04 proved to be less popular than 05 and 06. Question 03 provided students with ample scope, and students were duly able to make good use of their knowledge of all aspects of the pre-reformed Parliament and the reasons why this caused agitation. Some answers concentrated on issues such as corruption, unfair distribution of seat and an uneven franchise and were rewarded accordingly. Other answers provided, in addition to this, details of the composition of Parliament which were deployed in a valid and cogent manner. However, exemplification at all levels was not as strong as it might have been and it was this, coupled with limited conclusions and judgements, that restricted access to the very highest marks. Yet only rarely did students drift from the thrust of the question and this was very pleasing to see. Question 04 was dealt with competently, but students, though clearly aware of why reform was passed, did not always develop such explicit understanding by adding sufficient, well-chosen

evidence. The intellectual and philosophical climate, for example, was often restricted to general statements about the Enlightenment, while the role of radicalism was largely ignored and little attention was paid to the working class and middle class organisations that emerged to demand reform. There was good information provided about the political parties, if, again, it was an issue that was not fully explored. At the higher levels, students gained by clearly contrasting the events within Parliament with those outside and by attempting a reasons judgement.

Question 3

Student knowledge and understanding of the French Revolutionary period continues to improve. It was pleasing to see that the responses to both 05 and 06 demonstrated explicit understanding and relevant support. With regard to question 05 at the lower levels, there was a lack of depth and range of such knowledge, but in general students did avoid responses that did little more than list the causes of the French Revolution and did attempt to deal with the crises in France on the eve of the revolution. A very small number of students chose to supplement answers with detail about pre-1789 and this was done to mixed effect. At the higher level, there was good support and structure to such answers and the better responses retained a direct focus on the question. Responses to question 06 did show an awareness of the two sides of the argument, commenting on issues such as limitations to the franchise and the changes in the king's position. However, it was limited support and the ability to sustain a clear structure that, at the lower levels, prevented students from developing answers fully. At the higher levels, students were able to distinguish and exemplify progress toward democracy and otherwise and, encouragingly, some extended their discussion to include issues such as the judiciary and economic change.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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