

**GCE**

**History B**

Advanced GCE **A2 H508**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H108**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2015**

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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## F981, F982 Historical Explanation

This is the first session of the new specification. Examiners have marked papers that demonstrate an excellent understanding of concepts such as cause and consequence, or continuity and change, supported by relevant and accurate knowledge of events and actions, all underpinned by a grasp of contemporary beliefs and ideas. To achieve this within the compass of a 45 minute essay is not easy, but it is a credit to the centres and students who have tackled F981 and F982 that some exhilarating work has been produced.

### **Modes**

Examiners have noted a move away in recent years from the overly prescriptive application of the modes within essays. Rigid plans forcing evidence into ‘causal’ or ‘empathetic’ categories have become less commonplace, and the advice to see a modal structure as a way into a problem rather than a straitjacket has been heeded, with better essays resulting. What this approach is essentially asking students to do is to think about how historical explanations of the French Revolution or Elizabethan foreign policy have been put together and why they have been put together in the way that they have – and the strengths and pitfalls of each approach. The ‘complex judgements’ referred to in Level 1 of the Mark Scheme are a way of asking students to show that they understand the ‘constructed’ nature of the past: that many different ways into a question can be rewarded very highly, just as many different amendments to the given interpretation can be offered in the Documents papers F983 and F984. This is not to say that any answer will do. Good essays need a consistent level of analysis, a degree of judgement about why the given event or policy was important, for example, and the scaffolding of relevant knowledge. The ability to stand back from a question and to plan an answer which can offer a shape or an architecture to a thinking process has always been very well rewarded in these units. One examiner reports: ‘The really good candidates tended to make fewer points, but explained them in great detail, drawing on wide knowledge.’ This is important within the stand-alone context of F981 and F982 but also as a formative step towards the A2 Controversies and Historical Significance units.

### **‘Importance’ questions**

Questions asking about historical importance have featured more prominently in recent years. They have worked well, especially with questions focussed on events. ‘Why was the March on Versailles of October 1789 important?’ (F982 Q5b) is typical. Candidates could and did write profitably about what caused the October Days and some of the longer-term causes and the triggers of the event. But the implicit question of ‘important for whom?’ has also opened up other areas for discussion: in this case the gender issue of the involvement of women in leading and directing the March was relevant; elsewhere importance was germane to individuals such as the Tsar (Q7a) or groups such as Serbs (Q7b) or for entire populations (Q8b). Yet this is not a straightforward causation question in the style of ‘Why was the Schmalkaldic League formed in 1531?’ (Q3b). It also allows consideration of consequence, again long and short-term, so offers candidates a chance to see an event in the round and to offer a judgement about its overall importance. Did the March lead to other events and actions, or did it help change attitudes and beliefs about the monarchy, for example? This train of thought could profitably lead candidates back to consideration of the modes. Importance questions have led to a consistent focus on the term itself at the beginnings and ends of paragraphs, and they have indeed often produced a judgement, thereby opening up Level 2 and Level 1 of the Mark Scheme.

### **Plans**

It is a common characteristic of answers in Level 2 and above that they have a plan which works. This might or might not be evident on the page. This means that there has been some attempt to move through two stages. The first is to select relevant material – which means more

than just writing down some key dates and events but to think about what key issues a good answer to this particular question will need to include. The second is to deploy it, referring back to the key words in the question frequently. Low or disappointing marks are often a consequence of one or both of these stages being missed out. A 'light touch' modal approach to stage one in particular will often allow just such a relevant focus on vital beliefs and values, key events and relevant intentions. Planning effectively saves time and energy, and the same advice will hold for the differing demands of the A2 units of Specification B. An essay needs a shape, an architecture, or it will fall apart.

## **Practicalities**

This session again saw very few rubric infringements, so the good work of centres in explaining how the paper works is appreciated. Examiners do not anticipate that 17 year olds working under intense time pressure will produce faultless prose, but it would be salutary for teachers to point out that we are 'majorly' (very) disappointed to read about 'Liz' (Elizabeth I) or 'NII' (Nicholas II). The role of the 'NA' (National Assembly) in the 'FR' (French Revolution) is appropriate in a plan, not the body of an essay. These are not in themselves 'reasons as to why' (reasons why) marks are lost, but they may help to confirm a 'best fit' judgement about an appropriate level for an essay in the Mark Scheme.

## **F981**

As is customary, answers on the Lancastrians and Yorkists questions were often of high quality because the factual underpinning was secure. This meant that the role of 'Warwick the Kingmaker' could be assessed within the context of his actions and intentions towards Edward IV and Henry VI, for example, without being overwhelmed by the complex train of events during the period. Candidates and centres are again commended for their grasp of the chronology and shape of the 'Wars of the Roses', and the possession of this overview makes the task of analysis and judgement more enriching. The issues of patronage, connection and 'bastard feudalism' were central to each of the four questions on the unit this year, and a clear explanation of these circumstances or states of affairs added depth and quality to students' responses. However, candidates also had to explain how and why these key relationships could falter or turn sour, and this was a key element of questions 2a and 2b. Better responses looked at issues of marriage, title and status but lost nothing by discussing the failures of loyalty in the case of the Duke of Clarence, for example, in very personal terms. The term 'dynastic rivalry' was well grasped in Q1a, allowing responses to set personal hostility between Somerset and York against a larger context of genealogy and succession.

