

Report on the Components

June 2008

1939/MS/R/08

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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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Humanities (1939)

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1939/01 Paper 1

General Comments

The examination appears to have been set at an appropriate level. Overall candidates were able to score marks appropriate to their ability and at the same time more able candidates were stretched. There was a good spread of marks between 10 and 70 marks. There was a pleasing increase in the number of candidates scoring in excess of 70. A major concern remains the failure of candidates, despite prompts in questions, to provide examples in their answers to clearly demonstrate depth of understanding

Section A

The responses to the key concepts in the (a) questions still give cause for concern. These concepts are clearly stated in the specification and thorough preparation for them could enable a lot of candidates to improve their scores. Many marks are lost where candidates do not even attempt a response because they do not recognise the key concept. This was particularly noticeable this year in relation to *fundamentalism*, *finite resource* and *referendum*.

The (b) questions based around the source(s) are simple extraction questions requiring little response other than identifying the correct information from the source. Many candidates could be saved extensive, unnecessary writing if they were guided in this.

Responses to the (c) questions, as in previous years, were varied with Citizenship and Religious and Moral Issues generally the least successful. As this is a knowledge based paper candidates should be advised that simply re-writing the stimulus is unlikely to gain great reward.

Section B

It was encouraging to see continued progress in the response to these questions. Again performance was greatly enhanced where schools had made the mark scheme available to students. They not only constructed more appropriate factual responses but there was clear evidence that more centres were placing increased emphasis on using the sources in the question to implicitly and, increasingly, explicitly, draw information for use in their answers. There was also a noticeable decline in the number of candidates who answered both questions. This was well received by the examiners.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1 Citizenship

Generally the weakest section for most candidates – though with some notable exceptions.

- a(i) Ballot was variously addressed as the process or the voting slip or the ballot box. Where accurate information was provided all were rewarded appropriately.
- a(ii) Referendum was a key concept of which the vast majority of candidates had little, or no, knowledge.

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- b(i) Most candidates identified the elements of dictatorship appropriately but too often wrote in too much depth.
- b(ii) Also well done but again far more writing than was necessary to achieve the marks.
- c (i) Generally very weak with few candidates showing more than a passing acquaintance with either electoral system. Many literal interpretations of 'first past the post' presented intriguing suggestions that many votes were not even counted. Candidates with the literal approach tended to be more successful with 'proportional representation' linking votes to seats and identifying this as an improvement.

Q2 Economic and Industrial Issues

- a (i) Most candidates were able to make a reasonable attempt at explaining loans though many were vague about sources of loans, loan sharks featured heavily, as did repayment times and interest charges.
- a (ii) Definitions of insurance were often vague; candidates who used examples tended to score more highly and produce more coherent answers.
- b (i) Too many candidates failed to score because they mixed up informative and persuasive.
(ii)
- c (i) Generally well answered. Many candidates gave good examples though a significant
(ii) minority wrote about advantages/disadvantages to the employer or the business in general rather than the employee.

Q3 Environmental Issues

- a (i) Recycling was used by many candidates as synonymous with renewable resources and this was rewarded. Higher marks were accessed by candidates who quoted examples and referred to environmental impact.
- a (ii) Too many candidates failed to recognise that finite resources meant non-renewable resources.
- b (i) Generally well answered.
(ii)
- c (i) Too many candidates based their answers on the stimulus with very little input from their
(ii) own knowledge; this seriously hampered their ability to access higher levels. Few candidates displayed knowledge of trans-national companies.

Q4 Religious and Moral Issues

- a (i) Only a few candidates had a genuine understanding of the meaning of *fundamentalism*. Too many candidates referred to fund raising.
- a (ii) A similar problem existed with the understanding of *celibacy*. Too many candidates related it to celebrations. Another common option was 'no sex before marriage'.
- b Many candidates linked the down turn in Church going to more frequent attendance at football matches and the cinema.
- c (i) The majority of candidates attempted to compare all four of the options in the question (ii) though the question clearly stated two only. The most popular comparison was Christianity and Islam though a minority attempted other faiths. Many candidates appeared to have a very basic knowledge of Christianity but a more confused picture of their other chosen religion. Some candidates referred to features from most world religions in a haphazard fashion.

Section B

The vast majority of candidates chose to answer question 5.

Question 5

There was a significant increase in the number of candidates who answered by referring to both sides of the question. There was pleasing use of the guidance to help them to structure their answers.

Question 6

Much less popular than question 5 but candidates who attempted it made better use of the sources in structuring their answers.

1939/02 Paper 2

General Comments

The wide ability range of the candidates entered for this examination was reflected in the wide spread of marks. The paper appears to have differentiated quite well by outcome given the full range of marks seen. Many candidates wrote well and quality of written English appeared to have improved this year.

