



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	History
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

The standard of work was better overall this year, and the team was impressed by the continuing diversity in dissertations which resulted in some outstanding pieces of historical research. The commitment of teachers and candidates was obvious. Equally there is a continued awareness by most centres of the demands of the examination paper and its component parts.

The building on the skills acquired at Higher is more apparent. Candidates did, however, find specific areas challenging though they excelled in other areas. This report will give a general overview of Dissertation performance and a brief summary of the exam performance before considering in more detail each Field of Study.

## General comments on Dissertations

### Titles

The majority of dissertation titles were selected from the approved list. This is updated regularly, and centres should review their selection of titles against the current list. Where an alternative title is selected it is expected that the centre will submit that suggestion to SQA for approval. Centres should do so because in this way the Examining Team can advise on the issue/topic to help candidates produce a thorough and essentially analytical piece. Should centres not choose to do so there is a danger that the candidates may be disadvantaged. This was more obvious this year.

### Structure

Candidates frequently tended towards the narrative-driven descriptive piece this year, and there was evidence of hastily presented work. Candidates who lost track of their arguments did so most frequently in the essay-style approach. Chapter headings help give an idea of the direction of key areas of argument and to inform candidates' selection of appropriate material.

Chapter headings should also highlight the individual nature of the research and should not be seen as a template for an answer applied to all work on a given topic. Mini-conclusions made throughout the piece are very important, and should be used to draw the attention back to the issue underpinning the dissertation.

### Word count

Again, most candidates are now writing to the word limit and not beyond. Centres are advising candidates well. The Dissertation has to be, in part, a test of the selection skills of the candidate, and the word limit allows for that. The significant weakness which stood out once again in the markers' reports was the major shortfall in length, rather than excess wordage. Candidates who write to a word count of 3,000 words are not able to present the

substance required (producing in some instances more of a Higher response), and even at 3,600 words they have omitted ten percent of the possible content.

### **Footnotes and bibliography**

Year on year this is improving. We see more the expected application of footnoting. Only a few are still not citing sources properly, and even fewer are attempting to put text into the footnotes to remedy an excessive word count. These footnotes really stand out as contravening the expected structure of the piece, and certainly will not enhance their work. It is important to remember that footnoting is expected only to reference sources, and (in the exceptional case) to define or explain an unusual term.

### **Plagiarism**

It is worth repeating a point made year on year. Markers are quick to recognise derivative work (and not only if taken from standard texts), and when this is recognised there is not much of a temptation to award high marks. Indeed the thoroughness of the piece is in question, and the research is obviously limited. Internet sources provided the most overt comments from markers. Overuse of material from less than rigorous authorities in an unquestioning manner will not gain candidates marks.

### **Typography and proof reading**

The majority of candidates demonstrated professional standards and courtesy and only a minority did not present work in a format that was easy to read. Some markers reported that the conventions had not been applied. Good practice here is double spacing and 11 or 12 point font. The time and effort many candidates put into this, their first substantial piece of historical research, is appreciated and it would be a pity if their presentation limited the flow of their writing.

### **General comments on exam performance**

This year the paper was well received and most candidates were well-prepared. Some candidates, however, still do not answer the question set in Part 1 and tend to write a pre-rehearsed answer.

Historians' views were employed well on the whole, with most highlighting a range of viewpoints. When work excels, the argument drives the answer and robust detail is added to this.

In Part 2 candidates were very competent overall and applied the source techniques required. For some there was still difficulty in accessing provenance points, and some applied the comparison source technique from Higher to the two-source question. This caused candidates to miss valuable marks with wider contextualisation.

## **Areas in which candidates performed well**

### **Field of Study 1: Northern Britain from the Romans to AD 1000**

#### **Dissertations**

The majority of candidates did well here in terms of both structure and the presentation of argument. Most titles were chosen from the approved list. The best produced thoughtful well-developed conclusions which arose from appropriate chapter headings. Chapter headings tended to focus the candidate, and the marker, on the line of argument being tested. In many cases up-to-date theories were employed, which again reflects the extensive research undertaken. Candidates referred to the main authorities, and markers were impressed by engagement with up-to-date historiography. Markers noted that there was excellent work on LPRIA and the creation of Alba

#### **Scripts**

Essay questions generally worked well to differentiate between candidates, many having the necessary 'openness' of approach to the question. This was seen in the intellectual and sophisticated interpretations given. Most successful candidates took the time to interpret the question (and its nuances), which led to high quality answers. There were very few essays that did not pass. Sources were in general done well, and candidates are being well-prepared here. There was a distinct improvement in the approach to the two-source question, with candidates avoiding the trap of mere comparison.

