

A Level History: Independent Investigation (Units 2592 & 2593)

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE OF TEACHERS

SECTION A: Rationale

Independent Investigations allow candidates the opportunity to investigate an historical problem of their choice. In the process, they will encounter and interpret primary sources and/or different historical interpretations of their chosen subject. At the end they will formulate a concise, coherent, analytical and evaluative answer to the question they set themselves. The Independent Investigation thus offers students the chance for far greater initiative and independence than is possible in traditional examinations. It can be based on readily-available books. There is no expectation that candidates will conduct original research and/or that very specialised works need to be used.

SECTION B: Organisation & Administration

See also the Specification and section 6 of both volumes of Teacher Support Notes.

Appendix

There should be no appendix unless it is essential to give the text of a lengthy document or a set of illustrations or sets of statistics that will require frequent evaluation. An appendix is not a device for circumventing the word limit.

Bibliography

A bibliography identifying each article, book, interview, TV programme, website or other source used is required, set out alphabetically by author, eg.
M Greengrass, *The European Reformation c.1500-1618* (Longman, 1998)
H Oberman, *The Reformation, Roots & Ramifications* (T & T Clark, 1994)
B Scribner, 'Witchcraft & Judgement in Reformation Germany', *History Today*
April 1990

If a website is used, its address and origin should be given, eg:
Luther's Musical Reforms (<http://classicalmus.hispeed.com/articles/luther/html>)
[Carolina Classical Connection, University of South Carolina]

If primary sources have been used, the bibliography should be sub-divided:

A Primary Sources

Coventry Record Office, MS A6 Corpus Christi Guild Register
E G Rupp & B Drewery, *Luther* (Documents of Modern History, Arnold, 1970)

B Secondary Sources

(as indicated above)

Bibliographies should be slightly longer than the range of sources used in footnotes. This reflects the fact that most but not necessarily all secondary works used in researching the topic have been actively used in its production.

Board-set questions

While the ten specified topic areas remain constant, a fresh set of ten questions are published (one year ahead) for each academic year. Board-set questions from previous years may still be used for 2592. For 2593, however, only the current year's questions may be used. While each has to be 'customised' to the period of the candidate's choice, the question itself may **not** be altered.

Candidate choice of subject

While the objective is for every candidate to have a free choice of subject, that freedom may be limited because not every topic

- is a problem-centred historical issue;
- has a range of suitable books and/or source material easily available;
- lends itself to meeting the assessment objectives (especially AO2).

Centres may wish to encourage candidates to pick subjects well-served by their own library, local public library and (if nearby) university library or record office. The Board thus allows more than one candidate to tackle the same question, but OCR hopes that the latter will happen only when absolutely necessary.

Within one centre, some might use Board-set questions while others propose their own questions for 2592 and yet others take the 2593 Open Book exam.

Inter-disciplinary Investigations (eg. art history) must be rooted in History.

Biographical studies must similarly set their subject in his/her historical context.

Coursework forms

There are two:

- Question Proposal Forms [GCW088/QPF2592]
- Coursework Cover Sheet [GCW087/CCS2592]

Use of the first is optional while use of the latter is essential. Masters are in Appendix C of the 2nd edition (2002) of the specification. Stocks are also sent every April with the 2592/3 examiner address label and attendance register.

Footnotes

2592: Candidates must quote from the sources and/or interpretations they are required to evaluate. These must be acknowledged in traditional style, eg.

- 1 Dickens, *The German Reformation and Martin Luther*, p.73
- 2 Dickens, *Reformation & Society in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, p.80
- 3 Luther, letter to Johann von Staupitz, 30 May 1518, quoted in Dickens, *The German Reformation*, p.55. [ie when referring to a source gleaned from another book, the student should indicate the 'primary' reference first, followed by 'in' & the 'secondary' reference].

If the same footnoted source needs to be repeated, students should make use of 'ibid', followed by the new page reference.

Footnotes may be put at the bottom of each page or together at the end.

They must not be turned into mini-essays within which part of the argument of the Investigation is conducted. Footnotes are not a vehicle to subvert the word limit.