As always, questions on the reign of Elizabeth I were the most popular on the paper and saw the biggest contrasts in quality. Some candidates struggled with Q3a to identify and explain differing values and beliefs; in some cases, responses went little further thematically than obvious religious differences between Elizabeth and Philip and chronologically went no further than 1588. Other areas which might have been fruitfully explored included attitudes to territorial acquisition and to war, with contrasts to be drawn between Elizabeth's innate foreign policy conservatism and Philip's more aggressive and expansionist tendencies; marriage was another area looked at by some candidates, as was the issue of succession and beliefs about lineage and dynasty. It was pleasing to see some responses which discussed change over time in relation to values and beliefs: is it reasonable to expect a fixed mindset, in Elizabeth's case, over forty years? This question allowed responses to go right up to the end of Elizabeth's reign and to glance ahead to that of James. Q3b on the Spanish Armada brought out a detailed knowledge of the situation in the Netherlands and of the raids launched against the Spanish fleet by Drake and others, as well as some quite different views about the importance of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in triggering the Armada. Some candidates argued for a disconnect here, citing evidence for the planning of the Armada already being well advanced by 1587, but certainly a detailed knowledge of the plots against Elizabeth and of the papal excommunication of her helped enrich answers, whatever the line taken. Similarly, the Northern

Rebellion and the Sack of Antwerp might be deemed relevant, but as events ten or twenty years earlier than the Armada some critical assessment of their legacy was needed – and very good candidates could do this.

Q4a proved perplexing to candidates who thought that William Cecil and Lord Burghley were two different people. Some went further and thought that one must have supported Elizabeth's marriage plans and the other must have opposed them. It is a reasonable expectation that students working on a period for a year should understand that some men and women were ennobled and were henceforward often known just by their title, while retaining their family name. Such confusion did not happen with Q1b and Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. Better responses understood something of the subtlety of Cecil's position, in that he did not automatically reject Catholic suitors, for example. His delicate balancing of the national and personal interests allowed candidates to explore Elizabeth's changing attitudes and beliefs regarding marriage and foreign policy, set against the backdrop of England's diplomatic struggles with France and Spain. One examiner reported a profusion of confusion in differentiating 'faction' from 'fraction', and while the occasional slip is quite normal under exam pressure, a repeated error drains confidence in a candidate's understanding of an issue. No quarter was given to notions of a 'Cecil fraction'. Likewise, a few responses confused the Earl of Essex with Robert Dudley, but they were very much a minority. There was some high-level analysis in Q4b which balanced genuine concerns about the nature and direction of the Elizabethan succession on the one hand against selfishness and arrogance on the other, with some excellent understanding of Essex's failures in Ireland thrown in to the mix.

Tariff reform may not be many teachers' choice of favourite topics to teach, but by the evidence of the answers produced this year, they are doing a splendid job nonetheless. Not only was the idea itself defined and discussed with aplomb, but so were the political ramifications for the Conservatives. Q5a therefore produced some first-rate answers which explored the implications of tariff reform for Chamberlain's own career, for Balfour and his party, and for the electorate: the term 'important' went beyond mere cause or consequence to produce an overall judgement on the centrality of this issue for the period. Q5b was more straightforward in terms of typical structure and content, and it was pleasing that some answers ended with a gentle challenge to the idea of a 1906 Liberal landslide, especially when national voting percentages are looked at. Less popular were the questions on Ireland, but those students who did attempt them often knew their onions. Like tariff reform, Home Rule may not seem the easiest topic, especially in terms of its history under Gladstone and the difficulties of explaining who precisely supported and opposed it, to what degree they did so and why. Nevertheless, some fine answers were seen, contrasting the situation in 1912 and on the eve of WW1 against the later spread of nationalist sentiment. There was sometimes a degree of overlap between answers here and responses to the question on the Easter Rising of 1916, but this was perfectly acceptable. Here again, candidates impressed examiners with their focus on how the Rising helped changed attitudes and beliefs among supporters and opponents of nationalism; there is nothing inherently 'too difficult' about Irish history.

This year there were fewer answers to Q7 than in the past. Responses to 7b were often the better of the two: Bevan's motivations and actions were often well explained, as were the positions of the other interest groups such as the British Medical Association. By contrast, points about the Beveridge Report and the attitudes of Churchill and leading Conservatives to the emerging consensus of the 1940s were not well discussed, disappointingly. The Thatcher Revolution, however, produced strongly-argued essays bearing the imprint of some lively discussions in class. Responses showed good knowledge of the immediate context of the Miners' Strike and were able to make effective comparisons with the failings of the previous governments of Heath and Callaghan; less evident was material to assess the importance of the strike for the miners themselves (eg the divisions in their ranks), their industry and the trade union movement as a whole. Equally, the divisions within Tory ranks by 1990 were ably unravelled by a number of candidates, confirming that events which teachers and examiners may regard as relatively (and even frighteningly) recent can be studied by students with detachment. The importance of the poll tax and of debates about Europe loomed large, and some responses explained with gusto the resignations of Lawson and Howe and the implications of these events for Thatcher and her party.

