



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>History</b>
Level	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

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 good this year, and the team was impressed by the continuing diversity in dissertations, and the dedication and commitment from teachers/lecturers and pupils/students, which resulted in some outstanding pieces of historical research.

Equally there is a continued awareness by most centres of the demands of the examination paper and its component parts. 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 the SQA for approval. 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.

### Structure

Candidates on the whole have moved away from the narrative-driven descriptive piece and, with the use of chapter headings, have found it easier to focus on the issues and to present their analysis of them. 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 their selection of appropriate material. Chapter headings will also highlight the individual nature of the research and should certainly not be seen as a template for an answer applied to all work on a given topic. Mini-conclusions can then be made throughout the piece.

### Word count

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

We are beginning to see 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. 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**

Although the majority of candidates did demonstrate professional standards and courtesy, once again a significant minority did not present work in a format that was easy to read. Many markers' reports referred to work that was very difficult to read. Good practice here is double spacing and 11 or 12 point font. We appreciate the time and effort many candidates put into this, their first substantial piece of historical research, and it would be a pity if their presentation limited the flow of their writing.

## **General comments on exam performance**

The paper was well received by most candidates and they were mostly well-prepared for the exam. Some candidates are still not answering the question set in Part 1 and markers found considerable evidence of a pre-rehearsed answer. Historians' views were employed well on the whole, with most highlighting a range of viewpoints. When work excels it is obvious that the candidate is arguing their point and using robust evidence to do so. In Part 2 candidates did apply the source techniques required. There is 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 the candidates performed well**

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

#### **Dissertations**

The majority of the titles were, as usual, on Vikings and Celts, with only one title causing difficulties. This was a question of interpretation, and was a valuable reminder that as long as the candidate sets out their intentions in the introduction, and they are valid, the marker will go with the candidate. Titles were all chosen from the approved current list.

This year there were particularly insightful pieces on the creation and emergence of Alba and on the Vikings. Markers considered the quality of argument generally strong, with good analysis, which was more consistent across the centres. For some there was still a reluctance to go beyond the most obvious response. Candidates did refer to the main authorities, and markers were impressed by engagement with up to date historiography. However, quantity of reading does not necessarily indicate quality of writing.

In this field one candidate had a comparatively short bibliography but the reading had been applied so well that the discussion was of a very high standard. As in every field, double line-

spacing was asked for as a matter of course. It was found that chapter headings tended to focus the candidate, and the marker, on the line of argument being tested.

### **Scripts**

The standard was certainly good overall in Part 1, with most candidates presenting coherent and structured answers with a good level of historiography. In Part 2 markers commented on the ability of most candidates to access provenance in the 'How useful...?' question. Candidates had certainly been taught well, and source question responses were generally better than essays.

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

### **Dissertations**

Markers found the quality of argument better this year and noted that candidates had obviously consulted the extended criteria to their benefit. Most titles came from the approved list and the word limit was adhered to in most cases.

There were better dissertations than in previous years on 'Justice in the Great Cause'. 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.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 although essays were, as is usual, the most testing area of the exam, markers reported that some candidates' responses were better than last year. They seemed better informed on the intricacies of the Process of Norham and the Great Cause. Candidates wrote competent answers to Question 1. In general the standard of approach was better, with work being more 'issue driven' and much less domination of narrative.

Part 2 was mainly well done. Question 1 was generally well handled and provenance was found. In question 2 candidates were comfortable with Source B, but a few did not grasp the key points in Source C.

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

### **Dissertations**

All very well done and produced 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 high-quality essay answers were presented, with well-informed references to the most famous works — Masaccio, Donatello and Brunelleschi.

In Part 2 source answers also had high-quality knowledge of the topics covered, and these were often further substantiated by historians. There was excellent knowledge of key works of the Florentine Renaissance. There was also good awareness of the influence of classical works of art. Candidates wrote fluently and with evident appreciation of this field of study.

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

### **Dissertations**

Titles were reasonably diverse with the old favourites such as the Jacobites tending to dominate, but rightly so. Those tackled, in the main, made interesting reading. The markers found it refreshing when obvious further research had been undertaken e.g. a dissertation on Bonnie Prince Charlie that consults more than the orthodox Jacobites' histories but seeks out biographies.

Clear structure/format, chapter headings, double-spacing, accurate footnoting and bibliography will benefit 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 last year, 'be the Marker's friend'.

### **Scripts**

They were well prepared for the exam and seemed to understand the process required, particularly for source analysis in Part 2.

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

### **Dissertations**

Overall there was a good standard with a wide selection of titles and evidence of wide reading. Popular areas included the origins of the war and slavery. In most cases a focused title tended to gain the best marks.

Markers found that there was greater argument and less reliance on narrative this year. In some pieces there was engagement with the most current historiography, which was refreshing. Presentations which 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 there were some well structured essays but in the main the content dominated over the analysis. Some excellent 'A' grade work emerged, particularly on the slavery question, where candidates displayed 'remarkable degrees of insight and analysis'. Some were particularly strong in the use of introductions. The standard was mixed overall, but the best reflected sound preparation and answered the question that had been set.

