



## External Assessment Report 2013

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 overall much better again 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, year-on-year, becoming 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 Dissertation 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 obvious in a few cases this year, but difficulties arose more where candidates did not set out their intention in the introduction. There were also difficulties in the differentiation between the isolated factor and sole issue dissertation.

## Structure

Candidates were much more aware of the vital role that structure plays in setting out the dissertation. Candidates who lost track of their arguments did so most frequently in the essay-style approach. Chapter headings help to 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 were much more obvious this year, and were used to draw the attention back to the issue underpinning the dissertation.

## Word count

It is now the exception if candidates are writing beyond the word limit. 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. There were instances of abbreviations being used which are not common practice. This should be avoided and should not be employed as a tool to limit word count.

The significant weakness that stood out in the markers' reports was major shortfall in length, rather than excess wordage. Candidates who write to a word count of 3,000 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 the expected application of footnoting more. 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 the 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.

The absence of footnoting is also a concern. Markers need to see the recognition of sources researched as part of the dissertation. Similarly bibliographies should be included, and some markers noted that the annotated bibliography (vital for the Research Nab) was very helpful to them.

### **Plagiarism**

It is worth repeating a point made every 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. There is a recognition that online resources can be used well.

### **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**

The paper was very well received and the responses were very good overall. Some candidates did tend to write prepared answers to essay questions, and did not pay attention to the specific wording of the question. There is a temptation to see the topic, think you are familiar with the generic response, and produce this as the answer. The best answers address the question set.

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.

Markers felt that this was a very fair paper, appropriately demanding without being obscure.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

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

#### Dissertations

In the main, the structure candidates employed was readily apparent and enhanced their work. Most titles were chosen from the approved list. Chapters helped focus candidates, and the marker, on the line of argument. There was some very impressive use of historical interpretations to really develop arguments, and not just for the sake of it. There was plenty of breadth and depth of knowledge on show. Markers noted that it was good to see revisionist viewpoints being used, such as James Fraser or Fraser Hunter. Reference to up-to-date theories reflected the extensive research undertaken.

#### Scripts

There were well-informed and structured essays, particularly to question 5. Most essays achieved a good result. The source answers were very good in the main. Interpretation points were accessible and the best answers were those that explained points fully and did not just throw in contextualisation regardless. These actually selected and explained context points in terms of the exact wording of the question — that is ‘**methods** of control’, ‘**extent** of Viking control’, and ‘**warlike nature** of Pictish society’. The overall impression was very positive. Markers had the view that the candidates were well-drilled and hard-working, and were not caught out by any of the questions set.

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

#### Dissertations

Markers found that many candidates brought a range of evidence to their work. They displayed an excellent width of reading, with more access now to primary sources online. A few are now using POMS/BMB sites via Glasgow University. Chapter headings were carefully constructed, which made the candidate focus on the argument. This along with sub-conclusions at the end of each chapter made for some excellent pieces of work where candidates addressed the issue consistently.

#### Scripts

In Part 1 essay questions 1 and 2 proved popular. Virtually all candidates produced assured responses in their handling of King John in question 1. Although question 2 was not the mainstream question but considered the idea of ‘harm’, candidates came up with some very good ideas and thought through responses.

Part 2 was mainly done well where the technique for answering source questions was applied.

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

#### **Dissertations**

There was an interesting range of titles, although the Medici remain very popular. There was some impressive work presenting original answers on the possible decline of religion. Candidates were aware of the need to include argument and analysis alongside the narrative. Introductions, sub-conclusions and the conclusion were better tackled. Chapters were used to good effect and the overall feeling was of well-prepared and diligent candidates.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1 essays were thorough and detailed. The analysis was good and drove forward arguments.

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 certainly were aware that interpretation means more than just lifting from the source.

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

#### **Dissertations**

This field had an excellent range of titles, with a preference in some centres for the economic and social topics. There was an active engagement with historians' viewpoints rather than a tokenising approach. We saw evidence of serious academics being consulted and used well. In particular there was critical thinking and precise use of evidence in one dissertation on the agricultural revolution. 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**

In Part 1 candidates wrote well. Markers noted that there were excellent responses here that showed real involvement and understanding and commitment to the study. In Part 2 the responses again were good. Well-trained candidates scored well.

