

Report on the Components

June 2009

1938/1038/MS/R/08J

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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**General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)
History A (1038)**

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4971 Medieval

This is the third report on Unit 1 (the Externally Set Task) of the GCSE History Pilot. Over 2000 candidates took the externally set task in the summer of 2008. One of the aims of the Pilot is to provide candidates with innovative forms of assessment that enable them to demonstrate genuine historical skills and understandings. Whilst the task is conducted under controlled conditions, by encouraging candidates to use resources at their disposal and within a four hour period, it was hoped that they would be enabled fully to demonstrate a range of competencies not normally anticipated in more conventional externally set history examinations.

PREPARING FOR THE EXTERNALLY SET TASK

This externally set task provides a new way of assessing GCSE History and teachers had prepared candidates well for this. Clearly, more centres than last year had familiarised their students with the range of resources available and the sort of information and evidence that could be obtained from them, and these students generally did well.

- (i) It is appreciated that an enormously wide range and variety of source material is available, in both printed and electronic form, for both options. Some centres had clearly tried to help their students manage this information by preparing source booklets for them as part of the teaching and learning process. It must be emphasised that, whilst this might be a useful teaching tool, it should be treated as such. Students should be encouraged to treat such booklets as a starting point for an exploration of the richness and variety of material available to them.
- (ii) In a similar way, the provision of writing frames, whilst providing less able candidates with scaffolding which may be appropriate in a teaching and learning context, does not translate easily into an assessment situation with an unseen task. Students should be encouraged as soon as possible to leave this safety net behind.

THE EXTERNALLY SET TASK

Candidates had a choice of one from two options:

- Raiders and Invaders: the British Isles c.400-c.1100
- Power and Control: Kingship in the Middle Ages c.1100-c.1500

The majority of centres taught, and therefore their candidates responded to, the first option. This was the same as in 2007 and 2008.

General points

- (i) Examiners saw the full range of responses normally expected at GCSE level. There was much praise for really excellent, thoughtful, reflective work produced by high-achieving candidates who provided clear evidence of the ability to produce well-reasoned and well supported analyses, explanations, arguments and genuinely historical conclusions.
- (ii) Examiners found no difference in the range of responses from candidates entering on each of the two options.
- (iii) Very few candidates mismanaged their time, and the vast majority were able to bring their work to a conclusion.

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- (iv) The changes made to the structure of the task in 2008, and to the hints given on the examination paper as to how to approach the task, continued, it seemed, to help candidates select and deploy the information at their disposal. However, disappointingly, examiners saw many instances where candidates were able to select appropriate information but could not then deploy it effectively to answer the question.
- (v) Source evaluation was, in general, disappointing, as it was in 2007 and 2008. Many candidates omitted to evaluate the source material at all, but where source evaluation was undertaken, there was some effective work from the more able candidates. Thoughtful judgements were made, for example, about the reliability of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Domesday Book, although there were still the usual simplistic approaches to the reliability of primary and secondary sources. A handful of candidates were able to comment effectively on interpretations, with some scathing comments about, for example, Shakespeare's interpretation of Henry V and the mixed bag of interpretations about King John. There are still candidates who are using web-sites as their only sources of information, with many such students, particularly those studying 'Raiders and Invaders' using sites intended for primary school pupils.
- (vi) A small but significant minority of candidates adopted an integrated comparison for both assignments. Most, however, covered Vikings and Normans, or John and Henry V, separately and then reached a conclusion. The former tended to produce stronger answers, but many produced some valid, comparative conclusions.
- (vii) Better responses identified criteria at the start and then proceeded to apply it. A disappointing number of students identified criteria and then proceeded largely to ignore it in the rest of their work.
- (viii) A few candidates answered a largely different question, in some instances targeted on a question set in a previous year. This was clearly based on revision practice. Centres should remind their students that they should answer the question set, not the one they would like to have been set.
- (ix) Some candidates scanned in, or photocopied, cut out and stuck in, illustrations. These were not always helpful as they were not appropriately referred to in the response, nor were they evaluated.

