



## **2007 History**

### **Advanced Higher – Dissertation**

### **Finalised Marking Instructions**

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## **National Qualifications: Advanced Higher**

### **History – Dissertation**

#### **General Instructions**

Marking should not commence until after the final briefing by the Principal Assessor.

**You should not mark papers from your own centre.** If a packet contains scripts of a candidate you know or who is from a centre in which you have an interest (whether this has previously been declared or not), pass the packet to another marker.

Open each envelope and:

Check the particulars in the grid of the Mark Sheet against those on the envelope label.

Check that the candidates whose scripts are enclosed are those whose names are listed on the Mark Sheet.

In the event of a discrepancy, bring it to the attention of the Principal Assessor, and the SQA administrative staff who are in attendance at central marking will check it.

#### **Dissertation**

The dissertation is marked out of 50.

The criteria to be applied in marking the Dissertation are those set out in the Arrangements document for Advanced Higher History (SQA November 1999). Reference should be made to p10 of this document.

The Dissertation is designed to permit candidates to:

- identify a suitable topic or question including a number of complex issues
- analyse these issues
- select, organise, analyse and interpret evidence from primary and secondary sources
- demonstrate an ability to think critically and express opinions
- show awareness of historical debate/controversy
- arrive at reasoned conclusions which show evidence of analysis, interpretation and synthesis.

The following descriptions provide additional guidance on the features of dissertations categorised as meriting the ranking of D, C, B, A, A+ and A++. Many dissertations will exhibit some, but not all, of the features listed; others will be stronger in one area than another. **The criteria should NOT be thought of as hurdles, all of which must be crossed before a grade boundary is reached.** Markers should reward what the candidate has tried to argue rather than penalise what may have been omitted.

**D Ranking: 20 – 24 marks**

There may be no effective introduction or conclusion.  
Shows little more than an elementary knowledge and understanding of the main features of the issue.  
The structure may be weak with a disorganised presentation of the arguments.  
It may be very brief and arguments will look thin, un-sustained and possibly inaccurate or irrelevant.  
There will be much narrative and description rather than analysis.  
It will appear as though the topic has been studied through little more than school text books and teachers' notes, without much wider reading.

**C Ranking: 25 – 29 marks**

A structure that may be loose but will probably include an introduction and a conclusion.  
Sufficient thoroughness to reflect an appropriate study of the topic.  
An attempt to answer the questions and analyse the issues involved; possibly not deep or sustained.  
Some use of primary and/or secondary evidence can be seen, which may be acknowledged.  
Reasonable clarity and accuracy.

**B Ranking: 30 – 34 marks**

It is probable that some dissertations will achieve the B-grade mark because they are of A-grade quality in one or two ways but fall short of it in others.

The argument will be structured coherently and will probably come to a suitable conclusion.  
There will be an impression of thoroughness; the candidate shows an assured grasp of the aims of the question and tackles it with a fairly sustained analysis.  
The approach will be relevant though there may be some irrelevant paragraphs.  
There will be an awareness of historians' work.  
There will be a good degree of clarity and accuracy.

**A Ranking: 35 – 39 marks**

Clearly structured (not necessarily divided up into separate sections).  
A thorough piece of work based on a fair quantity of research.  
The candidate has an assured and consistent control of the arguments and issues, and sees most of the implications of the question and tackles them relevantly.  
Shows an awareness of historians' work and arguments.  
Written clearly with a vocabulary appropriate to the topic.  
A conclusion that arises logically from the evidence and arguments in the main body of the dissertation.

**A+ Ranking 40 – 44 marks**

A well defined structure displaying a very confident grasp of the demands of the question.  
A very thorough piece of work based on wide research.  
The candidate has a very assured and consistent control of all the arguments and issues, and provides a focussed approach to the question.  
Shows a sound knowledge and understanding of historians' work and arguments.  
The conclusion gives a robust overview/synthesis and a qualitative judgement of factors.

**A++ Ranking****45+ marks**

Structured so that the argument convincingly builds and develops through the dissertation.  
Notably thorough and clearly based on a wide range of serious reading.  
Thinks about various possible implications of the question, going beyond the most obvious ones.  
Uses detailed analysis effectively to advance the argument.  
Engages with current historiography.  
The conclusion gives a robust overview/synthesis and a qualitative judgement of factors.  
Written with sustained fluency, sophistication and clarity.

**Consistency**

The most important characteristic of a good marker is consistency. A response must receive the mark merited, at whatever stage of the marking process it is marked.

**Standardisation**

Samples of work from each marker will be scrutinised during the Central Marking diet, on an on-going basis; this process will be consensual and supportive. By this process we ensure that a candidate receives the grade merited, irrespective of the Field studied or person marking. The Examining team will give confidential feedback on marker performance.

**Penalties**

As per the 2002/3 edition of "Conditions and Arrangements", penalties are to be imposed where the body of the text of the dissertation exceeds the maximum of 4000 words. A flat penalty of 5 marks (ie 10% of the marks available) will be deducted. Please note on the Ex supplement where marks have been deducted.

Footnotes are not included in the limit of 4000 words. Where marker deems footnoting to be excessive, they should not reward any information or argument contained therein.

Penalties should not normally be imposed for shortcomings in presentation, such as failure to number pages, use chapters/headings or omissions in footnotes. Bibliographies ought to be annotated, but markers should be circumspect in their approach.