## **F982**

No responses were seen to Questions 1 and 2 on Charlemagne or to Questions 3 and 4 on Luther. I have remarked in previous Reports that French Revolution responses have too often produced descriptive answers to Q5 in particular. This was not the case this year. Rather, coherent and well-focussed essays, for the most part, tried to look at why a National Assembly mattered. The links between the Assembly's creation and subsequent events such as the issuing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen or the discussion of ideas about the nature of a constitutional monarchy were teased out expertly by more able candidates, giving them a chance to flourish by setting one key event against a wider backdrop without the need for scene-setting or descriptive writing. One enterprising response argued that the National Assembly was not important because the French Revolution would have continued anyway due to royal incompetence; what mattered more was the abolition of feudalism, the Declaration and, eventually, the Flight to Varennes. This tight focus was also the hallmark of good answers to Q5b. It mattered that the March was begun and led by women. Beliefs about constitutional monarchy could profitably be discussed here.

Q6 was answered either very well or poorly, with little in between. One candidate applied a loose chronological framework to the story of Paris across these years, moving from the September Massacres and the trial and execution of Louis XVI through the Terror to the Revolutionary Wars and increasing support for Robespierre. By selecting and deploying information carefully, the response avoided narrative and used a glancing reference to each major event or issue as a springboard to look at the social structure of the city or its changing political leadership, for example. The revolt in the Vendee was very well explained in some essays, with valid comparisons made to the urban contexts of protest in Lyon or Toulon. One candidate considered that opposition in the Vendee championed a local belief that the Revolutionary government was about the needs of the few not the many.

Unsurprisingly, most answers on paper F982 came to Qs 7 and 8 on Russia. Stolypin's reform programme was understood and explained by the majority of candidates, but the quality of those explanations varied hugely. A minority of candidates was unable to offer much detail about Stolypin at all, including the date of his assassination. Was this because the question had not come up in the past? Factual knowledge of the Dumas and the political context acted as a necessary scaffolding, allowing paragraphs to move from 'Attempted Explanation' to 'Explanation' and from there to some assessment about the importance of the minister's murder. Judgements varied between those who considered his death a catalyst to revolutionary protest and those who believed the opposite; what mattered was the quality of the evidence supporting the opinion. As ever, answers to Q7a and 7b were weakened by assertions about the nature and degree of peasant support for the Tsar and by lamentations about unspecified famines, food

shortages, strikes and economic backwardness; answers were strengthened by particular references to zemstvos, the Lena Goldfields Massacre or the battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, to name just a few examples. In assessing the length of time to which 'importance' might stretch there are no hard-and-fast rules, so a degree of latitude was granted to paragraphs on the Tsar's abdication as a consequence of Russia's entry into WW1, but not to responses which wanted to turn the question into a pre-prepared answer on the events of 1917. Better answers addressed key terms 'entry' and 'important' and returned to them frequently, assessing the diplomatic and military consequences of the events of August 1914 and avoiding a 'causes of WW1' answer.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was cogently linked to the April Theses and to the Civil War by many candidates answering Q8a. Some were able, in addition, to tease out the differences in policy and intention between Trotsky and Lenin, and some excellent answers settled on the realm of ideas, exploring intentions of spreading Communism to Germany and beyond and setting such ideals against the pragmatic need to defend Petrograd. One response argued that what mattered was the Revolution, not Russia. It used a modal structure of examining beliefs, moved on to the circumstances of Russia losing the war and then argued that Trotsky's intentions were neither to achieve war nor peace. As with War Communism, some discussion of beliefs and attitudes was essential to Level 1 success: just looking at the circumstances and states of affairs surrounding grain requisitioning or the Cheka was not enough to qualify as a 'complex judgement'. One response outlined the notion that War Communism was a trial run for the real thing; another glanced forward to the NEP and talked of a clash between communism and capitalism. Looking at the intentions of the Whites and Greens was pertinent, too, rather than looking solely at the Reds.



## F983, F984 Using historical evidence

### F983

#### General Comments:

It was most pleasing to note that most candidates engaged with the task in (a) questions, showing they understood the need to provide an argument based on evidence inferred from the sources, and to reach a conclusion that could be derived from that evidence. This is a considerable shift from the early years of this specification, showing a growing understanding of the requirements. Part (b) questions remain more challenging for candidates. Most find it difficult to stand back from the content in the sources and focus on evaluation of the sources themselves; their understanding of the concept of historical evidence is under-developed. Consequently (a) questions differentiate better than (b) questions. In (a) candidates are more or less able to identify the key components of the interpretation provided and have greater or lesser ability to understand and use the evidence that can be inferred from the sources to test that interpretation. In (b) too many candidates revert to describing the sources and their content, claiming that the sources are useful for finding out about that content but not useful for investigating other topics. Alternatively they assume 'the historian' knows nothing about the topic and therefore is not in a position to judge how typical a view or piece of evidence is or that historians aim to construct a balanced argument taking account of all points of view. On the whole literary and statistical sources present more problems than prose sources, while the interpretation of cartoons is often weak. One unsuccessful approach is for candidates to complete the analysis of each source by challenging its reliability. This leads to a new interpretation derived wholly from evidence that has been deemed unsatisfactory as the candidate fails to take into account this evaluation of the evidence in reaching a conclusion.

#### Comments on Individual Questions:

##### Question No.

1(a) The meaning of the interpretation was clear and most candidates tested it by establishing what was shown in terms of levels of wealth for different social groups and the extent to which changes could be attributed to the Black Death. Understanding of the sources varied. Most recognised that Source 1 recorded declining Church income. However many assumed that it meant prices were falling. Source 2 was used well, with candidates linking the evidence to the drop in population and its effects on working practices at manorial level, while candidates were able to interpret the statistics in Source 3. Better candidates cross-referenced this evidence with that in Source 5. Sources 4, 6 and 7 proved more challenging. Few candidates read Source 4 carefully or recognised that the wool and cloth listed in Source 6 was exported, or how these exports would affect the English economy. However some suggested that there had been an increase in wealth despite the decline of fleece exports as the increase in manufactured cloth would have increased wealth due to the fact that there was a better profit margin in the sale of cloth than fleece. The evidence derived from Source 7 was variable, with too few recognising the level of wealth required to build this edifice.