Specific points: Raiders and Invaders

- (i) The majority of candidates started their answer by writing about the invasions of the Vikings and of the Normans, and compared the two. Some of these candidates were able to make the nature of these invasions relevant to the question by showing, first, how control was gained and then established. Those who were not able to do this left the 'story' of the invasions as an irrelevancy.
- (ii) Very few candidates mentioned the Saxons, and were thus able to focus sharply on the Vikings and the Normans. However, few candidates were able to locate and deploy as much relevant information on the Vikings as they were on the Normans, although there was some skilful use of place names as illustrative of the extent of Viking control. The most common factors identified in relation to the Normans were castles, the feudal system, the harrying of the north and the Domesday Book.

Specific points: Power and Control

- (i) Many candidates began by establishing criteria for 'governing the people', some of which were not relevant, and then developed their answers by showing which was the better monarch.
- (ii) A significant minority of candidates presented a biography of each monarch (with Agincourt usually delivered in some detail) and drew a conclusion as to which was better at governing the people that bore little or no relevance to what had gone before.
- (iii) The use of the phrase 'the people' was interpreted by some candidates as 'ordinary people' (ie peasants), and by many candidates as 'barons and people' Better candidates provided considered views on the governance exercised over different strata in medieval society.

ASSESSING THE RESPONSES

Three teams of examiners, each led by a team leader, assessed the work of candidates. All the team leaders are involved with other elements within the Pilot and all of the examiners teach the Pilot. Thus candidates' work was marked by those very familiar with its aims and objectives.

- (i) The published, generic mark scheme was used.
- (ii) Each Band within the mark scheme contains three bullet points. They focus on selection, organisation and deployment of relevant information; source evaluation and an understanding of interpretations. It was not expected that candidates would perform equally across all three bullets within whatever band was appropriate. Examiners looked always for a 'best fit'. However, for access to Band 5 it was expected that candidates would address, even if in an unbalanced way, all three bullet points.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

(i) Teaching and learning

The Specification makes it clear that teaching and learning should concentrate on identifying, investigating and discussing issues related to the organising questions of each of the two options. These should give the students opportunities to investigate a wide range of representations and interpretations from a variety of sources; investigate and discuss the organising questions; make comparisons, and develop their research and planning skills.

However, the situation changes immediately when the envelope containing the externally assessed task is opened.

(ii) During the externally assessed task

The Specification makes it clear that, whilst teachers may give guidance during the four hours of the externally assessed task, this **MUST** be limited to ensuring that;

- all candidates understand the 'Hints' given as to how best approach the task
- where necessary, individually or collectively, candidates are given assistance in time management.

It would thus **NOT** be appropriate to provide written information, further unpacking the 'Hints', nor to provide plans, writing frames or source booklets that are specifically focused on the given task and written by the teacher once the task is known.

Centres are reminded that candidates must not communicate with each other about the content of their work during the four hour period of the set task, neither may they introduce any new material that is not accessed by them during the set four hours.

CONCLUSION

An externally set task of this nature clearly engages the candidates and it must be emphasised here that examiners found much to praise. Effective teaching was evident in the ways in which many candidates approached hypothesis testing with confidence, selecting and deploying information, and creating a genuinely historical explanation. The best responses were very good indeed; the weakest responses all had something relevant to say.

There is much to learn from this Pilot for us all, but now, at the end of the third externally assessed task, both teachers and students are to be congratulated on their commitment to the Pilot, on the obvious enjoyment and involvement with which their students are writing and researching, and on the outcome of the assessment of this Unit.

4972-4982

GENERAL COMMENTS BY THE CHIEF EXAMINER

This is the second year of results being issued for the Pilot full course. It is clear that it has been a success in trialling new methods of assessment, introducing new areas of content, and connecting history with some vocational elements. It has been granted another 5 years as a Pilot and it is hoped that it will inform future reform of GCSE History. Nearly all the centres who took part in the original Pilot are staying with it and some are using it as the only History GCSE being offered to their students. Most of the teachers involved with the Pilot over the last few years have contributed to its development with expertise and enthusiasm.

Of course, this is not to claim that there is no room for further improvement. OCR is busy preparing more guidance for centres, including exemplar materials, to ensure that the Pilot continues to develop and improve.

When teaching for the new specification begins in September 2009 the total number of centres using the Pilot will increase to about 100. It is important that existing centres refer to the new revised specification for candidates who begin the course in September 2009. There are some changes e.g. it is now possible to focus units on certain assessment objectives instead of having to cover them all in each unit, and there is more flexibility in terms of the order in which units are taught and assessed. It is also important to remember that candidates starting Year 11 in September 2009 (i.e. starting the second year of the source) will still be following the old version of the specification.