**Special Assessment Arrangements****Transcriptions**

You may have been allocated scripts where a candidate has been given permission to have his/her script transcribed. You should mark the candidate's original work and refer only to the transcription where necessary. Diagrammatical material should not be transcribed. If this has been done the transcribed diagrams should be disregarded.

All marks should be shown on the candidate's script and the packet should be processed in the normal way.

### **Suspected Malpractice**

Some candidates' responses may contain similarities which suggest that there may have been copying. If it appears that this is likely to be the result of the teaching method by which the candidates have been prepared to the examination, there is no need for attention to be drawn to the case.

If however two or more scripts contain the same errors, or other similarities which suggest possible malpractice, a short report with the relevant details should be prepared on a separate sheet of paper, and referred to the team leader of your field.

### **Referral to Principal Assessor**

In areas where markers feel the candidate's approach to the dissertation or bibliography raised serious reservations, they should mark the work provisionally and refer the dissertation to their team leader who will consult with the Principal Assessor. It may be useful to make a brief note of the points of concern.

### **Ex Supplement**

To assist standardisation and to inform decisions on any appeals, markers should complete an Ex Supplement for each candidate. Brief comments explaining marking decisions are most helpful to examiners. Please write in pencil to start with.

Comments should not be written on candidate's answer booklet.

A supply of Ex Supplements will be available in the central marking venue.

### **Marker Report**

This is an essential mechanism in our procedures for quality assurance. In addition to comments on candidate performance and the workings of the marking scheme, it would be greatly appreciated if markers noted good titles, for inclusion in the appendix to the Principal Assessor's report. **This should be completed before leaving the Central Marking venue.**

## Further general advice to markers – Dissertations

Even though all markers will mark positively and reward what is there in the dissertation, they may still ask themselves if there are any criteria where, if it has not been met, the candidate **must fail**.

### Factors which do lead to a dissertation failing:

1. **Total misunderstanding of the title.** It is unusual for a candidate to misinterpret their own title, but it can happen. Similarly, a dissertation may be wholly or partly outwith the content of the Field of Study. While what is there should be marked positively, it is likely that such a dissertation will not pass. Where the title contains an isolated factor, this factor must receive due attention. A dissertation which ignores this isolated factor must fail.
2. **Extreme brevity.** A very short dissertation of around only 2,000-3,000 words would have to be astonishingly well argued to get a pass. It is highly unlikely that there will be sufficient depth and breadth of argument to convince a marker it had covered enough of the markable criteria to pass.
3. **Lack of historiography.** The need for historiography in dissertations is clearly set out in the Grade Descriptions in the Course Arrangements. Dissertations without recognition of different historical interpretations **must therefore fail**. There is a fairly open definition of ‘historical interpretations’ as the minimum expected pass standard. What is expected at Advanced Higher level is that **there are signs of the candidate’s reading, and therefore some awareness that there are different views on an issue**.

If a candidate were to introduce a new paragraph with a phrase such as ‘Naturally, other historians have argued ...’ or ‘There is another school of thought on this matter ...’ that will suffice for meeting the C standard. If they start (accurately) quoting historians by name or refer to particular schools of thought, or give quotes from historians and changing views over time, that clearly takes the dissertation into B and A territory on this aspect of the marking.

### Factors which are NOT in themselves fatal to the candidates’ chances:

1. **Structure.** This may be poor. However, it may still be that enough other insightful and relevant aspects are explored in enough depth to persuade the marker that the candidate should be awarded a pass at some level. A sense of structure often ‘appears’ during the dissertation so a candidate should not be penalised or down-graded just because nothing much seems to have been laid out in the introduction. Similarly, the use of chapters is recommended but not obligatory.
2. **Accuracy.** Several minor inaccuracies, or indeed, a few fairly major ones, will not in themselves be sufficient to fail a dissertation. It may be that the marker becomes increasingly convinced that the candidate is not in full control of the evidence, and that may deter the granting of an A pass, but it does not automatically lead to a fail.
3. **Relevance.** While relevance is important, it is not the sole criterion on which a response is judged. It is a question of degree; responses should be marked positively. A pass at the C level can be gained by a dissertation with enough relevance to convince the marker of its overall virtue; an A pass can be granted even despite the odd lapse or digression.

4. **Thoroughness.** This aspect of width of detail is a clearly a major discriminating factor in determining a grade. It is NOT a pass-fail factor. If a candidate misses out what a marker thinks is a key factor, but comprehensively discusses a lot of other key factors, the A pass can still be awarded. While the candidate may seem to be presenting a very ill-balanced and distorted view of the width of relevant issues in the chosen title, that selectivity is the candidate's privilege. Therefore the marker should mark the dissertation for what argument it does contain and not for the degree to which it conforms to the view of the marker.

Equally, in terms of depth of detail, many dissertations are a very good review, albeit sometimes superficial, of a lot of the issues that are relevant. Candidates who follow this approach, which may appear light on analysis or evidence, may still have done enough to merit a pass or even slightly more.

5. **Use of language.** Candidates' linguistic skills vary. Dissertations can often be clumsily expressed in fairly poor English, but still contain many of the admirable criteria that merit high reward. Equally, there can be fluent and stylish pieces that flatter to deceive when the marker gets beyond the language and studies the other criteria.
6. **Conclusion.** This is an important aspect of the dissertation; it pulls it all together and shows the marker how the candidate has marshalled their facts and arguments. A good conclusion is often decisive in pulling the dissertation into the next higher marks band, and a weak conclusion will certainly hinder the chances of getting an A. However, the lack of a conclusion in itself is not a factor leading to an automatic fail.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]