1(b) The most common form of evaluation was to challenge the typicality of the wage changes seen in Sources 2 and 3 and of the changes in the value of Church property in Source 1 on the basis that it related to one or two places or one occupation and therefore might not be typical. This is a weak attempt to evaluate, based on the assumption that the historian starts with no knowledge of the context. General comments about the use of statistics and literary texts revealed that their use is poorly understood.

2(a) The meaning of the interpretation was clear. Many added other methods, but better candidates established a relationship between religion and other factors or a pattern in relation to factors such as the level of security of the throne at different times in the Tudor era. The sources presented few problems of comprehension, although there were some errors in establishing when rebellions occurred with consequent inaccurate linkage between sources and rebellions. There was some careless reading or lack of chronological knowledge from those who thought Source 1 was written during the reign of Henry VII or that Source 5 referred to a sixteenth century rebellion. Most candidates used the evidence from the sources to form their argument. However a few were tempted by their extensive knowledge of the rebellions to base their conclusions on additional knowledge. Source 2 coincided with the Pilgrimage of Grace but made no reference to the punishment meted on the leaders or the use of armed force against the rebels, so an argument that depended on this knowledge to claim that armed force was used against rebels was not a valid interpretation of the source.

2(b) Candidates need to focus on 'these sources' rather than the source-types they represent. General answers about Acts of Parliament, speeches and letters are not rewarded above Level 4. More successful are those who employ their knowledge to test reliability or typicality. While Source 1 could reasonably be assumed to flatter Henry VII, those operating beyond this basic point often used knowledge of the treatment of rebels in the various uprisings of Henry's reign to confirm the final sentence. Source 4's promise not to marry if the English thought it would not be of benefit was evaluated against the knowledge that Mary did marry Philip of Spain, who was subsequently blamed for her harsh policies towards Protestants.

3(a) The interpretation proved challenging because few were able to define 'social conditions' accurately. A range of definitions was identified, from those who claimed that constitutional reform aimed to eradicate social distinctions to those who regarded any 'rights' as synonymous with 'social conditions'. Attempts to identify changing focus over time often floundered on issues of definition but could be successful. The sources were mostly understood at a basic level, although there was evidence of careless reading of Source 6 and few understood the references in Source 4. Contextual knowledge was often generalised in that the period was subdivided into eras labelled according to a main characteristic. Where the source did not fit that label.

3(b) There were too many general references to the short-comings of newspapers and memoirs which were undeveloped in relation to the sources provided. Better candidates used their knowledge of Chartism to identify the writer of Source 5 as a 'moral force' Chartist, and hence to judge the typicality of his claims. Claims of the one-sided nature of newspaper reports could be substantiated with reference to the emphases of the report in Source 3.

4(a) 'The gap between rich and poor' was generally understood, based on the assumption that the working class and poverty were synonymous while rich meant upper class. Too many candidates ignored the claim in the interpretation that war was a causal factor. On occasion this led to long discussions of whether or not a source showed a reduction in the gap between rich and poor rather than what had caused it. Weaker candidates often read 'reduced the gap' as 'eliminated the gap', which skewed the argument. Most sources were understood, although Source 3 presented many problems of interpretation while Source 6 was rarely read with sufficient care. This source identified a range of causal factors for the reduction in the status of the rich. However many candidates understood the destruction of houses to refer to bombing during World War II, or assumed that requisitioning during World War II to mean that the poor were permanently re-housed in the country houses. The statistics in Source 7 were poorly used, with few recognising their limitations and too many using only the figures in the boxes while ignoring the general trends shown in the graph.

4(b) Most evaluation was confined to comments about the typicality of one person's view which lacked an awareness that the historian would possess contextual knowledge. Too many candidates work on the assumption that historians need a balanced version of events, or that this is what they seek to produce. They assume too that historians only want to read unbiased accounts. These assumptions prevent useful evaluation of the sources. However candidates who took the line that Source 5 was largely prediction had found a better approach. This was a valid point that most were able to develop with reference to the Blitz spirit or to the post-War labour government's welfare legislation.

## **F984**

### **General Comments:**

It was most pleasing to note that most candidates engaged with the task in (a) questions, showing they understood the need to provide an argument based on evidence inferred from the sources, and to reach a conclusion that could be derived from that evidence. This represents a considerable shift from the early years of this specification, showing a growing understanding of the requirements. In addition it was clear that many candidates understood that sources could be interpreted in different ways rather than simply supporting or challenging an interpretation. Part (b) questions remain more challenging for candidates. Many find it difficult to stand back from the content in the sources and focus on evaluation of the sources themselves; their understanding of the concept of historical evidence is under-developed. Consequently (a) questions differentiate better than (b) questions. In (a) candidates are more or less able to identify the key components of the interpretation provided and have greater or lesser ability to understand and use the evidence that can be inferred from the sources to test that interpretation. In (b) too many candidates revert to describing the sources and their content, claiming that the sources are useful for finding out about that content but not useful for investigating other topics. Alternatively they assume 'the historian' knows nothing about the topic and therefore is not in a position to judge how typical a view or piece of evidence is or that historians aim to construct a balanced argument taking account of all points of view.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### **Question No.**

1(a) The interpretation was generally accessible. Candidates adapted it either by adding other elements or, and this was a better approach, by recognising a relationship between religion and other characteristics of Viking society. Some also established a pattern of change over time. Problems arose for those who failed to recognise that there were two different religions involved with very different values. This led some to claim that warlike Vikings could not be religious because people who are religious are characterised by peaceful behaviour. Candidates who identified death in battle as the key to entry to Valhalla were more successful in establishing not only the extent to which Viking culture was religious but also the depth of religious conviction. For example, Source 1 was generally not well used; although candidates could establish the tone of the source, they did not recognise that this behaviour might be indicative of pagan values.