COURSEWORK UNITS: 4972 AND 4973

Most centres used or refined the assignments they used last year, and most worked very well. The International Unit was rather more popular than the Local History Unit. Favourite topics for the International Unit remain Vietnam and the Olympic Games while there was understandably a much greater variety of topics and approaches for the Local History Unit.

The marking of the candidates' work was completed with care with useful comments on the work explaining why a certain mark had been awarded. Moderators agreed with the marks from most centres although there were a few centres whose marks had to be adjusted. Large adjustments were very rare and it is encouraging how quickly agreement has been reached between centres and moderators over the application of the marking criteria. If a centre has had its marks adjusted downwards and if the report from the moderator has expressed some concern about the assignment, then early contact with the centre's consultant is advised.

Some of the issues mentioned in last year's need to be emphasised. Some centres set candidates a task rather than a question. It is strongly recommended that tasks are reworded so that they pose candidates with a question. Questions usually encourage analysis, argument and judgement more easily than a task that is not a question. The latter can lead to bland work and too much description. Centres should also ensure that all candidates are using the question set. This can be done by insisting that all candidates place the question at the beginning of their work. Instances have been seen where candidates have replaced the question/task with a slightly different, and blander, version of their own that has sent them off in the wrong direction.

Some work still failed to directly address the issues of significance satisfactorily. Judgements about significance should run through the entire answer and not be left to a brief conclusion at the end. Making significance prominent in the question, either explicitly, or implicitly, can help candidates. Candidates should also be helped to appreciate that a debate about significance

should form the body of the work. Examiners do not want narratives or descriptions with judgements about significance bolted on the end.

In the Local History Unit more emphasis, both in the question, and in the candidates' work, still needs to be placed on significance of a historical issue to the local community today. One approach that worked well was to take a prominent statue of a local worthy and ask whether he is the kind of person that the town should identify with today or whether there might be other local individuals whose achievements made them more suitable. Last year's report recommended that two questions be set: the first on the importance of the chosen factor/issue/person in the past (locally, regionally and nationally), and the second about how far, and why, the factor/issue/person is still important to local people today. It is often a good idea that candidates answer the question in the first line of their work. This establishes a point of view which they can spend the rest of the answer arguing, exploring, supporting and justifying. This might help some candidates move away from narrative and description.

There is still a tendency in some of the work for the International Unit to place little emphasis on the **international** significance of the chosen issue. For example in response to assignments about Vietnam candidates often analyse the impact of the war for those directly involved very well but are too brief on its wider international significance e.g. its impact on the US foreign policy in the period after the war and even leading up until today. For example comparisons could be made between US intervention in Vietnam and recent US intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. Candidates struggle with vast topics and the advice given in previous reports is worth repeating - when dealing with topics such as the international significance of the Olympic Games, encourage candidates to answer the question through case studies of two or three particular Games.

COURSEWORK UNITS: 4977, 4978, 4980, 4981, 4982

As with Units 4972 and 4973 most centres used assignments from the previous year. Most of these are suitable. The marking was accurate and only a handful of centres had their marks adjusted by the moderators.

While much interesting and valid work was seen, two main issues, both identified in last year's report, remain. The first concerns those centres using units based on topics that were studied in the past for traditional GCSE courses e.g. Medicine over Time. With some of this work there is still a worry that the issues raised and the assignments set do not fully match the requirements of the Pilot and have kept too much from the previous GCSE course studied.

Secondly, some of the work set for the Whose History? unit does not address issues concerning representations and interpretations in a useful and helpful way. The emphasis should not be on evaluating different interpretations. There is more scope for candidates if they are asked to explain how e.g. individuals, are represented differently and why these different representations exist. In preparation for responding to the latter issue candidates should be properly prepared by studying the historical context in depth. At the moment some of the candidates' analyses of representations lack this depth.

Below are some assignments across a range of units that worked well this year.

Local History

- 1 'How significant was the 1984-85 miners' strike in politicising people in Yorkshire mining communities?' This enabled candidates to bring past and present together and investigate the significance of a past local issue today.
- 2 'Has coal mining left a legacy for Huknall that it should be proud of?' This raises issues about significance to the local community today.

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- 3 'What should an Ashfield Mining Museum look like?' This included the candidates preparing a proposal for a mining museum and a justification of the proposal.