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

#### **Dissertations**

There was a wide range of titles with the majority coming from pre-1861. Markers commented on exceptional work on African-American identity in the Antebellum South, on the conditions of slaves and on slave identity. Candidates used primary sources and the internet was employed well. Wide reading enhanced the argument and made analysis stronger, as did the greater use of historians. Specific referencing of views served to drive home the writer's viewpoint. Markers noted that the very strong depth of analysis suggested well-prepared and highly motivated candidates. It was felt that a vast majority had treated dissertations with great diligence.

## **Scripts**

In Part 1 most candidates were obviously well-prepared. Answers had more detail and there was evidence of wide reading. Markers noted that the questions made candidates think and that responses, in the main, reflected real engagement with the issues, and rehearsed answers were thin on the ground. It was noted that essays were well-structured, had plenty of relevant evidence and were of a good length, reflecting the hard work and commitment of the candidates. There was effective use of historians' viewpoints and a skilful use of quotes. This was continued in the approach to source questions. Well taught candidates analysed sources and brought relevant background knowledge to the answer. Yet again the overall feeling was of a paper well done.

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

### **Dissertations**

Again there was a broad range of titles, many on the Meiji Reforms. There were outstanding pieces of work, one in particular on an economics topic. Candidates competently addressed evidence to support their point of view. There was real engagement with historiography and a much closer correlation between the bibliographies and actual evidence used. In the best work the structure was readily apparent. Chapters were successfully employed to build the case towards the conclusion. Sub-conclusions throughout were really effective with some candidates really developing arguments across and between factors.

### **Scripts**

Essay questions again allowed candidates to use their knowledge and apply it. The most successful candidates were able to interpret the question (and its nuances) to give very high quality answers. Those who dealt with the isolated factor and related it to other factors certainly performed well.

Source questions again were tackled very well overall. Candidates were well-versed in the expected technique and there was improvement in the responses. Candidates who tackled the source questions first had certainly a well-considered approach, which served them well.

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

### **Dissertations**

A range of titles was presented from across the period. Markers highlighted impressive work on culture in Weimar and Nazi Germany. The best work came from isolated factor titles. Those on education did go beyond merely describing policies and did judge and measure success. There were some excellent examples of use of historians' arguments and outstanding historical debate. More candidates were using resources to inform discussion and argument in a balanced fashion rather than simply to inform a single line of argument.

In most, the lines of argument were laid out in the introduction and adhered to throughout the work. Markers noted that it was a pleasure to read high quality sophisticated pieces of work which not only had good analysis and engagement with historians but also had conclusions which provided genuine thought and synthesis. To quote one marker 'Advanced Higher History is an academic exam providing very good preparation for further study and these dissertations demonstrate this' .

## **Scripts**

Candidates had a good grasp of the needs of the essay questions and presented well-structured questions. The result was some excellent work of a good quality and length. A wide range of factual detail was brought to answers. Even where knowledge was not outstanding candidates had a thorough grasp of how to approach in terms of structure and argument and gained very good marks. In Part 2 sources were answered well and the insightfulness of candidates was noted in some very original ways they interpreted the sources.

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

### **Dissertations**

This year the titles tended to come from post-1948 which is unusual. The impact of Sharpsville and Soweto were the most popular. There is a greater awareness of the argument and sub-conclusions were very helpful in bringing the focus back to the central issue. The majority presented a line of argument in the introduction and worked to sustain this. There was more evidence of accessing (and referencing) suitable websites and online archives. The breadth of reading is obvious, and candidates ventured beyond the usual texts. There was an effective use of marking instructions as a starting point to gauge what to include. Overall the markers felt that there was real commitment to historical research in evidence here.

### **Scripts**

Markers were impressed by the continued improvement in structure, with more focused introductions and frequent use of sub-conclusions. The isolated issue was dealt with more fully than previously. There was more sophisticated use of historians' views. Essay question 3, on Afrikaner nationalism, was particularly well done.

Candidates were well taught in source technique. The responses here were very good indeed. Good provenance points were made with a good number picking up all three points available.

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

### **Dissertations**

There was a range of titles and some impressive work on the Civil War, the leadership struggle and Great Patriotic War. Most candidates selected titles that suited them well, whether these were 'ideas' or 'events' based topics. Stronger candidates flourished in the former, which allowed them to engage deeply in the plentiful historiographical interpretations here. Candidates gave more careful thought to the introduction, which helped the quality of the argument. There was an excellent awareness of the need for analysis, and sub-conclusions at the end of each chapter were very effective. Furthermore there was real engagement with historians' interpretations. Annotated bibliographies, although not a requirement here, were considered very helpful.