### **Field of Study 2: Scottish Independence (1286–1329)**

#### **Dissertations**

Markers found the quality of argument good and noted that when candidates addressed the issue they really did so consistently. There were fewer which presented only the chronological survey of a topic. Yet again, markers noted that more candidates were using sub-conclusions at the end of each chapter. Using chapter headings did force the focus on summative analysis at set points. Most titles came from the approved list, and the word limit was adhered to in most cases.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1 essays were mostly well done, highlighting exceptional essays on Balliol, and markers noted that those candidates who were familiar with the grid certainly were achieving well. The candidates who answered the question set and included historical debates prospered. As last year the best work was more 'issue driven' and overall there was less domination of narrative. Part 2 was mainly well done. Questions 1 and 2 were very well done, and in general the technique for answering source questions was applied.

### **Field of Study 3: The Renaissance in Italy in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries**

#### **Dissertations**

The most popular areas were Florentine politics and the Medici. Those that chose less mainstream topics, eg The Princely Courts or the role of women, tended to do well. Candidates were well-informed, and a few managed to go beyond analytical narrative.

Candidates had made good use of a range of texts, including 'popular' works (Hibbert, Strathern, Parks) and highly academic books. Particularly impressive was the work in the 'magnificence' of the Montefeltros in Urbino. Yet again markers saw some impressive writing with the appropriate debate-driven style and use of the range of expected historians to back up the narrative.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 there were high-quality essay answers, well-informed both in detail and in argument.

In Part 2 source answers also had high-quality knowledge of the topics covered, and these were often further substantiated by historians. The best candidates wrote fluently and with evident appreciation of this field of study.

## **Field of Study 4: Georgians and Jacobites: Scotland (1715–1800)**

### **Dissertations**

Yet again there was a pleasant variety of titles and a clear improvement in the delivery of argument throughout the work seen. Candidates certainly were presenting analytical work, and narrative seemed to be on the wane.

This year the titles included work which considered the Enlightenment and the Tobacco lords. In most there was a clear structure/format, with chapter headings, double-spacing, accurate footnoting and bibliography, which benefitted the candidate immensely. These are not high-order tasks but clear instruction is likely to give all candidates the best possible chance to succeed. As was said two years ago, 'be the Marker's friend'.

### **Scripts**

There were some papers that revealed a lot of enthusiastic and intelligent study where candidates displayed the free-thinking approach expected, rather than the mechanistic response of a generic answer no matter the question. Candidates brought a considerable amount of knowledge and analysis in equal measure to questions on the Highlands before 1745 or the economy.

The source technique continues to improve year on year. Candidates responded well to questions, bringing to them the detail required as well as presenting a sound analysis of the sources themselves.

## **Field of Study 5: 'The House Divided': The USA (1850–1920)**

### **Dissertations**

Many candidates this year chose 'single cause' titles, which were very well done. The structure of work was generally well thought out, and chapter headings helped. Markers noted the appearance of some excellent individual research, which was well-received.

There were cases where thoroughness was matched by analysis and an impressive fluency in delivery of the work. Presentations that had clear chapter headings, included mini-conclusions throughout, and wrote up to the word limit, tended to gain the best marks.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 most candidates produced structured responses with analysis. The best work had some excellent use of historians' viewpoints. There were examples of work where candidates' learning was obvious and real insights were given. Markers noted that the scope of responses to questions was refreshing to see.

In Part 2 the overall feeling was of a paper well done. There was systematic answering of the sources, with appropriate technique employed. Again answers explained points rather than merely repeated interpretation points and brought substantial contextualisation to the answer.

## **Field of Study 6: Japan: From Medieval to Modern State (1850s–1920)**

### **Dissertations**

Yet again there was a broad selection of titles, which was most encouraging. Markers commented that the care and attention to structure and presentation was excellent. They again recognised the academic value of the annotated bibliography which did show that candidates were adopting a genuinely critical approach to the texts.

