

## Oxford Colleges History Aptitude Test: 2008 Marking Schedule

### General Remarks

It is essential to the credibility of the History Aptitude Test (HAT) that, as far as possible, it is marked in a uniform way and to a common set of standards and expectations. The following guidelines have been devised in relation to the published specifications of the HAT. They have been approved by the History Admissions Subcommittee, and you need to follow them closely.

Do not award marks that are not whole numbers as ADSS can only accept whole numbers. Please do not deduct marks for spelling and grammatical errors unless they obstruct the expression of meaning. In reflecting on the quality of candidates' expression, give preference to clarity over style. The use of high-quality vocabulary should not be rewarded for itself, but only when it assists the expression of relevant material.

Note that the essay exercise [1(c)] is not intended as a test of candidates' depth of knowledge, and must not be marked as such. Candidates have been advised that no special preparation or revision is required for the HAT, so it is unreasonable to expect them to write with the same depth and/or accuracy on points of detail that we would expect from prepared written work.

Please use the whole of the marking scale.

### Marking Guidelines for Each Question

#### 1(a)

This is a specific question intended to test a relatively precise range of skills:

- careful and critical reading
- precision in the handling of concepts
- precision, clarity and facility of writing

In particular, this exercise demands that the candidates pay attention to and think about the text. They should show understanding of the author's words without simply translating or transcribing them.

For 8-10 marks, candidates will correctly identify the (Namierite) view against which the author is arguing and express it in their own words. The view under attack has both a broad form and a specific application: it is first that the ideological or principled motivations enunciated by politicians are no more than camouflage for actions which they carry out for other, implicitly more pragmatic, reasons; and second, specifically, that only when we can demonstrate a sincere commitment to a given principle on the part of a political actor do we need to treat that principle as a cause of his actions. A candidate should show that s/he has not merely translated the first sentence of the second paragraph, but has thought about the whole text and the broader position that the author is tackling, in order to get marks in this top range. S/he should write concisely and clearly.

For 5 to 7 marks, candidates will write an answer centering on the more specific point referred to at the top of the second paragraph, without considering its larger implications or the clues elsewhere in the text to the broader position under attack. Alternatively, they may have a sense of the broader implications as well as the specific point, but tend to reproduce the language of the original extract. Alternatively, their explanation may be sound, and delivered in the specified number of sentences (not more than three), but nonetheless ungainly or long-winded.

For 0 to 4 marks, candidates will demonstrate only a hazy awareness (at best) of the view that the author is attacking. They may rely heavily on the words in the text (perhaps quoting them, or – worse – copying them), or be hard to understand.

In general, candidates who go over-length should be penalized. One mark should be deducted for every additional sentence beyond the third.

### 1(b)

The criteria for this question are:

- careful and critical reading
- analytical approach
- precision in the handling of concepts
- precision, clarity and facility of writing

In particular, this question is intended to test the ability of candidates to read the passage as a whole and to construct (in their own words) an accurate account of the author's argument, which is as follows:

Principles *do* shape political actions, and in two ways: first, politicians who have to justify what they do to others in order for their actions to succeed are limited in the range of actions open to them by what will seem justifiable to their audience; second, they will have to ensure that their actions perceptibly conform to the specific principles they are claiming as motives/justifications for them. This means that the actions of even the most calculating politician can be said, in some sense, to be caused by the ideas and principles current in his/her society, and thus that the study of these ideas and principles is always an essential part of the study of politics.

For 14 to 20 marks, the candidate will provide a clearly-written summary of the argument above, without significant error or embellishment. The best answers in this range will capture the argument completely, including the distinction between the two ways in which principles shape actions and the two implications of the argument that are presented in the second sentence above. Weaker answers in the range will capture all but one or (at most) two of these four points accurately and effectively. It does not matter whether the candidate writes a précis of the author's argument ('Principles do shape...') or recounts it ('The author begins by arguing that principles do shape').