Question A

There is still evidence that candidates are not fully aware of the focus of this question. This was highlighted by the response to Q3.

Question B

Many centres are preparing candidates very thoroughly for this question. There appeared to be less formulaic answers this year and the topic set was clearly used as a focus.

Question C

The improvement seen in the answers to this question last year was maintained. The improvement in candidates responding appropriately to the skills being examined was also maintained.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question A

1 and 2 Most candidates scored well.

3 Few candidates realised that this question was about sampling

4 Some good answers though many candidates failed to use the information that these were Conservative views in the answer and therefore missed the opportunity to bring in the political dimension.

5 Good candidates made full use of the sources. Too many did not take the opportunity to consider both sides of the argument.

Question B

6 See General Comments.

Question C

7 Most candidates scored well.

8 Most candidates scored well.

9 Most candidates scored well.

10 Most candidates scored well.

11 Good candidates constructed well argued answers. Others answered superficially.

12 An increasing number of candidates have been well prepared for the requirements of this question which is encouraging.

13 An increasing number of candidates are responding to the requirements of the mark scheme but the prevalence of those who are still unaware of the need for balance makes it necessary to comment on this again.

1939/03 Coursework

There has been an overall increase in the efficiency of the application of marking criteria particularly the more complex AO3d and the Ao2c. As always, centres who have detailed, well organised moderation structures, tend to do much better overall. Problems which result from not having sufficient clarity about the methodology have diminished. Some centres particularly new ones have found the application of criteria for evaluation difficult and the axiomatic problem has been an issue, i.e. you cannot gain much evaluation credit for pointing out that 5 or 6 questionnaires are not enough, as the basic methodology is founded on the fact that questionnaires are a fast way of collecting and comparing lots of basic information. The new centres have tended to concentrate on the title of the investigation as being an interesting, and in some cases, controversial topic, without really equipping the students with the investigative methodology to do the topic justice. Successful centres have a tight well defined and detailed coursework task. Weaker centres are still in the main trying to do coursework as an open ended task with no real reference to methodology. Any centres experiencing problems, should read carefully the detailed analysis of the areas needing attention in the centre feedback report.

The less experienced centres are continuing to refine their approach to the coursework. This has continued to develop a wider range of options. It is pleasing to note that all questionnaires are no longer sent by most centres as only a sample need to be sent. Some centres still send too much work which is not produced by the candidate such as professionally produced handouts, these cannot gain credit. Please put all work not directly written by the candidate into some form of an appendix if possible, as wading through large amounts of information, which gains little or no credit, increases the chance of the moderator missing important information the candidate has included somewhere in the middle of it.

Again where the task is framed around a statement or hypothesis that can be interpreted in a range of ways candidates do much better. It is still worth restating the mantra that, the methodology of the investigation is the investigation and it does not play second fiddle to the actual content of the coursework. This course is unashamedly more about the how than the what. From an examining point of view, it is important to point out that being extremely flexible on content, means the process has to be by definition very tight, otherwise it would be impossible to manage. Sloppy, woolly or uncritical application of methodology is the main cause of poor coursework marks. It is very difficult to award high marks where conclusions are not linked directly to the evidence collected by the candidate, or even better attributed to the results of the investigation. Linked but unsubstantiated opinions held before, during or after the investigation cannot gain more than a level 1 in AO2C. New centres need to recognise that unlinked conclusions however well expressed do not score marks at all in this criteria. Where centres are now fully addressing the innate bias of the sources, the marks have begun to improve. The long cut and paste essay is still not achieving the marks candidates appear to deserve. Care is needed in some centres, to avoid what could be called "implicit marking", where candidates gain credit in the middle of the mark scheme for making fairly simplistic statements about the methodology, or sometimes don't really mention the methods at all.

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This year some centres have reorganised their coursework and this has added a new vibrancy to the responses of many candidates in their schools. Distinguishing between reaching conclusions and evaluating methodology is continuing to improve in many centres. For those centres with issues - conclusions are basically what can be said about the results gathered; evaluations are about the way the research was handled by the candidate and how this could be improved. Overall some centres are now producing excellent coursework throughout the cohort and the work is an absolute pleasure to moderate.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Humanities (Specification Code 1939)
June 2008 Examination Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	100	60	51	43	35	27	18	10
02	50	33	28	23	19	14	10	6
03	50	42	34	27	20	14	8	2

Specification Options

Overall

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	144	127	110	93	74	55	36	17
Percentage in Grade		2.9	6.9	15.3	21.5	21.5	15.5	12.0	4.0
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		2.9	9.8	25.1	46.6	68.1	83.6	95.6	99.6

The total entry for the examination was 1730.

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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