



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

History B

40453

(Specification 4045)

Unit 3: Historical Enquiry

Report on the Examination

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40453 Historical Enquiry

2012 marked the second year of the new specification and the significant changes introduced to this component of the examination. The general consensus of the senior moderators is that this year schools were more comfortable with the demands and challenges of Unit 3, which is very encouraging. This was seen in a number of ways. An improved selection of sources was evident. A greater accuracy in marking standards and assessment was apparent, indicated by the fact that the marking of the large majority of schools were in tolerance, and did not require any statistical adjustment to bring it into line with AQA standards. These points are worthy of emphasis as, inevitably, a report will tend to focus on those aspects that have not gone so well and that require the attention of some schools.

The administration of the component was good. The deadline of 7th May for the submission of centre marks to the moderator was very largely met and, in many cases, met well in advance of the deadline. This is much appreciated by the moderating team who have their own deadlines to meet. Sample scripts and other relevant materials were sent in good time and, again, the moderating team is grateful to the very large majority of schools who provided copies of the sources used, rather than merely the required bibliography. It should be noted that it is not a requirement to send the Research Diaries of the students in the sample. These are internal centre documents and should be retained in school. An area of some concern was the number of errors made in the transfer of marks from the students' scripts to the Candidate Record Form and/or the Centre Mark Form and, occasionally from the script to the Candidate Record Form. These can be corrected if the moderator looks at that script; otherwise the error remains in the final result – and this is not always to the advantage of the student. It must also be recorded that a handful of schools seriously misinterpreted the regulations by not submitting work from the 2012 tasks.

It is the prerogative of the school to determine how students present their work. Whilst the majority of schools presented hand written answers from their students for understandable reasons, it was felt that more schools are moving towards word processed work. This is perfectly acceptable so long as systems are in place within the school to ensure the validity of the work as the students' own.

Wordage generally improved as more schools are seeking to advise their students to produce answers towards the advisory total of 2000 words. However, it does remain an issue, and the difficulties in achieving this are acknowledged. Without the opportunity to re-draft, as this against the regulations of the specification, schools must mark the work students have produced in the time allowed for the Controlled Assessment. Similarly, within the Controlled Assessment, students are less concerned with word limits and more with writing a coherent answer to the question. In spite these constraints there is some guidance that teachers can give to their students to reduce the amount they need to write. Lengthy knowledge introductions are not required, as the focus of the questions is source analysis and evaluation. Description of a source is not required; this is a low level skill. Encouragement should be given to students to move straight on to a consideration of analysis and evaluation. The degree of supporting knowledge included in an analysis of a source needs only be minimal to reflect the weighting of this assessment objective. Repetition can also produce excessive writing, but it is recognised that within the Controlled Assessment this is more difficult to control. The key point about excessive wordage is that in only very exceptional circumstances does it add anything to the quality of the student's answer. Typically, it brings only more knowledge, more source description and more repetition – all criteria reflecting a Level 1 standard.

The standard of annotation tends to vary from school to school but the general consensus was that there has been continued improvement in 2012. It makes the function of the moderator – to assess the accuracy of the centre’s marking – much easier if there is a clear, structured indication by the school to explain how the level and mark have been arrived at. This improvement has been partly the result of an increased usage of the marking grid issued by AQA. The great advantage of the grid is that it enables the school to make accurate judgements within the levels with large mark ranges. Another factor that has brought improvement in assessing a student’s work was the clear evidence that internal standardisation procedures have been applied to give a consistency to the marking. However, an inconsistency in the standard of annotation across all schools still remains. A school marking that has little or no annotation save for ticks and a brief summary comment is not helpful to the moderator. Neither are general comments on a piece of work that are not linked to the mark scheme. Annotation can, on occasions, indicate a misunderstanding of the mark scheme: for example, a comment of ‘L4’ after the opening paragraph or ‘L4’ for the consideration of a single source - neither of these examples meet the criteria for Level 4.

The tasks are provided by AQA and cover the four areas of study in the specification. There was evidence that Britain at War was the most popular area of study presented, followed by the British People in War. This is a change from 2011, where these two areas were reversed in popularity. It highlights the fact that schools do have a choice each year as to which area of study they offer. Although there may be internal resource issues, it does suggest that schools are looking at the tasks on a year-by-year basis and determining what they would rather do or what would appeal most to their students. The Changing Role and Status of Women remained an option of a minority of schools. Britain and the Aftermath of War continued to be the least popular. The nature of the tasks presented very few problems in terms of understanding and the sources selected were almost without exception relevant to the topic.

Source selection is an essential prerequisite in order to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their skills of source analysis and evaluation. There was much to be encouraged with regard to the selection of sources. Considerable care had clearly been taken by many schools to produce a portfolio of well-balanced sources, both in relevant subject content and in the range of different types of source. For the first time there were good examples of film clips from YouTube. For example: excerpts from ‘All Quiet on the Western Front’ for the question on trench warfare; Ministry of Information films for the question on the work of women in the two World Wars. This is a rich source of material that teachers should consider using. It was also apparent that there was less usage of secondary sources in the portfolios. Whilst secondary sources have a place in any historical enquiry – and their usage is a requirement for the interpretation question – they can present difficulties to students in developing a Level 3 evaluation comment and thus must be selected with care. Source selection should be based on two criteria, reflected in the mark scheme. The source should allow the student to produce a developed (Level 3) comment of analysis, placing the source in the context of the study. The source should also have enough provenance to allow the students to produce a developed (Level 3) comment of evaluation, examining the purpose of it in relation to the study. The former generally presents few problems; the latter, based on evaluation, can create more difficulties for students, for example, an unattributed photograph of the Dunkirk beaches gives the student little to go at in examining the purpose of the source. Similarly, raw data from a textbook on the occupations of women working in the two World Wars or the number of soldiers killed from gas attacks in the First World War can be utilised well for analysis, but offer few opportunities for a Level 3 evaluation statement.