The sources were generally understood at least at a basic level. Those who read more carefully interpreted the evidence in more subtle and sophisticated ways. The juxtaposition of toasts to Christ and St Michael with the plans to invade Norway and rape and murder named individuals led better candidates to debate the extent of Viking religiosity. Equally the extent to which Christianity was embraced was discussed in relation to Rollo's motives, the forcible conversions described and the reversion to paganism.

1(b) Most candidates knew what was required by the mark scheme in terms of evaluation of sources and discussion of the purpose of the historian. They were knowledgeable about the source-types, giving them a good basis for reaching at least level 3. Where they did not do so it was because their knowledge was not applied sufficiently to the specific sources in the question. It was claimed that the description of King Olaf's exploits in Source 5 was exaggerated because the source was a saga, without any explanation of why these particular feats of athleticism would have been mentioned. Many candidates find it difficult to recognise that an object such as Source 2 can be interpreted in different ways, or may have changed its use over time.

2(a) The interpretation was accessible and understood by the candidates. They either added other factors identified in the sources that characterised the Renaissance or, better, they established a pattern of change over time or of the relationship between religion and other characteristic features. There was much evidence of sophisticated use of knowledge to identify the Renaissance ideas and values demonstrated, such as Neo-Platonism, the use of perspective and scientific enquiry. The sources were largely accessible and most candidates could recognise where religion was mentioned, although establishing whether or not religion was fundamental to the Renaissance was more challenging. The role of religion in Source 5, for example, was more sophisticated than in the paintings described in Source 1 or in Source 4. However, those who could apply their knowledge recognised the difference between the Church's control of subject matter in art and the artist's contribution in determining elements of the style such as perspective in Source 1 and the brain-shaped drapery in Source 4.

2(b) Candidates generally found evaluation of the sources challenging despite displaying excellent subject knowledge that could have aided them in this task. The typicality of Savonarola's view was questioned, but opportunities were often missed because of a mechanical approach in which evaluative methods appropriate to individual sources were not applied.

3(a) Candidates were able to discuss the role of hostility to other countries and its role in driving nationalism as well as to identify other factors. Most were able to construct convincing new interpretations either adding factors or differentiating between how this hostility manifested itself differently in Italy and Germany. The sources were challenging, but generally well-used. Source 5 was sometimes misunderstood as a view only from Hanover. Change over time was often identified, noting the aspirational tone of the early sources compared with the practicalities of post-unification German government policy. Candidates often recognised and made use of the different roles of France in relation to Italy and Germany, and in doing so cross-referenced sources successfully.

3(b) Candidates discussed the typicality of Source 3's views, given its authorship and of Source 4 given how short-lived the Roman Republic was. Many of them used the interpretation provided for 3(a) as a starting point for identifying questions that the sources could be used to answer. It was also noticeable that candidates suggested sources from previous papers as useful additions to the set.

4(a) 'Mass participation' was variously defined, which was expected and acceptable. However those who took it to mean that anyone who advanced African American civil rights, whether as part of a group or as an individual, constituted part of the mass, struggled to challenge or alter the interpretation. Those who failed to define it also struggled to produce a coherent argument. Source 1 proved difficult, but the other sources were more accessible and led to debate about the relative importance of presidents, Civil Rights leaders and the mass of civil rights participants. Many candidates compared the two visual sources on the basis that they showed Caucasian Americans subverting civil rights. Those who claimed that Source 5 showed mass participation based this inference on knowledge rather than the source and were straying into a common fault, that of using knowledge rather than the sources to test and amend the interpretation. This was also true of sources concerning Martin Luther King and Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The letter to Kennedy, for example, served as a launch pad for a long description of Kennedy's stance or of King's role.

4(b) Answers were often generic, making claims about the reliability, typicality and purpose of sources that remained unsubstantiated. There was a tendency to list missing information as though it is intrinsically important. Candidates listed as 'missing' other African American groups, leaders and events or unrelated topics such as Native or Mexican Americans. This could not score highly unless the candidate explained why Part (b) is not an invitation to list everything that the candidate has been taught that does not appear in the paper. Nor is an invitation to list all the other kinds of sources that might have been included but were not.

## F985, Historical controversies

### General Comments:

The size of the entry and the overall quality of candidates' responses remained about the same as in previous years although this British option remains much less popular than the non-British one. Examiners continued to be impressed with the confidence and skill with which many candidates tackled challenging extracts and questions. This specification has clearly demonstrated that candidates at this level can engage with historiographical issues. The belief that this specification began with, that candidates should have some understanding of the nature of the subject they are studying, remains as valid as ever. There were no candidates for the Norman Conquest option while the other three options were equally represented.

