



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

History A 4040

40403

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Assignments

For the great majority of centres, the 2011 Controlled Assessment session proceeded smoothly. Centres are clearly growing in confidence and expertise – the majority of the work seen by moderators showed care and enthusiasm in both the planning and execution phases, and there were far more instances of outstanding practice this year.

It is clearly possible for centres to construct effective Controlled Assessment tasks around different types of sites. The most popular seem to be castles, cathedrals, churches and cemeteries, stately homes and halls, industrial mills, mines, canals and hamlets. Some approach the tasks by selecting a site associated with a particular ‘event’ such as the D-Day beaches or the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Moderators commented on the rich and varied selection of sources that centres had chosen to support both the learning and the tasks themselves. As observed in last year’s report, the most effective source booklets contained around 8-10 sources, containing visual, textual, primary and secondary evidence.

Moderators were grateful to those schools and colleges who sent not only the marks and candidates’ 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 centres to include schemes of work and a record of correspondence with their Controlled Assessment adviser and it is pleasing to be able to report that most centres did so.

As with the 2010 submissions, the very best work seen was usually the product of effective communication between centres and Controlled Assessment advisers. Centres are reminded that the tasks for 2012 are different from those set in 2011 – it is advisable for teachers to discuss how this might impact on their choice of sources with their designated adviser.

Assessment Objectives

Almost every centre covered the assessment objectives appropriately. It is important to emphasise that centres should check that they are using questions for the appropriate year of entry. If centres are intending to submit in May 2012, the 2012 tasks (currently available on e-AQA) should be used; if candidates’ work is to be submitted in May 2013, then the 2013 questions (available on e-AQA from September 2012) should be used.

Assessments

The great majority of centres were found to be marking in line with the standards established and exemplified at standardisation meetings.

In most cases, the annotation of work was helpful as were the explanations of internal standardisation of work by departments with more than one teaching set (eg cross-marking and sampling exercises, or the allocation of different teachers to the marking of particular questions across the centre’s entry).

Question 1 Why was the site you have studied created?

This proved to be a straightforward task for the majority of candidates; although some weaker responses were characterised by site descriptions, most contained thorough and wide-ranging evaluations, often with interesting and original concluding judgements.

Question 2 Consider the interpretation of the site you have been provided with. What evidence from the site supports or contradicts this interpretation?

As in 2010, moderators were impressed with much of the material submitted in answers to this AO3 question. The best work examined the interpretation supplied by reference to some or all of the following: its content, provenance, authorship, date, the purpose or intended audience for the source, which aligns with Questions 1(c) on both Units 1 and 2. Clearly a stimulating interpretation helps and, in this instance, it needed to be verifiable by reference to the site itself.

Question 3 How do other historical sources that you have used in your study help you to understand what you have seen at the site?

Here most candidates worked with several sources, usually presented in a source booklet. Some candidates chose to tackle the question in a source-by-source manner, but the more able looked for patterns or trends in the sources and grouped them accordingly; some chose their supporting material in a quite sophisticated way, showing a selectivity and precision usually thought to be a characteristic of more advanced study.

There were two common weaknesses seen in answers to this question: firstly, some candidates chose to describe or re-write the sources presented; secondly, some ignored the site itself as a source of evidence and information in its own right.

As in 2010, the great majority of candidates were able to present their arguments within the suggested word limits. Once again, moderators felt that writing 'against the clock' under time constraints served to focus minds and provided a much clearer insight into students' historical understanding. That candidates' submitted work is sometimes less polished than might have been the case with coursework is considered a very small price to pay for the greater emphasis now attached to the deployment of historical skills, knowledge and understanding.

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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