### **Scripts**

Essay questions certainly worked well in differentiating candidates, with many having the necessary 'openness' of approach providing fine examples of intellectual debate in a sophisticated manner. The most successful candidates were able to interpret the question (and its nuances) to give very high quality answers.

Source questions were tackled well overall. Candidates were well-versed in the expected technique and there was improvement in the responses to the two-source question, where there was an awareness that this was certainly not a comparison question.

## **Field of Study 7: Germany: Versailles to the Outbreak of the Second World War**

### **Dissertations**

Yet again there was a good selection of titles which represented the range of issues in this Field of Study, and there seemed an equal split between the Weimar and the 1933–39 period. Some ambitious topics and issues were answered to a high standard demonstrating wide research and excellent independent thought.

There was obvious good guidance from centres on the structure of the dissertation. The best work signposted at the start what they were going to discuss. This was followed by a determined answering of the question at the end of each chapter. Some consulted a wide range of sources, where others 'leaned heavily on a tight nucleus of books' but still attained well. Copious footnoting showed, in some cases, good evidence of wide reading. The best candidates not only ably acknowledged alternative viewpoints to their own arguments but

also entered into a reasoned debate. The use of mini-conclusions and also greater detail in support of sustained arguments allowed 'A' grades to be awarded. Candidates presented a contents page, chapters, page numbers and double spacing. This more professional approach made for easier reading, and the chapter headings allowed the structure to dominate as it should.

### **Scripts**

The marking team felt that the paper 'allowed candidates to show what they knew'. In Part 1 again there were some outstanding pieces of work, particularly on totalitarianism and Volksgemeinschaft. Candidates produced considerable evidence on policies for workers, women, youth and churches alongside the exclusion of those considered outsiders. When definitions of the questions were employed the candidates had greater control and direction of their argument. There was very impressive use of historians' viewpoints which were integrated into the argument.

Most candidates did well in Part 2. The sources were tackled using the appropriate technique and contextualisation was particularly strong.

## **Field of Study 8: South Africa (1910–1984)**

### **Dissertations**

There was generally a good spread of titles from centres, with more from pre-1948, which was welcomed. The Soweto and Sharpsville topics remain very popular.

The attention to structure is improving. Candidates are setting out their argument in the introduction. Candidates were also using a range of evidence, and there seemed to be a greater attention to proof-reading work here.

Those who looked at international relations issues and the impact of the Cold War on western support for apartheid produced work of merit, as did those who studied the black consciousness movement in the context of increasing opposition to apartheid. The feeling yet again was that in the better pieces the standard was very good.

### **Scripts**

Markers commented on the improvement in structure of essays, and a better use of historians, where there is engagement with view rather than these solely being used as more evidence. Candidates were 'increasingly prepared to commit to clear argument'.

In the best work, candidates were presenting work where they had been challenged and were obviously thinking for themselves, rather than producing a pre-prepared essay. There was better use of historians' views, which were integrated into the argument rather than being used solely as evidence.

In Part 2 there was a confident response in general to the sources, most notably in the use of wider contextualisation.

## **Field of Study 9: Soviet Russia (1917–1953)**

### **Dissertations**

Most dissertations were from the approved list and the quality overall seemed good this year. Again a wide variety of titles were selected, the most popular being the Civil War, Stalin's Rise to Power and the Purges. Markers commented on some outstanding work on The Church and The Soviet Union and Socialist Realism.

Some pieces reflected careful consideration of the structure and embedded analysis throughout. This again was much better in the main, as were the introductions and conclusions. One marker commented that dissertations on Stalin's role as war leader were very successful. The best candidates produced 'logical and compelling lines of argument based on historians' views.

Generally there was a very professional look to the dissertations with candidates being able to write in a professional academic manner. Overall candidates were much better and were doing the 'basics' really well.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 many attempted to answer the question engaging with the isolated factor and referring to it throughout. Fluent and justified points were skilfully made, and the paper allowed candidates to present their own arguments. Most candidates identified the aims of the question and made appropriate efforts to answer analytically.

