



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2012**

**History A**

**40403**

**(Specification 4040)**

**Historical Enquiry**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **40403 Historical Enquiry**

### **General Comments**

#### **Assignments**

The 2012 Controlled Assessment experience proceeded smoothly for the great majority of schools who are, with the specification now in its third year, well attuned to its demands. As with previous years, students and teachers have responded enthusiastically and moderators were quick to praise much of the work seen for its planning and originality. Moderators indeed were impressed with the range of sites selected, from castles and cathedrals through to stately homes and halls, industrial mills, mines, canals and hamlets, to more ‘dispersed’ locations such as the Normandy Beaches or the death camps at Belsen.

Moderators once again commented on the thought and care with which teachers had produced source booklets and on the rich and varied selection of sources that were chosen to support both learning and the Controlled Assessment tasks. It bears repeating that the most effective booklets contained a range of sources, around 8 to 12 in number, these being visual, textual, primary and secondary.

Moderators were grateful to those schools who not only sent the marks and students’ work on time, but also included all the supporting documentation. When moderators were furnished with appropriate mark schemes, the sources used and crucially the interpretation used in Question 2, their job was made so much easier. It is of course best practice for schools to include schemes of work and a record of correspondence with their Controlled Assessment Adviser, and the majority of schools did so.

As with the 2010 and 2011 submissions, the very best work reflected an effective dialogue between schools and Controlled Assessment Advisers. Schools are reminded that the tasks for 2012 will be different from those used in 2011 and it might be reassuring to discuss how this might impact on their choice of sources with their designated adviser.

#### **Assessment Objectives**

In the great majority of cases, schools covered the assessment objectives appropriately in their responses to the set tasks. It is important to emphasise that schools should check that they are using questions for the appropriate year of entry. For those schools intending to submit in May 2013, the 2013 tasks (currently available on e-AQA) should be used; if students’ work is to be submitted in May 2014, then the 2014 questions (available on e-AQA from September 2012) should be used.

#### **Assessments**

Most schools were found to be marking in line with the standards established and exemplified at moderation meetings. Moderators commented on the thorough assessment and annotation of students’ work by many schools.

Such annotation was most helpful as indeed were the explanations of internal standardisation procedures carried out by departments with more than one teaching set. The most common methods of securing consistency across a school’s entry were through cross-moderation and sampling exercises, as well as the allocation of one teacher to the marking of a particular question.

### **Question 1**

As in previous years this proved to be a straightforward task for most students. While some weaker responses were characterised by site descriptions, the majority contained thorough, detailed explanations with interesting and original concluding judgements.

### **Question 2**

Once again moderators were favourably impressed with much of the material submitted in answer to this question. The most effective work chose to examine the interpretation in terms of its content, provenance, authorship, as well as the position of the author or artist, the time when the interpretation was written or painted, and the purpose or intended audience for the source. Schools will recognise that this approach is in alignment with Questions 1(c) on both Units 1 and 2.

### **Question 3**

As with Question 2, students are required to work with a number of well-chosen sources, usually 8 to 12, presented in a source booklet. Some adopted a methodical source-by-source approach, but the most able looked for patterns or trends in the sources and grouped them accordingly.

There were two common weaknesses seen in answers to this question. Firstly, some students chose to describe, or re-write, the sources presented and second, some chose to write lengthy evaluations of the individual sources when what was required was a consideration of source sufficiency.

As in 2010 and 2011, the great majority of students were able to present their arguments in close to the suggested word limits. Once again moderators felt that writing under time constraints served to concentrate thinking, so that the work which was ultimately produced was both focused and relevant. It has been suggested in previous reports that this work may be less polished than coursework submissions, but is a far more accurate indicator of students' historical knowledge, understanding and skill: the evidence of the 2012 round of Controlled Assessment moderation supports this conclusion.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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