The best answers to part (a) were often amongst the shortest and were based on careful consideration of the extract. It was clear the candidates responsible for these answers had reached their conclusions about the main interpretation of the extract before they set pen to paper. This meant they could begin their answers with a brief and accurate summary of the interpretation because they knew what their answer was going to be before they started writing it - always a good strategy.

They then proceeded to use key parts of the extract to explain how they had extracted the interpretation from it. This is a key part of the answers as examiners are looking for how well candidates can justify their claims about the interpretation. This can sometimes be done by a well-chosen quotation although candidates should be careful not to leave quotations to do all the work. Candidates own explanations based closely on the extract often do the job more effectively.

These candidates avoided the error of claiming that the extracts contain many different interpretations. For example, two key points are made in the Imperialism extract - that decisions about decolonisation were made in the metropole and that international pressures had a crucial role. These are not two separate points. They are part of the same overall interpretation of the historian as are all the subsidiary points such as the election of a Labour government or the importance of the Cold War.

Candidates who adopted a paragraph-by-paragraph approach often claimed to have discovered several interpretations and even more approaches. They tended to produce long answers lacking in coherence and often failed to identify the main interpretation. The best answers also avoided the mistake made by some candidates of recognising an interpretation or approach in the extract and then writing down everything they knew about the interpretation or approach. While they did this, the extract quickly disappeared from view, sometimes never to return. It is important that candidates understand that their knowledge of the topic and the historiography are important in enabling them to understand, analyse and explain the extract but it is not necessary to put it all in the answer. Every point made in answers needs to be related to the extract.

The best answers often turned to approaches and methods after they had firmly established the nature of the main interpretation although the very best candidates were able to mix them seamlessly and effectively. Candidates should try and identify, at most, two or three approaches and methods. They should also try to explain the main approach of the extract e.g. in the Holocaust extract it is functionalism. It is counterproductive to try and force every approach and method they have learned onto the extract. Neither is it a good idea to approach this part of their answers too mechanically. Each of the extracts is unique. Some will contain more evidence of approaches but others might contain more about methods.

Some candidates are still unclear about the distinction between approaches and methods. An approach represents the types of questions historians ask themselves about the topic. They might lead them to focus on a 'from below' approach or an intentionalist approach. Methods include the ways in which the historian carries out the approach e.g. use of oral history, court records or case studies. These methods could be used in many different approaches.

In response to part (b) the best answers focused, in the first instance, on the named approach rather than on the interpretations of historians who have used that approach. These interpretations were brought into answers to exemplify advantages or disadvantages of the approach and not for their own sake. Candidates need to be able to generalise about the named approach in terms of how it has added to our understanding of the topic. They can then briefly refer to the findings of particular historians to explain this further. They also need to be able to use the work of historians in a similar way to explain possible shortcomings of the approach.

Candidates need to be careful when explaining disadvantages of the named approach. Some candidates this year dismissed approaches if they appeared to produce interpretations they disagreed with or if they thought they only covered only some aspects of the topic e.g. it was claimed by some that a focus on 'new imperialism' would leave out ideas such as gentlemanly capitalism or informal empire.

The best answers focused on an evaluation of the named approach and never lost sight of this. If they mentioned particular historians and interpretations, it was to illustrate general points they were making about the approach. Less good answers drifted away from the approach into long meandering surveys of every historian and interpretation they could think of. Some answers on part (b) ran to 16 pages when some careful thought and planning would have produced more concise and focused answers a quarter of that length.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### **Question 1 The Debate over the Impact of the Norman Conquest, 1066-1216**

No candidates attempted this question.

#### **Question 2 The debate over Britain's 17th Century Crises, 1629-89**

In part (a) an encouraging number of candidates were able to explain the Court-Country nature of the argument and the claim that the opposition to Charles was essentially conservative in nature. Many also focused on the argument that the actions of Charles and his courtiers unified the opposition although this unity was only a surface one. It was good to see some of the candidates using these aspects to form a clear and holistic reading of the extract. Approaches mentioned included 'from below', Court-Country and anglo-centric. In part (b) good knowledge and understanding of the 'Three Kingdoms' approach was demonstrated and there were some particularly good explanations of both its advantages and shortcomings.

#### **Question 3 Different Interpretations of British Imperialism c.1850-c.1950**

There were few very poor or very good answers. In part (a) many candidates were able to identify key aspects of the extract including the importance of decision making in the metropole, the Cold War, the need for international respectability, the Labour government and pressure from the periphery. However, far fewer candidates were able to put these into one clear interpretation. Many candidates saw these as four or five separate interpretations and some over emphasised the importance of the periphery. Many were able to identify and explain a focus on the metropole as an approach and some tentatively suggested that a structuralist approach could be discerned. In part (b) there were a number of candidates who knew about 'new imperialism' but struggled to focus on the advantages and disadvantages of its use as an analytical tool for studying British Imperialism. They tended to describe it and the work of a range of historians rather than evaluate it as an approach.

**Question 4 The debate over British Appeasement in the 1930s**

Many candidates identified key aspects such as the continuity of British policy towards Eastern Europe, the fact that Chamberlain was wrong to think time was on his side and that Britain might have been better off going to war in 1938, the poor advice he was being given the misperceptions these led to and the importance of France to British policy. A number successfully forged these into a holistic reading of the extract. In part (b) many candidates knew a lot about the role of public opinion in Britain at the time and were able to explain some valid advantages and shortcomings of focusing on it. However, a number of answers contained a lot of description rather than evaluation.



