

History Pilot

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE J938**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **GCSE J038**

Examiners' Reports

January 2011

J938/J038/R/11J

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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 specification 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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Chief Examiner's Report

The entry for the History Pilot for the January assessment was small. In some units the entry was tiny. It is therefore not possible to come to many general conclusions about the work. However, some important points are explained below.

A few centres used questions that were problematic and did not provide candidates with the best chance of meeting the assessment criteria. Centres are encouraged to use the Coursework Consultants who will provide feedback on questions and programmes of study. A consultant is attached to a group of centres. Details can be obtained from OCR.

In a minority of centres it is sometimes difficult for a moderator to work out what the question was. In these cases, moderators are left trying to find the question on the candidates' answers, only to find that candidates have used different versions of the question. It is important that candidates use the exact question that has been set. A slight difference in wording can take the answer away from the main targets. It would also help moderators if details of the question could be provided on a separate sheet of paper.

Despite the small entry there was a wide range of work both in quality and in approach. Although it was encouraging to see some outstandingly good work, it was also clear that candidates from all ranges of ability had gained much from completing the course of study. The marking was on the whole accurate, although sometimes a little on the generous side. However, large adjustments in marks were rare. Some centres provided detailed annotation of the work, explaining why certain marks had been awarded. This was most helpful.

B872, B873, B877, B878, B880, B881, B882 Coursework

The most popular units were those on Local History (B872) and International History (B873 and B882). In addition there were small entries for the Change over Time (B878) and Depth Study (B880) units. For the International History unit there was some interesting work on the international significance of the Irish Famine and the Olympic Games. One assignment that worked particularly well required candidates to produce plans for a Holocaust Memorial Day. The candidates' justifications for such a day led them to produce some excellent work on the international significance of the Holocaust. The main weakness in some of the work for the International History unit remains the lack of focus on 'international significance'. This is only a weakness in some centres, but where it occurs it does diminish the quality of the work. The coursework question needs to be phrased in such a way that it encourages candidates to consider significance in its broadest sense. For example, the significance of the Vietnam War needs to be considered in terms of US foreign policy in the decades that follow and the attitudes towards the US by countries around the world. It is not enough to focus on the impact in Vietnam and in the US.

One Local History assignment that worked well asked candidates why World Heritage status would be important for a given area. This encouraged candidates to explain the importance of its past for the local community - a key aspect of this unit.

Candidates should not be required to cover too much. Sometimes coursework questions are simply too large in scope and become unmanageable. There are two possible solutions. One is to encourage candidates to select their own case studies, the other is for the teacher to base the work on a limited number of case studies. Case studies can be particularly useful in making questions manageable. For example, some questions on the Olympic Games require candidates to cover too much. This can lead to superficial work. A focus on just two Games, for example, can help to produce work of more depth.

B874, B875, B876, B879 Teacher Assessment

There were a small number of centres entering candidates for the Heritage and Marketing unit (B874), and a very small entry for the Multimedia unit (B875). The key to good work for the Heritage and Marketing unit remains a good range of material assessing a range of historical skills. It is particularly important that candidates are encouraged to use their marketing plans and materials to show how they would use the history to convince the public that, for example, a site is important, interesting and worth visiting because of its history. Some of the materials produced are devoid of history. The target for candidates is to blend the history with the marketing. This was done effectively by some candidates in interesting work on Robin Hood and on marketing the First World War battlefields and memorials to ethnic minority groups in Britain.

It should be remembered that the folder of work for Teacher Assessment needs to be assessed as a whole, using a best-fit approach to the mark schemes. Summative comments summing up the overall strengths and weaknesses of the work are more useful for moderators than detailed comments on each piece of work.

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