International History

- 1 'Write a letter to the Secretary of the United Nations arguing why it is so important that more countries hold a Holocaust Memorial Day.' This enabled candidates to focus on the international significance of the Holocaust.
- 2 'Put together a proposal for the BBC for a documentary entitled 'Vietnam, significant in the short term but not in the long term?' There was additional advice for the candidates emphasising the importance of focusing on issues of international significance.
- 3 'Is the Olympic Games more than just a sporting event?' This is best answered through case studies of selected Olympic Games.

A Society in Depth

'Why was Crazy Horse a significant individual in Plains Indian society?'

'Do Sources A to D prove that the Indians had successfully adapted their lifestyle to suit a nomadic existence?' This encouraged candidates to use the sources together, and in context, to critically test a hypothesis, rather than just produce a series of evaluations of individual sources.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT UNITS: 4974, 4975, 4976, 4979

The work submitted for the Teacher Assessment units of the Pilot specification demonstrated further progress on the successful start in 2008. No new issues arose and centres new to the Pilot will find it useful to refer to the 2008 report on the Teacher Assessment units where a comprehensive report on the issues arising from the first year's assessment can be found.

Heritage Marketing was by far the most popular unit with just a couple of centres using each of the units on Multimedia, Archaeology, and the Migrant Experience. Most centres were able to send teachers to the cluster group meetings where the centres' marking of the work was moderated. These meetings ran smoothly and an agreed rank order for the whole cluster group usually emerged quickly. Most centres had used the marking criteria carefully and accurately and few changes to centres' marks were found to be necessary. Much of the marking was accurate and detailed with helpful comments provided explaining where and why marks had been awarded. The only area where more consistency needs to be achieved is the credit given for ephemeral evidence. This includes: candidates' informal contributions to class discussions, oral presentations by candidates, candidates' oral contributions to group or paired work overheard by the teacher. Some centres make much more use of this than other centres. It is not expected that every candidate will have marks added for ephemeral evidence but it is worrying when some centres seem to take no notice of it at all. When credit is given for ephemeral evidence a record must be kept by the teacher and this should be available for a moderator to see. There should also be a note on the candidate's folder/cover sheet explaining how the total mark has been changed due to ephemeral evidence and noting what the ephemeral evidence was. Rather than leaving it to chance, some centres have planned into their course clear opportunities for candidates to produce ephemeral evidence. This has worked well.

The success of Teacher Assessed units depends on the planning. A coherent course is required that contains a series of pieces or work for candidates to complete. These pieces of work should not be regarded as assessment exercises that are bolted-on to the course. They should form an integral part of the course and should be used because: (i) they are worthwhile in their own right (ii) they are activities for good learning and development, as well as useful for assessment, (iii) they grow naturally out of the course, and (iv) they address one or more of the assessment

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objectives. They should be planned so that together they provide a reasonably even coverage of the assessment objectives.

Most centres have adapted well to the holistic assessment of candidates' work. It is not necessary to award a separate mark to each piece of work completed (although centres may wish to do this for the purposes of feedback to candidates). What is required is a best fit approach with the marking criteria in conjunction with judgements about the overall qualities of a candidate's work across all their work.

The topics used by centres were the same as last year. For the Heritage Marketing unit there were studies of e.g. local museums, people and castles. Topics included King Arthur, Jack the Ripper and smuggling. The main issue with the Heritage Marketing unit remains the balance between the history and the marketing. The work from some centres was clearly stronger in one rather than the other. A better balance needs to be struck. One way of achieving this is to bring the two closer together by using as much historical research, knowledge and understanding, as possible in the marketing. Sometimes, the marketing work is almost a history free zone. The Multimedia, Migrant Experience and Archaeology units all produced some very interesting work.

Grade Thresholds

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History (1938, 1038)
June 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
4971	Raw	50	42	36	30	24	19	14	9	4	0
	UMS	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	0
Coursework Units	Raw	50	44	40	36	33	27	22	17	12	0
	UMS	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	0
Teacher Assessed Units	Raw	50	47	43	39	35	29	23	17	11	0
	UMS	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	0

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1038	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1938	200	180	160	140	120	100	80	60	40

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1038	7.55	21.23	39.53	58.49	76.98	88.87	95.09	98.49	100.00

The total entry for the examination was 1067

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1938	7.96	23.11	41.50	65.85	82.64	92.14	97.02	99.28	100.00

The total entry for the examination was 1967

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html
Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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