## F986, Historical controversies

### General Comments:

The size of the entry and the overall quality of candidates' responses remained about the same as in previous years although this non-British option of Controversies remain much more popular than the British option. Examiners continued to be impressed with the confidence and skill with which many candidates tackle challenging extracts and questions. This specification has clearly demonstrated that candidates at this level can engage with historiographical issues. The belief that this specification began with, that candidates should have some understanding of the nature of the subject they are studying, remains as valid as ever. Witch-hunting and the Holocaust remain the most popular options with only a few centres entering candidates for the Crusades and the American West.

The best answers to part (a) were often amongst the shortest and were based on careful consideration of the extract. It was clear the candidates responsible for these answers had reached their conclusions about the main interpretation of the extract before they set pen to paper. This meant they could begin their answers with a brief and accurate summary of the interpretation because they knew what their answer was going to be before they started writing it - always a good strategy.

They then proceeded to use key parts of the extract to explain how they had extracted the interpretation from it. This is a key part of the answers as examiners are looking for how well candidates can justify their claims about the interpretation. This can sometimes be done by a well- chosen quotation although candidates should be careful not to leave quotations to do all the work. Candidates own explanations based closely on the extract often do the job more effectively.

These candidates avoided the error of claiming that the extracts contain many different interpretations. For example, two key points are made in the Holocaust extract - that in December 1941 policy towards the Jews changed from deportation to extermination and became the main policy of the war, and that Hitler used the extermination plan to turn the impending disaster of the two-front war into a German triumph defending civilization. These are not two separate points. They are part of the same overall interpretation of the historian as are all the subsidiary points such as the setback against the Soviet Union or the work of Himmler.

Candidates who adopted a paragraph-by-paragraph approach often claimed to have discovered several interpretations and even more approaches. They tended to produce long answers lacking in coherence and often failed to identify the main interpretation. The best answers also avoided the mistake made by some candidates of recognising an interpretation or approach in the extract and then writing down everything they knew about the interpretation or approach. While they did this, the extract quickly disappeared from view, sometimes never to return. It is important that candidates understand that their knowledge of the topic and the historiography are important in enabling them to understand, analyse and explain the extract but it is not necessary to put it all in the answer. Every point made in answers needs to be related to the extract.

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Candidates need to be careful when explaining disadvantages of the named approach. Some candidates this year dismissed approaches if they appeared to produce interpretations they disagreed with or appeared to cover only some aspects of the topic e.g. a focus on the role of secular authorities was often criticised because it tells us nothing about the role of religion in witch-hunting, when in fact a focus on secular authorities might raise all kinds of issues about religion.

The best answers focused on an evaluation of the named approach and never lost sight of this. If they mentioned particular historians and interpretations, it was to illustrate general points they were making about the approach. Less good answers drifted away from the approach into long meandering surveys of every historian and interpretation they could think of. Some answers on part (b) ran to 16 pages when some careful thought and planning would have produced more concise and focused answers a quarter of that length.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### **Question 1 Different approaches to the Crusades 1095-1272**

The main interpretation in this extract is that the first two Crusades were not part of any crusading movement and were part of an older process. They only appeared to be part of a movement when that movement existed after 1187. An encouraging number of candidates understood this although not all of them were able to explain it clearly. Some got side-tracked into discussing whether the extract reflected the traditionalist approach to the crusades. Most were able to explain about the use of contemporary accounts. In part (b) there were many convincing explanations of the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on economic issues.

#### **Question 2 Different Interpretations of Witch-hunting in Early Modern Europe c.1560-c.1660**

This extract argues that the historian's task is to understand the past in its own terms. If we do this then witch-hunting, and a belief in witches, has to be accepted as a form of knowledge that was embedded in the culture of the time - a world of magic. The author also argues that this was a local and popular culture and not one imposed from above. The extract contains many ideas that support these main points e.g. that magic and maleficium were two sides of the same coin. Many candidates understood the main aspects of the extract but some found it hard to put them together into a coherent reading. Many sensibly explained the extract as one based on a history from 'below approach'. In part (b) many candidates focused just on secular courts and thus ignoring other secular authorities. However, there were many well informed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the approach.

### **Question 3 Different American Wests 1840-1900**

A holistic reading of this extract need to start with the author's criticism of Turner's frontiers and the way in which his approach excluded women. The extract goes on to explain how a different approach can reveal the agency and importance of women in the West, and the different experiences of different groups of women. There was a wide range of different types of answers to part (b) with different approaches to co-operation, kinship groups and communities being used. Many were valid although some were rather unconvincing.

### **Question 4 Debates about the Holocaust**

The author of this extract argues that in December 1941 policy towards the Jews changed from deportation to extermination and became the main policy of the war, and that Hitler used the extermination plan to turn the impending disaster of the two-front war into a German triumph defending civilization. The extract also includes many minor but supporting points. Many candidates understood many of the key points but only the best were able to use them to produce an holistic reading of the extract. In part (b) some candidates used the question as an excuse to describe the Browning-Goldhagen debate, but there were also some thoughtful answers that carefully explained advantages and disadvantages of the approach.

## F987 Coursework

### 1 General comments:

- The coursework component continues to offer candidates a valuable historical experience, and to allow them to demonstrate techniques and understanding gathered in the three taught modules.