Generally there was a very professional look to the dissertations with candidates being able to write in a professional academic manner.

## **Scripts**

In Part 1 the essays were tackled well overall. The Civil War answers were not, on the whole, generic responses but rather candidates not only addressed the role of Trotsky but also the 'exaggerated' nature of his part. This meant that the isolated factor was given its place and candidates recognised that writing 'why did the reds win' response was not enough to answer this question. The analytical approach was seen in many responses.

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. The use of historians' views was also very effective.

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

### **Dissertations**

This was 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 and some very good use of historians' viewpoints.

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**

Popular titles this year were on Churchill or Bomber Command. Work was clear in presentation, using chapters and carefully argued, which indicated thorough research. Markers commented on impressive arguments with real attention given to sub-conclusions throughout the work. For many this enhanced analysis and offered a more sophisticated level of synthesis. A number of dissertations engaged with a wide range of historical interpretations.

### **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. The essays on Bomber Command were very good indeed. Markers commented on the presentation of some excellent pieces of work and the use of historians' viewpoints to advance the argument.

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.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

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

#### **Dissertations**

Again this year some candidates produced work that was dominated by the narrative, where the structure was based on chronology rather than themes and the analysis was diminished because of this.

In selecting a topic candidates should think about the argument not just the content. Markers found that some work did not address the question stem. In particular they highlighted that 'To what extent ...' does not mean 'In what ways ...'

Qualitative analysis is certainly vital and was seen in the best work throughout the dissertation, not just at the end.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1, more than ever before, some essays had a generic somewhat formulaic response to some questions. This was true of question 1. Candidates seemed to struggle with the word 'underpin'. These responses tended to write an essay on what 'shaped' society. Also in some the isolated factor was afforded too little attention. In question 6 one marker noted that no historiographical interpretations were included.

In Part 2 it was surprising that more provenance was not easier for candidates to find on the Orkneyinga Saga. Also some answers tended to have everything thrown in as contextualisation in question 2, not specifically Pictish warlike society.

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

#### **Dissertations**

Candidates weakened their work by presenting evidence but failing to explain its significance in terms of the issue. This tended to be the case in dissertations on Wallace.

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.

In some cases a lack of proof-reading was highlighted. Also, a few were 700–800 words short, which had a significant effect on the quality and quantity of argument. On the other hand, there was evidence of simply padding out the work without adding substance to the work.

#### **Scripts**

Some essay responses were limited by their failure to address the isolated factor or by producing a very one-sided answer. A few candidates did not seem to know about chronicle accounts in the Balliol essay, and did not realise they might be expected to say something about how these contributed to his negative reputation. Some employed basic structures and tended to write to the question they expect.

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. Question 2 was not always done well. Markers were surprised, given that the 1305 Ordinance is a key document. In some instances the technique required to answer source questions was simply not there. The selection of relevant points from the source, explanation, addition of contextualisation with evidence not in the source and historians' views should be part of the process here.

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

#### **Dissertations**

Dissertations here were done well. The advice to use chapters still holds true, even for the ablest candidates. Bibliographies were varied, but here more were obviously used works, rather than window-dressing. Some did rely on publications by journalists and non-historians. Certainly these should be used but it would be advisable to give more weight to academics working in the field, such as Holmes or Najemy.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1 some candidates did not have the depth of knowledge required, but these were few in number.

The source questions were well done on the whole. The exception was in question 3, where some candidates misinterpreted the view of Source D itself.

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

#### **Dissertations**

Yet again there were also signs of a thorough effort being employed, but this effort failed to deliver an argument. Some arguments strayed off the precise title of the dissertation. The key words in the question are as important as the subject matter.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1 candidates wrote well, but one flaw was highlighted where the response did not reflect the precise wording of the question.

In Part 2 the responses again were good and well-trained candidates scored well.

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

#### **Dissertations**

Once more there were missed opportunities when candidates produced limited introductions and conclusions. Some produced introductions which read like the conclusion. Those who did not attend to a clear structuring of the dissertation lost focus and produced narrative with little analysis. If using the published marking instructions it is hoped that this is taken as a starting point. Some work had no bibliography or a very limited bibliography with an over-dependence on Farmer.