2593: Footnotes are not required, but candidates may use them if they wish.

Forecasting grades

Teachers need to read Investigations to forecast grades. This may only be done after they have been handed in by the candidates, so centres need to set their own internal submission deadline, ahead of OCR's 15 May deadline.

Guidance given by teachers to candidates

Candidates research and write their Independent Investigation on their own (hence its name): as the cover sheet declaration states, 'the work submitted is that of the candidate concerned.' However, there are areas in which guidance should very properly be given. Teachers have a vital role to play by:

- (a) advising their candidates as they select a suitable topic and then narrow it to a precise question that is problem-centred and lends itself to meeting the assessment objectives. The teacher's help is irreplaceable here.
- (b) encouraging use of proposal forms, prepared with thought and properly filled in. Forms are optional, but they offer the chance for constructive feedback from a senior examiner.
- (c) offering on-going advice on possible sources of ideas and information;
- (d) discussing the techniques of research and writing, with special reference to 'problem-centred' history and to the assessment objectives.
- (e) encouraging candidates to think critically about their developing work through a one-to-one tutorial system. Examples of appropriate essay structures may be found in Teacher Support Notes vol 2 section 6.

Inadmissible guidance (2592 & 2593)

Once candidates have framed their question, teachers must **not** read anything a candidate writes. Commenting on or marking candidates' notes or drafts infringe the inter-Board regulations. Only when an Investigation has been handed in may it be read – to forecast the grade.

Historical period permissible

No Investigation may examine anything before 768AD. There are no restrictions on contemporary history, but candidates must understand that a sufficient range of suitable sources and/or serious works may not be available.

Length

2592: Investigations should be about 2500 words, excluding only the compulsory footnotes and the bibliography (NB extracts quoted from sources or historians do count). The maximum is 3000 words, beyond which an examiner will not read.

2593: The only limit is the length of the exam.

Open Book exam (Unit 2593)

Candidates may only answer one of the current year's Board-set questions.

While such a question has to be 'customised' to the period or country or personality of each candidate's choice, the question itself may **not** be altered.

Ahead of the exam, candidates should: organise the materials they need to use; plan the essay they will write; pre-prepare their bibliography to take into the exam and attach to their script with a tag (the bibliography may be typed).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a candidate, intentionally or unintentionally, passes off the words of someone else as his/her own. All quotations must be acknowledged by quotation marks and a footnote. Plagiarism is a serious offence. All cases are automatically referred to OCR's Malpractice Committee.

Presentation of a 2592 Investigation

Each investigations must:

- be prefaced by a cover sheet, properly filled in;
- be submitted in a soft folder or have its pages stapled. Separate plastic pockets for each page must **not** be used. A pile of loose pages is equally unacceptable.
- have wide left and right margins;
- if word-processed or typed, be double spaced;

If used, the proposal form with the Assessor's advice should be attached.

Proposal forms

The Board does **not** approve titles, but candidates may seek advice from a senior examiner. A master of the proposal form is in Appendix C of the 2nd edition (2002) of the specification; a stock is also sent with the 2592 &/or 2593 examiner address label and attendance register each April.

Centres are encouraged to use this voluntary advice service. If the same question is to be used by more than one candidate, there is no need to submit it several times over. Forms may be used for Board-set and candidate-chosen questions alike.

Provisional entries for coursework (2592 & 2593)

Examiner address labels have to be prepared before final entries. It is therefore essential that exams officers make provisional entries. If provisional entries are not made, there will be no despatch of the necessary materials to those centres.

Question titles at the top of Investigations

Candidates must head the first page of their Investigation with their title, even if they are using a Board-set question (in which case they must also indicate in their introduction the period or personality or country they are applying it to).

Report

Reports on individual centres are allowed only for teacher-marked coursework. The Chief Examiner's Report, however, always offers specific feedback on 2592 and 2593 each summer. Centres are urged to digest the advice offered there.

Retakes (2592 only)

Candidates retaking A Level may submit a 2592 essay on the same topic they investigated the previous year, but retake candidates tend to do better if, at least in part, their coursework investigates a fresh angle or dimension within that topic.