For 8 to 13 points, the candidate will get the main point that the author is making, viz. that ideas and principles always matter in politics, but will not differentiate the separate strands of the author's argument, or will only isolate one or two of them as part of the whole. S/he will be less accurate than candidates scoring in the top band, and may make errors or

introduce extraneous notions (provided that neither of these are so considerable as to raise serious questions about the candidate's understanding of the piece). Answers in this band may be less economically, deftly or clearly written than those in the top band.

For 0 to 7 points, the candidate may fail to grasp the nature of the overall argument, focus exclusively on one factor, or present nothing more than a series of quotations or near-quotations. The candidate may even miss the point of the question completely.

Answers must be concise. Deduct one mark for every line over 15, assuming that the candidate's handwriting is normal size (ten words per line).

### 1(c)

This question relates to the following criteria:

- analytical approach
- coherent argument;
- precision in the handling of concepts and selection of evidence;
- relevance to the question;
- historical imagination;
- originality;
- precision, clarity and facility of writing

It may be helpful to have in mind typical degree class boundaries in assessing this exercise, with the essential proviso that depth and accuracy of knowledge (as distinct from precision in its deployment) are not being tested. Essays placed in the top band will display clarity, cogency, relevance, conceptual power and – perhaps – originality. Essays falling in the larger middle band will answer the question soundly, but lack the analytical flexibility, the perceptiveness, or the argumentative coherence of a top-band answer. Essays in the bottom band will have qualities characteristic of a Lower Second or worse: a hazy or partial idea of the question; material of varying relevance; variable or poor coherence; variable or poor expression.

The question requires candidates to discuss the author's central proposition in relation to a political topic drawn from their chosen period; they should also understand that the author's proposition implies an integral role for ideas in the working of politics. They should explore the proposition in relation to a single topic or period and not simply write generally about it (particularly if this leads them to say, 'Well, yes in some periods, which are very ideological, but not in others'). Markers must use their judgement on what constitutes a single topic or period: it would, for example, be reasonable to consider the role of reformed religious ideas in the politics of 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century England, or the influence of Marxism on the activities of Stalin and Mao, though it would be equally acceptable for either topic to be treated more narrowly (in the 1530s, for instance, or in the 1940s); an essay which ranged over all these topics would clearly be unacceptable. The content of the curriculum for GCE AS level and A2 level has been scrutinised, and it seemed to the Admissions Subcommittee that any student should be able to think of a topic s/he has studied in which the political impact of ideas and principles can be considered, but markers should be alert to the possibility that this will be a harder, or less prepared, task for some students (such as those studying the social and economic history of Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> Cs) than for others. In general, markers are urged to err on the side of generosity

where a candidate appears to have chosen a less than ideal example for discussion, but it is appropriate to penalize a candidate who presents an example that has nothing to do with either politics or ideas and principles, or one who seizes on an event from his/her course without explaining why it constitutes a suitable case study. Note that it is, of course, entirely reasonable for a candidate to argue that ideas and principles had no part to play in a particular political scenario, provided that s/he deals adequately with likely objections to this position and/or explains why ideas and principles cannot be relevant to explaining what happened. Should the candidate choose to write about the example of Bolingbroke vs Walpole, s/he must, of course, do more than reproduce the content of the extract.

For 30-40 marks, the candidate will write a coherent and clearly-written essay in which the author's proposition is accurately understood and effectively analysed in relation to a specific topic or period. S/he will offer an argument, sustained throughout the essay, and culminating in a clear conclusion. S/he will refer to evidence to support his/her claims (though markers are reminded that candidates are not expected to prepare for the HAT, so it is the principle of making reference to specific historical cases and reasoning about them that matters, not the amount of information provided or its accuracy).