### 2 Presentation of studies:

- It would be very helpful if centres would ensure that the tick boxes at the foot of Front Sheets are completed fully and that all of the accompanying items are included in the script package – i.e. the Mark Sheet (MS1), the Record of programme of Study (ROPOS) and the Coursework Authentication Form (CAF). The ROPOS is particularly important, as it allows us to check compliance with the rule that there can be no overlap between the content covered in the coursework and that of other taught units
- It is equally important to include **candidates' numbers** as well as their names, for the purpose of sampling work for moderation
- The word limit was well observed – though a few candidates continue to use footnotes, to make either points of argument or evaluations of sources.

### 3 Titles:

- There were generally fewer 'causal' titles than in previous years (see also below under 'AO1')
- However, there is a continuing tendency to propose topics dealing with contemporary popular culture. These tend not to work, usually because there is insufficient time span to make a judgment about significance over time.
- Uncommon titles that worked well this year assessed the significance of e.g. The Easter Rising, The Spanish Institute for Psychological Research and William Morgan's Welsh Bible. Why no-one has yet offered the Battle of Culloden remains a mystery.

### 4 Marking:

- Marking was very accurate on the whole and rarely fell outside of the Nationally Agreed Standard
- In margin annotation, it is better to describe what candidate has done, rather than using e.g. 'AO2b/L4'. This is particularly true of the early sections of a study, where the practice can lead to the premature awarding of levels.
- There is a continuing tendency to inflate marks given under AO1, when significance 'over time' is insufficiently developed. This is particularly true in approaches based on 'resonance', where simple references to modern commemoration, such as "Scott's statue still stands...." or "the Gunpowder Plot is still remembered..." are not enough to establish significance over time. Issues such as whether Scott *deserves* a statue, or whether the Gunpowder Plot *deserves* to be remembered in the way that it is, need also to be addressed.
- There is a similar tendency to inflate marks given for demonstration of techniques related to AO2a – in particular for the evaluation of sources. For example, the quality and relevance of attempts at evaluation should be considered as well as their mere occurrence; similarly, a candidate's critical use of sources over the study as a whole should be considered – rather than an isolated success.

**5 AO1:**

- The basic requirement of AO1 narratives is that they should lead to a judgment about **significance**. It is not uncommon, however, for studies to lead to judgments that are either not about significance at all, or are concerned with the significance of something other than what appears in the title. For example, endless arguments about whether e.g. Stalin or Richard III etc. was a good or bad man are not necessarily addressing their *historical significance*.
- Significance, be it 'at the time' or 'over time' is about *impact*, or *consequence* - and in most cases, impact over a considerable span of time (expressed in terms of trends, turning points, 'false dawns' etc.). It is not a requirement of an AO1 narrative to explain the *cause* of something. For example, the question; 'How significant was Hitler in the Nazis rise to power?' is not actually about significance at all, but about *importance* – in this case, the importance of this, against that of other factors, in bringing about the Nazi triumph of 1933.
- Several centres clearly make use of published criteria for determining significance. Whilst these are fine in themselves, slavish adherence to such can cause candidates to lose track of the only criteria that actually matter – the ones enunciated through the level descriptors of the mark scheme.

**6 AO2:**

- The single most debilitating factor in candidates' use of source material is the use of the internet. Whilst this is better than nothing – and, indeed, does allow work including such material to be rewarded up to Level 2, the fact that it can be difficult to attach authors to sources means that it is difficult to make critical use of the sources themselves, be they primary or secondary – hence effectively closing off levels 3-5 on AO2. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule (in the form of websites that are fully and impressively accredited). However, one suspects that, in most cases, the use of websites is simply a matter of convenience. There really is no substitute for the 'big books'.
- The use of 'ad hominem' remarks as a form of source evaluation is still too common. Of course, this is not an invalid approach; but when used to excess it has the effect of interrupting the flow of an argument or narrative. Approaches based on cross-and/or counter-reference tend to be more elegant and could be inserted to enhance the texture of the argument can be used to vary the approach. Neither approach (nor any other) should be used for its own sake; it must be focused on the title and used to advance a claim about significance.
- There remains some confusion over the use of secondary sources. When these are used as evidence to support or contradict a claim, they are governed by AO2a; when they are used to represent a particular view of the past (conservative, radical, revisionist, intentionalist, functionalist etc.) they are governed by AO2b.

**7 Footnotes and bibliographies:**

- Use of footnotes was generally improved, and it was good to see far more candidates than in previous years including page references in footnoted items.
- The most useful advice for improving the actual *mechanism* of the footnote reference is to encourage candidates, as often as possible, to insert the *author's name* into the main text, rather than relying only on the superscripted link. This makes it easier for them to make cross-and counter- references, as well allowing them to take account of the context and purpose of the author when weighing the value of the evidence contained in a source.

**8 Research Diaries:**

- It was interesting to note that some candidates have adopted the practice of placing the Diary *before* the Study in the package. This has the advantage of offering both teacher and moderator a preview of the main study, allowing them to trace each candidate's 'journey' through the whole coursework experience 'in the order in which it happened'.
- In one outstanding study dealing with a little known facet of the Spanish Civil War, the candidate made contact with several current historians of the topic. As a consequence, she acquired material that would have been otherwise impossible to track down. The outcome was a study that was close to the leading edge of current research in the field. All of this was meticulously recorded in her diary – which was almost as interesting to read as the study itself!
- In some cases, and for unaccountable reasons, the quality of source evaluation – in particular for utility – was better than critical use of the same sources in the finished Study.

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