Return of coursework

History has examiner-marked coursework so, like exam scripts, any wanted back must be requested by the deadline via exams officers on the appropriate form.

Time allocated to coursework

Coursework makes up one-third of the A2 so centres should make available to their candidates a suitable proportion of the formal class and prep time allowed to A2 History (as each AS element was given its due share).

Timetable

- Optional submission of proposal forms to the Board: at any time **before 31 January** in the year the Investigation is to be presented for examination. Forms sent in after that date will be returned without feed-back.
- OCR despatches to exams officers the examiner address label, attendance register & cover sheets: **April**.
- Centres post 2592 Investigations to examiners: **by 15 May**.
- Centres hold the 2593 Open Book Exam on a convenient day **within the published specified period** and send the scripts to their examiner immediately afterwards (for the specified period, see the published summer timetable or the current year's list of Board-set titles).

SECTION C: The Investigation

The nature of the task

- The task students undertake should be **an evidence-led investigation**. This is why almost half of the assessment weighting attaches to their ability to make critical use of sources and/or interpretations in constructing their argument.
- **The Investigation has to be problem-centred** – ie it must pose a valid historical question and proceed to answer that question by means of an argument. That argument is likely to be either evaluative or causal.

Not every historical topic will thus lead to an effective Investigation.

The importance of the question

The quality of a study tends to be determined more than anything else by the quality of its question.

- An Investigation should be 'medium-sized'. This does not necessarily mean that it should be of limited chronological span, but rather that the outcome, in the form of a valid argument, should be capable of being fitted into the word limit. Huge topics like "*How successful was Elizabeth I as Queen of England?*" should be avoided and more specific topics like "*To what extent was Worcester a 'Faithful City' in the run up to and during the battle of Worcester?*" (notice the specified time period) or "*How far does Captain Scott deserve his heroic reputation?*" should be encouraged.
- Given the requirement to make critical use of primary and/or secondary sources and/or interpretations, students should consider choosing a topic that has attracted historical debate. This is not to say that the topic should be 'well known' in a more general sense, but simply that competing sources and/or interpretations should be readily accessible.
- There can be no rules governing the wording of questions. However, those phrased "To what extent...?" or "How far...?" encourage an evaluative argument (whereas 'What...?' or 'How...?' tend to encourage narratives and 'Why...?' to produce lists.). Questions requiring a causal explanation tend to work better when they contain a proposition: "*How far would you agree that*

the main reason that women were given the vote in 1918 was in recognition of their contribution to the war effort? By proposing a 'main reason', the student is reminding him/herself, in effect, of the need to assess the importance of this factor in relation to that of other factors in explaining why (some) women were given the vote in 1918.

The use of source material

Candidates need to make 'critical use of source material'. This may be defined by one or more of the following characteristics:

- Where primary and/or secondary sources are used, the evidence taken or inferred from them is used to shape the argument in some way. Where quoted extracts are used simply to illustrate points made in the text, they are not being used critically and cannot be rewarded as such. In other words, evidence taken from sources has to do some work; it has to contribute to the outcome of the investigation.
- In order to satisfy the higher levels of the mark scheme, 'critical use' of sources has to involve an element of interpretation and/or evaluation.
- In the case of **primary sources**, the need for interpretation is based on the notion that historical sources do not speak for themselves; they have to be assigned meaning and status as evidence. This might mean, at its simplest level, drawing an inference from the source or going beyond its 'face value' in some way (not to be confused with paraphrase which simply expresses the 'face-value' statement in a different way). Beyond this, students might cross-reference sources for agreement or disagreement, thus strengthening or weakening the weight of evidence the source(s) will bear. Above all, interpretation needs to be in context, that is, where the meaning or value of a source is seen to be dependent on factors such as the kind of source it is, its provenance, its typicality and the circumstances of its production, etc.
- This leads naturally to the process of evaluation, where the student asks questions about the reliability and/or usefulness of sources. Questions about reliability are concerned with the amount of trust we can place in the truth or accuracy of a source. They therefore tend to focus on the author of the source and on factors that might cause this person, wittingly or unwittingly, to produce dependable or misleading information. Questions about usefulness are concerned with the practical strengths/limitations of a source in providing evidence for a particular enquiry. The first question, therefore, should always be, 'useful for what?' followed by eg: 'what is included?', 'what is left out?', 'how typical?', 'what other evidence do I need?', etc.
- Similar techniques can characterise students' 'critical use' of **secondary sources**. As with primary sources, students need to go beyond an illustrative use of quotation, or the unqualified listing of different historians' views (which in itself adds nothing). There has to be an element of interpretation or evaluation for the higher levels to be reached.
- The most obvious method of interpreting a secondary source is to analyse its content for relevance to a particular line of enquiry. This may lead to comparison of views in the source with the views of other historians in which similarities or differences are discussed. This, in turn, might involve consideration of the purpose or perspective of each historian, or the circumstances in which he/she was working. In other words, students should attempt, where possible, to interpret secondary sources in context.