In considering the standard of centre assessment, the general quality of marking was accurate and conformed to AQA standards. Thus the marks of the large majority of schools were accepted. There is now widespread usage of the ‘Summary of the Mark Scheme’ rather

than the generic mark scheme. By breaking the levels into 'bands', it provides a greater guidance in determining the overall mark within a level in critical areas like Question 2 Level 3 where the mark range is 13 to 20. When the Summary is used in conjunction with annotation, based on the grid mentioned earlier, this serves to clarify to the moderator how the final mark decision has been reached. It was generally felt that those schools that used the combination of the Summary and the grid were more likely to produce an accurate assessment of their students' work.

The marking of a minority of schools was felt not to conform to AQA standards and thus, in these instances, a statistical adjustment of marks was made. The next section of the report indicates the main areas and the main reasons for this discrepancy.

Of the two skills associated with source examination, evaluation was generally less convincing than analysis. Analysis – the context of the information in the source in relation to the task – can always be enhanced by supporting knowledge, although there was some tendency to award descriptions of the source as analytical statements. Evaluation requires something more: a consideration of the purpose of the source in the context of the question. Thus the provenance of the source becomes an essential tool in determining purpose. There were students, and sometimes whole cohorts, that ignored evaluation or limited the evaluative comments to generic, simple statements (Level 2) – and too often the latter were adjudged to be in Level 3. There is a difference in conceptual level between students identifying a Second World War poster on women's work as produced by the government and, therefore, is biased to students who go further, and consider why the government issued the poster – the purpose behind it. There was evidence in the marking of some schools that there was a misunderstanding of the nature of source evaluation. It is incorrect to credit the limitations of a source by pointing out what is not as evaluation. This, at best, could be analysis or, as in many cases, it was simply the application of knowledge as the provenance and purpose of the source has not been considered.

The crucial area of assessment in both questions is Level 3. The wide range of marks here covers Grade A/B to Grade D. The Summary of the Mark Scheme aims to assist in determining the correct band, and therefore mark, to place an answer. There was some tendency to award in high Level 3 (11/12; 19/20) answers that lacked the consistent balance of Level 3 analysis **and** Level 3 evaluation across the 5/8 sources. A lack of balance between Level 3 analysis and Level 3 evaluation would place the answer in the mid-Level 3 range of marks (10; 16-18) with the final decision being based on the degree of imbalance. Answers that were limited to Level 3 analysis (or, more unusually, Level 3 evaluation) are accommodated in the low Level 3 mark range (8-10; 13-16). Thus students (and schools) that ignored source evaluation, or dealt with it in only a simplified manner, should be placed in this range of marks.

The decision to award Level 4 is also a critical one, both in terms of the Grade outcome (A or A*) and of the marking criteria. One of the criteria for a Level 4 award – sustained Level 3 analysis and Level 3 evaluation across the 5/8 sources – was generally recognised. The other criterion, a judgement based on the evidence of the 5/8 sources as a whole, was less effectively identified. In a large number of cases where Level 4 was awarded for a short summary statement – sometimes 4 or 5 lines – or for extended repetition of comments on the sources as individual sources, the moderator found it necessary to reduce the centre mark awarded into Level 3.

The application of knowledge in students' answers remains a key concern, not least because it may lead the student to produce extensive answers that cannot get a mark commensurate with the effort applied. If knowledge per se is rewarded by the school in excess of its weighting, then this may place the marking out of tolerance. It must be emphasised that knowledge (Assessment Objectives 1 and 2) has the minor weighting in Unit 3, accounting

for only 20% (8 marks) of the total. The practical consequence of this is that there is no need for students to produce extensive factual introductions: for example, as in 2012, on the background to Dunkirk or the range of employment women undertook in the two World Wars. Neither is it necessary to provide extensive knowledge to place a source in context: 'supporting knowledge' is indicated in the mark scheme. The approach of a very small number of schools that focused on knowledge and used the sources to support that knowledge was also a distortion of the mark scheme and the weighting of the Assessment Objectives.

The concluding comment to this report must be to reiterate the judgement made in the opening section. The large majority of centres have administered and assessed this component with efficiency and accuracy. The overall standard of work seen this year has been impressive, and underlines the application demonstrated by students. Teachers deserve praise for the quality of the sources selected and for engaging their students so effectively in the enquiries.

AQA offers support on Unit 3 to teachers in a number of ways:

- a Controlled Assessment Adviser is appointed for each school to support them on an on-going basis, for example, in the selection of sources or if specific issues arise
- Feedback Reports offer comments by the moderator on all aspects of the centre assessment of Unit 3 for 2012
- Meetings are organised in the Autumn Term 2012 focusing on marking and marking standards
- the Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA website has a number of documents relevant to Unit 3. Two entries are of particular relevance to issues raised in this Report
 - (i) 'Annotating the Controlled Assessment Task' provides advice on annotation and includes the grid approach
 - (ii) 'What students should know about Unit 3' provides practical advice on the selection of sources and the understanding and application of the mark scheme.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.