The choice of question is important. Markers noted cases where the candidate attempted questions that were too complex for them. An example of this might be the extent to which slavery determined the nature of the South. A 'for' and 'against' structure can limit high-level analysis. The aim to build an argument is still being lost on some candidates. In several cases, long quotations limited the words available for analysis, and the length of the quote did not always add to the argument.

The dissertations that were short, some 3,200 words, 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 an inability to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font).

### **Scripts**

Although most candidates performed well, there were some who disadvantaged themselves by trying to twist the question to suit what they wanted to answer. Also, some used the sources as evidence in the essays. This will not be rewarded as recall or historians' views because it is presented evidence.

Some historians' views were bolt-on rather than integrated. Whilst not an error in itself, it is not the best way to build on the argument. In Part 2 some approached the two-source question as the Higher comparison question. Others analysed the source in itself but brought little wider contextualisation, by adding their own knowledge, to the answer. For some there was a struggle to find provenance points.

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

### **Dissertations**

Some candidates did not focus on the question they themselves had selected, suggesting that the choice was too demanding for them. Failure to address the title was the result. The introduction for some candidates was an opportunity to present the narrative and for others to fully answer the question. Both undermine the development of the dissertation.

There was a lot of assertive commentary running throughout dissertations in place of analysis. Also there were some vague and general answers, which betrayed a lack of depth of both reading and understanding. Arguments were treated in isolation rather than in reference to the others. Some depended too much on standard texts.

Work on the Meiji Reforms was not always done well. Many candidates chose to describe the reforms and their effects without evaluating their success.

Historians' views were included but this would be better employed to develop the writer's own insights and perspectives rather than being a summary. Also in some cases quotes could be edited better, and, in others, they could be better explained by the writer.

## **Scripts**

Some candidates seemed to have prepared for 'set' essay questions, and were not able to apply knowledge to a distinct question. Many seemed to have expected an essay about how democratic Meiji Japan became following the political reforms post-1868. They were not flexible enough to apply their knowledge to analyse the extent to which these reforms successfully established a centralised state. Some seemed unaware of the meaning of 'centralised'.

For isolated factor questions there were some 'shopping list' answers. Candidates produced a long list of relevant factors but had little synthesis between factors and indeed to the question itself.

In Part 2 candidates did write well, but some struggled with provenance, or ignored the date in question 1, and in question 3 some mistook 'reactions' for 'results'.

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**

Some candidates misinterpreted titles. This tended to be the case when the sole issue was considered to be an isolated factor. In this Field of Study it applied particularly to dissertations on Versailles, where they were taken as a means to explore the collapse of Weimar rather than an evaluation of the short- and long-term impact of Versailles. A few dissertations on women, youth and the Gestapo/SS were also more narrative than evaluative. A few tended to conflate titles. 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. Only occasionally did candidates set out a line of arguments and lapse into contradictory discussion in the main body of the work.

Yet again some work had 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. Quoting historians without footnoting or including their work in the bibliography, an uncritical over-reliance on internet sites, and poor proof-reading also hindered attainment.

Shortcomings in presentation also impacted on achievement. Some were unable to adhere to formatting guidelines (ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font), to have page numbers and a word count on each page. This helps the marker. It would also be best not to staple the whole dissertation.

### **Scripts**

Candidates seem to have responded well here. Where there were weaknesses it was due to a lack of historians' views or presenting a rehearsed answer.

In Part 2, weaker responses reflected a lack of awareness of the process of source answering. Some answers had no wider contextual knowledge only interpretation. A few still

approached the two source question as a Higher comparison question. Some had very basic provenance points. Question 2 resulted in some resorting to reasons why the Nazis rose to power or became popular rather than why Hitler became Chancellor.

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

#### **Dissertations**

Candidates struggled with some of the concepts in the titles. They found it difficult to pin down the meaning of catalyst, turning point and fundamental change. Some also struggled to differentiate between the apartheid state and apartheid policies. Historians were often being used as evidence rather than opinion which means candidates are not engaging with the debate but taking it as read.

#### **Scripts**

Weaker responses to essay questions happened when candidates did not pick up the details of the question. This happened in question 5 where candidates discussed government policy rather than foreign policy.