- Consideration of the perspectives/circumstances of different historians can lead naturally to evaluation of their work as evidence for a particular enquiry. This approach can work well when the student 'knows' his/her historian or the context in which he/she worked. However, it can also lead to simplistic assertions of bias, showing little understanding of the way historians work. A much safer and more valid method of evaluating historical interpretations is to test them against evidence from available primary sources.
- A common fault in studies is 'mechanical evaluation'. This is where each quoted extract is automatically followed by an evaluative comment along the lines of: "This is an unreliable source because..." Such an approach could well be valid, but all too often the evaluation is of the source - "This is a primary source and therefore..." - rather than of the evidence it provides for the argument. Moreover, the interruptive style of the commentary tends to undermine the coherence of the argument for the reader. As with primary evidence, analysis should be integrated naturally into the narrative.

The quality of argument

- The other essential element is the quality of the argument, the design of which is defined by the conceptual demands of the question posed.
- All arguments contain passages of narrative that can be of various kinds: chronological, descriptive, causal, developmental, evaluative. The types of narratives that contribute to the building of an argument are causal, developmental and/or evaluative. These are more highly rewarded.
- Most studies require arguments that are causal or evaluative. Typically, causal arguments respond to a question such as "To what extent was 'X' the main cause of...?" Too often, causal explanations do not actually explain anything at all and conclude typically by just asserting that one factor is more important than others. In order to go beyond this, candidates need to identify, through critical use of source material and other information, a number of causal factors bearing on the event, and then assess the relative importance of these factors to the explanation. One way of doing this is to show why some factors were less important than the selected factor. Another approach is to argue that there was no 'necessary' factor but that a particular combination of factors was sufficient to bring about the outcome. A third method is to test one or more factors counter-factually ("Is it likely that the event would have occurred as it did, had this factor been absent?"). Whichever method is used, the candidate will arrive at much more of an answer to the question than is possible by methods of mere assertion.
- Evaluative studies usually involve the testing of a proposition, eg: "How far does Charles Stuart deserve his romantic reputation as 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'?" This requires a two-sided argument developed through critical use of source material, followed by a judgement. In the best work, the judgement may take the form of a synthesis, in which the apparent conflict suggested in the title is resolved in such a way that a 'third' hypothesis is formed.

The structure of the Investigation

See Teacher Support Notes vol 2 section 6 for a series of examples, based on the 2002 Board-set titles but equally applicable to candidate-chosen questions.

SECTION D: Question checklist

Will the proposed question allow the candidate to:

- analyse and evaluate (rather than describe) a valid historical issue
- through a reasonable range of suitable sources
- set in an historical context (ie typicality), and so
- meet the assessment objectives (especially AO2) effectively in c.2500 words.

