



2009 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 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

The structure is weak with a poorly organised presentation of the arguments.
The introduction and conclusion are ineffective.
Considerable elements of the factual content and approach relate loosely to the title.
There is much narrative and description rather than analysis.
There is no discernable reference to historical works.
The treatment of the issue shows some elementary knowledge of the issue but has major omissions.
There is a weak sense of expression.

C Ranking: 25 – 29 marks

The structure displays a basic organisation but this may be loose.
The introduction and conclusion are functional.
Factual content and approach broadly relate to the title.
There is an attempt to answer the question and analyse the issues involved; possibly not deep or sustained.
There is limited but perceptible reference to historians' interpretations.
The treatment of the issue shows sufficient knowledge which reflects a basic understanding of the issue.
Expression is generally clear and accurate.

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 structure is readily apparent.
The introduction is a competent presentation of the issues; it comes to a suitable, largely summative, conclusion.
Factual content and approach is largely focused on the title.
There is an assured grasp of the aims of the question and the candidate tackles it with a fairly sustained analysis.
There is an awareness of historians' interpretations.
The treatment of the issue shows an awareness of the width and depth of the knowledge required for a study of the issue.
Expression is clear and accurate.

A Ranking: 35 – 39 marks

The work is clearly structured (not necessarily divided up into separate sections).
There is a perceptive presentation of the issues; the conclusion arises logically from the evidence and arguments in the main body and attempts synthesis.
Factual content and approach are focused on the title.
There is an assured and consistent control of the arguments and issues.
There is an awareness of historians' interpretations and arguments.
The treatment of the issue is based on a fair quantity of research demonstrating width and depth of knowledge.
Expression is clear and accurate with a vocabulary appropriate to the topic.

A+ Ranking**40 – 44 marks**

There is well defined structure displaying a very confident grasp of the demands of the question.

There is a fluent and insightful presentation of the issues; the conclusion gives a robust overview/synthesis and a qualitative judgement of factors.

Factual content and approach are clear and consistent with the title.

There is a very assured and consistent control of all the arguments and issues, and a focused approach to the question.

There is a sound knowledge and understanding of historians' interpretations.

The treatment of the issue is based on wide research and demonstrates a considerable width and depth of knowledge.

Expression is clear, accurate and fluent, with a vocabulary appropriate to the topic.

A++ Ranking**45+ marks**

The work is structured so that the argument convincingly builds and develops throughout.

There is a fluent and insightful presentation of the issues; the conclusion gives a robust overview/synthesis and a qualitative judgement of factors.

Factual content and approach are clear and consistent with the title.

There is detailed and effective analysis which advances the argument and considers various possible implications of the question, going beyond the most obvious ones.

There is an engagement with current historiography.

The treatment of the issue is clearly based on a wide range of serious reading and demonstrates a considerable width and depth of knowledge.

Expression shows sustained fluency, clarity and sophistication.

NB These grade criteria are provided in tabular form in Appendix 1.

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 2008 edition of "AH History Arrangements Document", 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 markers deem 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.

Suspected Malpractice

Some candidates' responses may contain minor similarities. If it appears that this is likely to be the result of the teaching method by which the candidates have been prepared for 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. All instances where published Marking Instructions have been used as dissertation plans should also be referred to the team leader.

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.**

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 strongly 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 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 the 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.

	D (20-24)	C (25-29)	B (30-34)	A (35-39)	A+ (40-44)	A++ (45+)
Structure	The structure is weak with a poorly organised presentation of the arguments.	The structure displays a basic organisation but this may be loose.	The structure is readily apparent.	The work is clearly structured (not necessarily divided up into separate sections).	There is a well defined structure displaying a very confident grasp of the demands of the question.	The work is structured so that the argument convincingly builds and develops throughout.
Introduction and Conclusion	The introduction and conclusion are ineffective.	The introduction and conclusion are functional.	The introduction is a competent presentation of the issues; it comes to a suitable, largely summative, conclusion.	There is a perceptive presentation of the issues; the conclusion arises logically from the evidence and arguments in the main body and attempts synthesis.	There is a fluent and insightful presentation of the issues; the conclusion gives a robust overview/ synthesis and a qualitative judgement of factors.	There is a fluent and insightful presentation of the issues; the conclusion gives a robust overview/ synthesis and a qualitative judgement of factors.
Relevance of Information and Approach	Considerable elements of the factual content and approach relate loosely to the title.	Factual content and approach broadly relate to the title.	Factual content and approach is largely focused on the title.	Factual content and approach are focused on the title.	Factual content and approach are clear and consistent with the title.	Factual content and approach are clear and consistent with the title.
Degree of Analysis	There is much narrative and description rather than analysis.	There is an attempt to answer the question and analyse the issues involved; possibly not deep or sustained.	There is an assured grasp of the aims of the question and the candidate tackles it with a fairly sustained analysis.	There is an assured and consistent control of the arguments and issues.	There is a very assured and consistent control of all the arguments and issues, and a focused approach to the question.	There is detailed and effective analysis which advances the argument and considers various possible implications of the question, going beyond the most obvious ones.
Historical sources/ interpretations	There is no discernible reference to historical works.	There is limited but perceptible reference to historians' interpretations.	There is an awareness of historians' interpretations.	There is an awareness of historians' interpretations and arguments.	There is a sound knowledge and understanding of historians' interpretations.	There is an engagement with current historiography.
Thoroughness	The treatment of the issue shows an elementary knowledge of the issue but has major omissions.	The treatment of the issue shows sufficient knowledge which reflects a basic understanding of the issue.	The treatment of the issue shows an awareness of the width and depth of the knowledge required for a study of the issue.	The treatment of the issue is based on a fair quantity of research demonstrating width and depth of knowledge.	The treatment of the issue is based on wide research and demonstrates a considerable width and depth of knowledge.	The treatment of the issue is clearly based on a wide range of serious reading and demonstrates a considerable width and depth of knowledge.
Clarity of Expression	There is a weak sense of expression.	Expression is generally clear and accurate.	Expression is clear and accurate.	Expression is clear and accurate with a vocabulary appropriate to the topic.	Expression is clear, accurate and fluent, with a vocabulary appropriate to the topic.	Expression shows sustained fluency, clarity and sophistication.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]