Yet again this year in Part 2 it was obvious when candidates knew the source requirements and had paid attention to the published marks schemes. The best work exhibited wide reading that was successfully applied to contextualise the source.

## **Field of Study 10: The Spanish Civil War (1931–1939)**

### **Dissertations**

This was again another year with a good selection of titles, and most dissertations drove the answer with argument and detailed analysis. Arguments were sustained and the structure of work was generally very good. There has been a consistent improvement over the last few years and the markers are aware that candidates are certainly paying attention to the grid here.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 there was generally evidence of good essay skills and knowledge of key issues.

Part 2 was well answered with an obvious skill base in the differing source questions.

## **Field of Study 11: Britain at War and Peace (1939–1951)**

### **Dissertations**

The titles were selected from the approved list and this year the most popular were those relating to Churchill, preparedness for war, social change, and the status of women. Some

very successful work was done here, with good and balanced presentation of arguments and the inclusion of 'revisionist' historians. Again this year the analysis was good with less narrative dominating the work — rather, candidates were attempting to argue, analyse and evaluate.

Candidates demonstrated that they knew their topic and used the expected texts, and where websites were consulted they were used critically. Markers praised candidates for the professional approach, presenting work in the expected format — double spaced and in 11 or 12-point type.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 there were some very good essays with candidates showing detailed knowledge in most responses. Essays were sound in structure and overall strong in narrative. In many, historians' interpretations were well employed.

In Part 2 sources were well handled where candidates had been taught the skills and process in answering these questions. The responses reflected the improving skill set for this part of the exam and the topics and issues were accessible.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Field of Study 1: Northern Britain from the Romans to AD 1000**

#### **Dissertations**

Some candidates tended to produce work which was dominated by the narrative and often churned out too many facts at the expense of analysis. Markers found this to be the case in those dissertations on the Romans and Agricola.

Although some candidates did show extensive reading in their provision of a long bibliography, the longest bibliographies did not always link to the quality of the work. Also, footnoting was not always helpful. Here it is expected that page numbers should be given, or date of access if an online source of information is used.

In the weakest pieces there was a feeling that the final work was rushed.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1 poorer answers had a standard response but failed to have any discernible reference to historical interpretations. Some candidates failed to address the isolated factor and attempted to twist the answer to fit what they wanted it to be.

Question 2 did result in some misinterpretation, with candidates answering why Romans failed to conquer Britain rather than reasons for the attempt to conquer. And for some the phrase 'cultural domination' was problematic.

In Part 2 the common deficiency was a lack of detailed knowledge.

## **Field of Study 2: Scottish Independence (1286–1329)**

### **Dissertations**

It is important that centres send in titles which do not appear on the approved list. Some candidates amended titles, and not to their benefit. Some titles then became too open-ended and candidates found it difficult to come to substantial conclusions. Those who lost sight of the main issue produced less clear or useful analysis. At times a better definition of terms at the outset in the introduction would help provide focus.

The main challenge for some was to sustain the analysis throughout the dissertation. The less thorough works tended to cite less substantial authorities. Overuse of Wikipedia without cross-referencing can cause difficulties. Also, while it is recognised that all sources offer some insights, the faithful citing of 'Braveheart' certainly was problematic.

### **Scripts**

As last year, some candidates found the essays challenging. They employed basic structures and tended to write to the question they expect. Many candidates chose to largely ignore the isolated factor or the phrasing of the question. Even those who correctly identified question 4 to be about Bruce's generalship made little of the concept of 'exaggeration'. Other candidates in question 2 only wrote on Wallace.

Unfortunately, some candidates wrote very good essays which were devoid of historical interpretation and that certainly limited their attainment significantly in those essays.

In Part 2 the skills base for some is still not apparent. Again markers noted responses that did not include enough recalled knowledge to enhance their answers.

## **Field of Study 3: The Renaissance in Italy in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries**

### **Dissertations**

Most dissertations were done well. Where candidates approached an issue in a non-evaluative way they created difficulties for themselves. The titles encourage candidates to make a clear qualitative judgement of different factors.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 some candidates struggled to introduce analysis into essays. Some wanted to write a prepared essay rather than answering the question set. Some found it difficult to relate art to society in question 2.

In general, candidates would benefit by defining terms used in questions. This was particularly the case in question 4 with High Renaissance.