For 15-29 marks, candidates will write a reasonably clear essay which, in some way, explores and tests the relationship between ideas and politics. Answers in this category may however be more descriptive and less analytical than those in the top band, though there should be some sort of argument. They may be less coherent, less well-structured, and/or less well-expressed; they may pay less attention to defining ideas or be less precise in determining their influence (or not); in particular, weaker essays in this category may assume that the issue is simply one of conscious motivation ('ideas were important in the civil war because Charles I really believed in the divine right of kings and his opponents were republicans'), though in this case they must make some effort to demonstrate, by argument and reference to evidence, that specific ideas/principles were sincerely held (or not) by the actors under discussion. Essays in this group may be intelligent, but too brief to allow for sufficiently complex analysis. A good essay which discusses a range of examples, rather than a single topic, may fit in this category. Recycled school essays which are well-handled but show no evidence of broader thought may also fit this category, provided that the example chosen is adequate and the essay meets the terms of the question.

For 0-14 marks, candidates will have focused their discussion on a culpably inadequate example, or failed to tackle the proposition that ideas have a part to play in politics. They may have written a wholly descriptive essay, or have taken for granted the very relations between ideas and politics which they are supposed to be analysing. Of the various flaws in these essays, choosing a poor example should be regarded as the most easily forgiven, and problems arising from a poor choice should not be penalized twice. Essays which offer no discernible argument, make no attention to proving a point and/or are very poorly written belong in this category.

## **2: The question relates to the following criteria**

- Careful and critical reading
- Historical imagination
- Originality
- Precision, clarity and facility of writing

Note that candidates are NOT expected to write a cogent or structured piece of writing about the source, though they are expected to express themselves clearly and accurately.

This is a rich document from which a number of points concerning attitudes to kingship in this century could be derived.

- That kingly status can be seized by ambitious men, eager to control the treasure of the realm, who lie and cheat to secure their ends, who do not respect ties of family, and who are prepared to murder those who stand in their way.
- Yes kingship, and particularly succession, ostensibly operates within a series of conventions. Sons are expected to succeed their fathers. Kings are acclaimed by the populace in a ceremony that emphasizes the military aspects of rule.
- Though naked force may lie behind the seizure of the throne, the usurper will seek to manipulate the incidents that led him to power, and will both deny his responsibility for the chain of circumstances that provided his opportunity and claim that the usurpation was in some sense justified.
- That the writer of the history, who reveals the duplicity and violence employed by Clovis, is also prepared to legitimize the usurpation, both in terms of presenting Chloderic's murder as the rightful punishment for the killing of his father, but also in terms of divine providence. Clovis's success in enhancing his authority is presented as God's reward for his obedience to divine precept.

Students might tackle a number of issues, or pursue particular points in more detail.

For 21-30 marks, candidates will show that they have read the text closely, accurately and thoughtfully, and that they are correspondingly able to say something about a number of the issues raised above. Their historical imagination will be engaged by a society in which the royal treasure can be kept in a chest; by the violence to which Clovis's envoys resort – these are not suave ambassadors; by the military dimension of the acclamation of Clovis – the clashing of shields, and the raising of the king on a shield. They will be prepared to speculate on the very odd tone of the passage. Gregory knows the story in all its duplicitous detail, yet he is prepared to record Clovis's highly disingenuous and self-serving remarks without comment. And they might wonder why Clovis seeks to deny responsibility. The final sentence seems very strange, and should particularly intrigue them as historians. Is Gregory being ironic, and if so, why? Why might Gregory write such an ambiguous account? What is the purpose of his history? How far is the final sentence indicative of a belief that success necessarily indicates God's favour? (It does not matter if their speculations are factually wrong, provided they are reasonable ones to make from this extract).

For 12-20 marks, candidates will have made some sense of the text and touched on some of the issues raised by it, but their judgements and speculations – though relevant – may be less penetrating, less clearly-expressed, or less easily sustainable from the text. They may emphasize the brutal realities of political authority and fail to notice that this is a world in which kings need good public reputations; in which kinship is in a measure rule-bound. They may too easily abandon an attempt to understand Gregory's motivation in writing as he does, and conclude that the tone and construction of the narrative is simply sarcastic. Weaker answers in this category may invoke external knowledge at the expense of a close engagement with the passage.

For 0-12 marks, candidates will more or less have failed to interpret the text, writing comments that simply reproduce what is in it, or draw substantially upon extraneous material at the expense of proper engagement with the passage. Answers in this category may be short, or poorly expressed.