SECTION E: Coursework Generic Mark Bands

Bands I-VII/90: Essay

I 72 - 90

The response is not perfect but the best that a candidate can be expected to achieve in A2. The Investigation uses critically an appropriate (but not necessarily full) range of primary and/or secondary sources and/or discusses critically an appropriate (but not necessarily full) range of historical interpretations bearing on the topic which is integrated into the overall approach. The response is focused clearly on the demands of the question (e.g. causation, change over time, evaluation). The Investigation reflects a very high level of ability in organising and presenting an extended argument. The approach is consistently analytical or explanatory rather than descriptive or narrative. The argument is structured coherently and supported by very appropriate factual material. The answer is fully relevant. The impression is that a good solid answer has been provided. At the lower end of the Band there may be some weaker sections, but the overall quality still shows that the candidate is in control of the argument. The writing is fluent and uses appropriate historical vocabulary. The answer shows accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

II 63 - 71

The Investigation uses critically a reasonable range of primary and/or secondary sources and/or discusses critically a range of historical interpretations bearing on the topic. The response is focused clearly on the demands of the question but there is more unevenness than in Band I answers. The Investigation generally reflects a high level of ability in organising and presenting an extended argument. Most of the argument is structured coherently and supported by appropriate factual material. The approach is mostly analytical or explanatory rather than descriptive or narrative. The answer is fully relevant. Most of the writing is fluent and uses appropriate historical vocabulary. The answer mostly shows accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

III 54 - 62

The Investigation uses a range of primary and/or secondary sources and/or interpretations, but with some significant gaps and possibly with a limited critical sense. The response reflects clear understanding of the question and a fair attempt to provide an appropriate argument and factual knowledge. The Investigation reflects a competent level of ability in organising and presenting an extended argument. The approach contains analysis or explanation, but there may be some purely descriptive or narrative passages that are not linked directly to analysis or explanation. The answer achieves a genuine argument, but may lack balance and depth in factual knowledge. Most of the answer is structured satisfactorily, but some parts may lack full coherence. The answer is mostly relevant. The writing is generally fluent and the historical vocabulary is usually appropriate. The grammar, punctuation and spelling are usually accurate.

IV 45 - 53

The Investigation uses largely uncritically a limited range of primary and/or secondary sources and/or interpretations, and this may be 'bolted-on' to the other material. The response indicates an attempt to argue relevantly. The Investigation reflects an adequate level of ability in organising and presenting an extended

argument. The approach depends more on descriptive or narrative passages than on analysis or explanation, which may be limited to introductions and conclusions. The structure of the argument could be organised more effectively. The writing may lack fluency and there may be some inappropriate historical vocabulary. The answer usually shows accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling, but contains some careless errors.

- V 36 - 44** The Investigation refers to a limited range of primary and/or secondary sources and/or interpretations. These may well be poorly understood and used uncritically, and may well be 'bolted-on' to the other material. The responses offers some elements of an appropriate answer, but there is little attempt generally to link factual material to the requirements of the question. The Investigation reflects a very basic level of ability in organising and presenting an extended argument. The approach lacks analysis and explanation and the quality of the description or narrative, although mostly accurate and relevant, is not linked effectively to the argument. The structure of the argument shows weaknesses in organisation and the treatment of topics within the answer is seriously unbalanced. The writing contains some inappropriate historical vocabulary. The answer shows some accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling, but contains frequent errors.
- VI 19 - 35** The Investigation refers only occasionally, and without any critical evaluation, to primary and/or secondary sources and/or interpretations. The response is not properly focused on the requirements of the question. The Investigation reflects an inadequate level of ability in organising and presenting an extended argument. The argument will be of very limited relevance and there may well be confusion about the implications of the question. There may be many unsupported assertions or a commentary which lacks sufficient factual support. The answer may lack coherence as an extended essay, being largely fragmentary and perhaps incoherent. The Investigation may rely heavily on a 'scissors and paste' approach. The writing contains very inappropriate historical vocabulary. The answer shows significant weakness in the accuracy of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- VII 0-18** The answer demonstrates a completely unsatisfactory attempt to meet any of the demands of the Unit. There is no attempt to discuss any of the key issues in the question. There is no reference to primary and/or secondary sources and/or interpretations. There is no argument and no supporting evidence for any assertions. The answer is irrelevant and/or incoherent, perhaps in note form. The writing shows very major weakness in the accuracy of grammar, punctuation and spelling.