There is little to comment on regarding source answers. One piece of advice would be to identify the views given more explicitly and sooner in answers.

## **Field of Study 4: Georgians and Jacobites: Scotland (1715–1800)**

### **Dissertations**

Some candidates tended to use a significant number of websites. This, though not necessarily a concern in itself, becomes worrying when the use is an uncritical one. There were also signs of a thorough effort being employed but this effort failed to be used to deliver an argument. The key words in the question are as important as the subject matter.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 candidates wrote well. The only observation made was that we found well-prepared candidates who included no historians at all, which led to an impoverished result for them.

In Part 2 the only flaw highlighted was in the answers to the two-source question, where candidates limited themselves to the Higher response. This is not a comparison question.

## **Field of Study 5: ‘The House Divided’: The USA (1850–1920)**

### **Dissertations**

Again there were missed opportunities when candidates produced limited introductions and conclusions. Those who did not attend to a clear structuring of the dissertation lost focus and produced narrative with little analysis.

There was a need to define the terms of their argument. Candidates found it difficult to consistently sustain their own arguments throughout, and tended to go with the safer option of referring to historiography. Historians’ arguments often were quoted and became illustrative, rather than being employed to further the argument of the writer. Again this year markers noted that there seemed to be a ‘ping pong’ match between historians but little if any sign of what the candidate thought. It is not enough to make this implicit.

Some candidates did attempt to write in a sophisticated style which tripped them up. It is better to write what you think.

At times bibliographies flattered to deceive. It is not the number of works consulted but the actual consultation that counts. That having been said, for some an over-reliance on Farmer’s book did not serve them well. There were many who used online sites and some who became over-reliant on them in an uncritical manner.

The dissertations that were short, some 3,200, meant depth and detail would be difficult to achieve. Again there were instances of poor proof-reading, and again a suggestion of rushing to meet deadlines. As last year for some this was a challenge (no matter the ability of the candidate), as was as an inability to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font).

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 some candidates misinterpreted question 1 and read it as how much slavery contributed to growing sectional tension in the 1850s. Some answers to question 3 tended to move from the question to the reasons for Northern victory. For a minority there seemed still

to be a lack of awareness in the importance of historians' viewpoints in essay answers. This remains the indicator of a pass mark at this level.

Source handling for some was not effective, and markers highlighted the main causes of limited attainment which included merely quoting verbatim without interpretation or explanation, thinking the two-source question is a comparison task, and (in most cases) not bringing enough wider contextualisation to the answer.

## **Field of Study 6: Japan: From Medieval to Modern State (1850s–1920)**

### **Dissertations**

Some candidates did not seem to understand their own issue and produced description and narrative. This led to some very complicated assertion which did not seem to be backed by evidence. Yet again, in some cases the extensive use of quotations caused candidates to lose the thread of their own arguments. It is also important to apply historians' interpretations to your own argument rather than use them as merely illustrative historiography.

The challenge also seems to be proof-reading, no matter the ability of the candidates, as well as an inability to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font).

### **Scripts**

Weaker candidates tended to pull words out of the essay questions and revert to prepared or desired essays. This was true in question 1 where some candidates had prepared for a 'downfall' or 'structure of the Tokugawa society' essay and they attempted to twist the question to suit. Some candidates misinterpreted Question 3 and, rather than focus on political and administrative reform, they presented an overview of Meiji reforms. In question 5 some candidates did not focus on the Taisho years but told the story of how Japan became a global power.

In Part 2 marks were lost when candidates did not explain the quote selected. Weaker responses tended to interpret sources rather than interpret in relation to the question. Some lost sight of the question both in terms of interpretation and use of wider contextual development. This was true in question 1 where the focus was on the structure of Japanese society and in question 3 where only the consequences of Portsmouth were required.

There were instances where candidates did not include historical interpretations, which should be used in all answers.

## **Field of Study 7: Germany: Versailles to the Outbreak of the Second World War**

### **Dissertations**

Those dissertations which looked at Nazi propaganda were mixed. The challenge for some was to avoid a summary of the methods used rather than considering their impact. Some dissertations on women, youth and the Gestapo/SS were also more narrative than evaluative. Other dissertations had limited sources using little beyond Hite and Hinton, or relied too much on historiography and did not write what they thought, or produced

bibliographies which flattered to deceive, or had no footnotes or endnotes, or were very short at under 3,500 words. All of this would limit achievement.