The two source question was challenging for some. Some struggled with the interpretation of Source B. A good number confused the term 'British' with 'English speaking Afrikaners'.

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

#### **Dissertations**

Some candidates did not engage with the debate in 'To what extent...' and 'How far....' questions. Others struggles with key debates involved in Stalinist State topics which had their focus on the idea of its totalitarian nature or the extent to which Homo Sovieticus was created. The weaker work on the Civil War presented more narrative and had little analysis.

Other difficulties arose when key events were not discussed, for example work on the October Revolution with no narrative at all about the event itself. Also, some candidates found terms like 'totalitarian' and 'coup' problematic. In these instances not fully getting to grips with the question would limit achievement. Another example might be a piece on the topic of Stalingrad which merely recounts the battle rather than evaluates its overall significance, linking this to why Russia did prevail.

An issue this year was the use of abbreviations. If the convention exists, for example 'USSR', this is acceptable. If, however, it does not, for example 'PG' for Provisional Government or '5YP' for Five Year Plans, it is not acceptable.

Some candidates relied too heavily on Corin and Fiehn, and produced work which was too short (2,500-3,000 words). 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 some candidates misinterpreted question 1 writing about the failure of the Provisional Government or the October Revolution rather than the one party state. In the

essay on collectivisation some wrote on industry, weighting their answer too heavily in that area. Some could not define 'luck' in the question on Stalin and did not take the next step engaging with the debate on the use of luck. For some, the word 'exaggerated' proved problematic in assessing Trotsky's role in the outcome of the Civil War.

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 again encountered difficulty with provenance. 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.

This year we saw a greater use of abbreviations which are not considered standard — candidates editing the Provisional Government to 'PG' and National Minorities to 'Nat Min'.

## **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). It was also noted that some candidates had strayed from their question or had not set the appropriate dates for their work.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 essays were tackled well. In Part 2 the sources were, in the main, well done, although some performed poorly in the two-source question by treating it as a comparison, with no contextualising knowledge.

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

### **Dissertations**

Although there was a reduction in the overuse of narrative, some who chose Churchill questions failed to get to grips with it. Some candidates disadvantaged themselves by not using chapter headings, which caused the work to lack sustained analysis. For some the challenge was to focus on the needs of the question, and not just write down everything they know. Many primarily had website referencing, not a fault in itself, but some were less than academic and the concern here was that they were not a starting point for more detailed work, but rather the final destination in terms of research.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 some candidates did not give adequate attention to the isolated factor type question. This was particularly true of question 1. In question 5 some did not define 'New Jerusalem'. The use of historians' viewpoints was on occasion not strong.

In Part 2 some candidates lifted evidence from the source but did not interpret it. A few had limited knowledge of the Mass Observation topic. The two-source question was challenging. Candidates found it difficult to focus on the issue of challenges and the American element.

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.

## **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.
- ◆ The candidate will benefit from establishing a clear structure at the outset. Key here is the function of the introduction. It should certainly contextualise, but it should focus the reader on the key areas of debate and present the writer's hypothesis. In this way the reader is prepared for a line of argument to be proved in the following chapters.
- ◆ Chapter headings 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 in each chapter. 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. The latter point on spacing is one which all markers highlight in reports. The dissertation should have appropriate footnoting and bibliography.

### **Examination**

- ◆ Each year this point is made and it remains true. 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 be '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. Make sure that the question is read carefully. One word will change the expectation of response. The isolated factor means that significant attention should be given to it, not just a cursory comment. Candidates may refer back to it in discussion of subsequent factors. Balance in the discussion is also vital. Use historians to highlight the range, or not, of 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. In the end, make sure the reader reads the writer's view, not a synopsis of the viewpoints currently held. Your own conclusions are vital.

- ◆ 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. Differing viewpoints may be read here but these sources are not set out to contrast one another. Here you are required to provide a substantial amount of wider contextual development. Look at the mark allocation for interpretation, contextualisation and historians' views.
- ◆ 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 progression for all factors, particularly for introductions and conclusions.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	1238
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	1208
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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	34.1%	34.1%	412	98
B	32.8%	66.9%	396	84
C	24.1%	91.0%	291	70
D	5.0%	96.0%	61	63
No award	4.0%	100.0%	48	-

## 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.