Attention to the structure and chapter headings would benefit some candidates. When the work has too many sections it prevents the depth of study and the detail being discussed and debated.

Yet again some were unable to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font).

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 only a few seemed to resort to a prepared answer no matter the question set. However, there were some cases of misreading, which proved problematic. This was true of question 1 where some treated this as the reality of the German Revolution rather the political conflict in Germany during the war years as a cause of revolution. Some candidates did not look at the dates indicated in questions and disregarded their relevance. The weaker answers on Volksgemeinschaft tended to the descriptive rather than the analytical. And some candidates failed to address the isolated factor in the 'Hitler myth' question and concentrated on a discussion of other factors.

In Part 2, weaker responses reflected a lack of awareness of the process of source answering. This would result in poor structure, lack of provenance points, random wider contextualisation without linking to the question, and historians' viewpoints being omitted. All of these flaws certainly limited attainment.

## **Field of Study 8: South Africa (1910–1984)**

### **Dissertations**

Weaker dissertations tended to have bolt-on analysis at the end of the work rather than integrating this throughout the discussion. Some candidates favoured the long essay approach and this can cause lack of focus on argument. It is better to use chapters to help direct the argument and the conclusions throughout the work.

Candidates regularly tried to pigeon-hole historians using terms such as 'revisionist' 'Marxist', or 'traditionalist' without grasping the significance of these terms. This confusion is particularly apparent where candidates are considering the nature of the early apartheid state.

Many failed to grasp the meaning of 'practical apartheid' — a view which contrasts with those who see apartheid as having been underpinned by a coherent vision dreamed up in the 1940s and aiming to continue to provide a cheap labour force to meet the changing economy of South Africa.

## **Scripts**

Weaker responses to essay questions were seen when there was a desire for the prepared essay to appear. In Part 2 some responses to source questions were weaker because candidates failed to evaluate the source.

Without due care to the wording of the question candidates lost straightforward interpretation points. They seemed too eager to put down all of their own knowledge in the hope of achieving marks for contextualisation while ignoring the marks awarded for provenance and interpretation.

The two-source question was challenging for some who had limited knowledge about poor whites and who did not tackle the issue of 'development' in the question. This latter point, when candidates do not look at the whole period being examined in the question, was also evident in essays.

## **Field of Study 9: Soviet Russia (1917–1953)**

### **Dissertations**

Candidates found isolated factor dissertations challenging. The extent to which Stalin's Russia was built on fear proved to be one case in point. If the work concentrates entirely on that factor such a response tends to provide a narrative description rather than an evaluation of society at that time. Here, as in all dissertations, defining your terms will help. This would also benefit those on the Purges and those which discussed 'opportunism' in the struggle for power.

Work on the February Revolution could result in too much discussion of the nineteenth century without linking it to the twentieth century structural weaknesses and events of February itself.

Tentativeness in conclusions did cause difficulty, and some candidates could engage more with historians' opinions. Some were uncritical of internet sites, a particular danger in this Field of Study. Limited reading also resulted in limited attainment — the weakest work was over-reliant on Corin and Fiehn.

While historians may be used for illustrative purposes, the intention is to bring the candidate's viewpoint in alongside this. And yet again for some the challenge seems to be proof-reading (no matter the ability of the candidate) as well as an inability to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font).

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 the main difficulty was dealing with the isolated factor. This was true in both the question on the downfall of the Provisional Government and in the one on the Civil War. The result for some was to produce a catch-all answer with a cursory reference to the factor itself. Some candidates misinterpreted 'military defeat' as lack of support from the soldiers.

Only very few essays appeared to have no historians' viewpoints, but those that did not contain them would be unable to attain a pass for that essay.

In Part 2 candidates encountered difficulty with provenance. Some tended to swamp their answers with contextualisation and did not really interpret the sources. For a few the two-source question was turned into the comparison question (which is seen at Higher). Timing was obviously a problem for a few candidates.

## **Field of Study 10: The Spanish Civil War (1931–1939)**

### **Dissertation**

There were the generic issues here. As for other areas for some the challenge was in proofreading and in the ability to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font).

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 some essays displayed a general knowledge of the topic rather than addressing the main factor highlighted. The rehearsed essay was typical in all fields of study. In Part 2 the sources were, in the main, well done, although the provenance points were challenging for some candidates. Their knowledge of the impact of regionalism was certainly tested.

## **Field of Study 11: Britain at War and Peace (1939–1951)**

### **Dissertations**

When candidates did fall down it was when they concentrated on the topic rather than the issue, and this caused the narrative to dominate too much. Some needed a greater sense of the historical debate. It is not enough to drop in the odd quote and leave it there. It is important to really integrate this into the debate.

If many candidates are going to approach the same issue, it is vital that the marker has a sense of the individuality of research and debate in each candidate's work. As for other Fields of Study, it is important to apply the professional conventions in presentation. We expect to have a bibliography, proper footnoting and ask that the font size is 11 or 12 and double line spacing is employed.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 some candidates were not prepared for the isolated factor type question and either chose to write a survey of the topic or to write solely on the factor avoiding all other points of view. This was particularly true of question 1. Yet again some candidates had prepared answers for set questions and found it challenging to apply their knowledge to the actual questions. Some essays were brief, or lacked historians' interpretations, which certainly limited their attainment.

Provenance still remains a challenge for some, and the date and locality in source question 1 were missed (ie evacuation following the raids on Clydeside).

There is still a variety of approach to the two-source question. Treating this as the comparison question at Higher is flawed. Searching for contradictory points here can lead to forcing differences that really do not exist.

Using ellipses when quoting means that the essence of the quote is removed and is not best practice.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

For those who are not getting the results they hoped for the following points may help clarify key issues and areas of preparation for this examination.

### **Dissertations**

- ◆ Dissertation grades can be improved by careful planning and monitoring of the process. In the first instance, choosing a title from the current approved list is advised. If a candidate wants to deviate from this, submitting the proposed title to the SQA will allow advice to be given.
- ◆ Teacher input should be as guidance, not as the editor, and to this end the candidate will benefit from establishing a clear structure at the outset. The introduction has a function to set out the key areas of debate, not to over-contextualise the work.
- ◆ Chapter headings do provide direction, and the majority of candidates need that. It is important to read the writer's views as the synthesis of all points of argument. These conclusions should be seen throughout the work and in the conclusion itself.
- ◆ On a practical and professional note, candidates should take account of presentation conventions. Dissertations should be submitted in a standard font (Arial or Times New Roman), in 11 or 12 point type and in one-and-a-half or double-spacing. They should have appropriate footnoting and bibliography.

### **Examination**

- ◆ In a formal exam paper the best essays are the ones that answer the question — a simple point to make but something many find difficult to do. Expecting a prepared essay to a 'banker' question at this level is wrong. The expected topic may appear, but the question is worded specifically to invite a particular type of debate. The isolated factor means that significant attention should be given to it, not just a cursory comment. Balance in the discussion is also vital. Use historians as arguments — not as 'history' but as evidence of the arguments, and do feel that you can challenge views as long as you can justify this.
- ◆ To ensure the best answers to source questions, prepare by using the grids to mark class work. Interpretation is more than repetition of sources — candidates need to explain why their selected point is important to the issue being discussed. The

'scaffolding' of English is necessary, and the addition of further recall will gain more marks. The two-source question is not the same as the comparison question at Higher. Here you are required to provide a substantial amount of wider contextual development.

- ◆ The prelim should mirror the exam exactly. This means that there should be no overlapping of questions, and the best way to ensure this is to check it against the extended descriptor for your chosen field of study.
- ◆ In marking both the dissertation and essays, refer to the landscape grid and consider the drivers to be thoroughness and analysis. Note the minor alteration in phrasing to clarify expectations in introductions and conclusions.
- ◆ Beware of the internet. It can provide an abundance of information, but selection is the key to success here. Much of what is produced is not authentic and accurate, and each source should be checked carefully.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	1204
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	1238
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 140				
A	28.8%	28.8%	357	98
B	32.6%	61.5%	404	84
C	24.4%	85.9%	302	70
D	6.1%	91.9%	75	63
No award	8.1%	100.0%	100	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.