In Part 2 there were some very competent source answers where well prepared candidates readily accessed all sources and realised that you had to explain rather than merely copy/repeat interpretation points.

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

### **Dissertations**

As last year there was a broad selection of titles, which was most encouraging. Markers commented that there were some wonderful examples of independent research. They also recognised the academic value of the annotated bibliography which did show that candidates were adopting a genuinely critical approach to the texts.

## **Scripts**

As last year, well prepared candidates performed well in both essays and sources using the expected approach.

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

### **Dissertations**

As last year there was a good selection of titles which represented the range of issues in this field of study. Overall more were on the Nazi rather than the Weimar period. There were some excellent examples of fine research, particularly one on the Weimar Constitution that adopted a political science approach. The high order of debate and argument was obvious and the bibliography reflected depth of reading.

Similarly works on both the German Revolution and Stresemann were impressive. Likewise there were some very interesting pieces on culture and on resistance. There was an increase in the use of mini-conclusions and also greater detail in support of sustained arguments allowing 'A' grades to be awarded.

Candidates who tackled the more complicated issues did rise to the challenge. There was mature thought and reflection, and some exhibited an excellent language and writing style. On a practical note, more candidates presented a contents page, chapters, page numbers and double spacing. The more professional approach made for easier reading, and the chapter headings allowed the structure to dominate as it should.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 there were some superb essay answers but overall there were more mixed responses. The answers were not as strong overall as in previous years. However, markers noted the impressive answers to Question 2 with very good use of historians' views. There were some equally outstanding essays which gained excellent marks in Question 4 on the Nazi economy.

In Part 2 markers were impressed to see that some centres clearly had prepared candidates well for the demands of the sources paper. Question 3 was very well done with some excellent contextualisation of the means by which the Nazis sought to implement Volksgemeinschaft during the 1930s. There was a commendable use of historians' views from many candidates.

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

### **Dissertations**

Most of the responses were effective, and some more adventurous titles were well done. Markers highlighted impressive work comparing Smuts and Herzog, the evaluation of Herzog's role in the interwar period and also work on Vorster and Botha. Candidates were integrating analysis and almost all used conclusions at the end of each section. Work was again much more analytical and less dependent on the narrative.

There was much better use of historians, and candidates were aware of how to integrate views and brief quotations into the text without interrupting the flow of the argument. There was obvious use of a range of texts, and good use was made of the excellent online

resource southafricahistory.org. The feeling was that in the better pieces the standard was very good indeed.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 essays were generally well structured and candidates were well versed in the requirements of writing at this level. The standard of expression was good and most candidates were able to refer to the viewpoint of a number of historians. Some answers included direct quotes; more made very good use of more generalised statements about differing explanations associated with particular historians and periods of historiography.

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 very 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 women's equality and Socialist Realism.

Good candidates tackled the scholarly debates eg on the question of Stalin as the heir of Lenin and on the nature of the Stalinist State. Some pieces reflected careful consideration of the structure and embedded analysis throughout. This was much better in the main, as were the introductions and conclusions. One marker commented that dissertations on the Civil War showed candidates to be in control of argument and historiography.

Generally there was a very professional look to the dissertations. Candidates were able to write in a professional academic manner. Some showed 'a fluency and dexterity that does themselves and their school a great deal of credit'. Overall candidates were much better and doing the 'basics' really well.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 many candidates made better use of introductions and conclusions; most used historians' opinions and were analysing. Some candidates did tackle the isolated factor well. In many scripts, a lot of ground was covered in terms of breadth but not always in depth of knowledge. Excellence was possible when candidates made the specific effort to engage with an essay question (as expected) paying close attention to the isolated factor and referring to it throughout.

In Part 2 it was obvious when candidates knew the source requirements and had paid attention to the published marks schemes. The 'How fully...?' question had a high standard of response.

## **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. Indeed recent works were used well eg Homage to Caledonia.

### **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 Chamberlain and Churchill. This field of study had an outstanding piece of work on imperial decline. Throughout the analysis was good with less narrative domination — rather, candidates were attempting to argue, analyse and evaluate.

Candidates demonstrated that they knew their topic and used the expected books — Calder, Addison, Keegan, Charmley, Hastings — to name a few. More websites were used, but they were used critically. Wide reading was therefore evident and in this field of study candidates were praised 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 of Chamberlain's resignation in 1940 and Labour Social Reforms, 1945-51. Essays were sound in structure and overall strong in narrative.

In Part 2 sources were well handled where candidates had been taught the skills and process in answering these questions.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

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

#### **Dissertations**

This year word count was much more as expected but a few were a little short, which resulted in a missed opportunity. Even submissions that are 10% under do raise the question of thoroughness, a key driver in the awarding of a mark. In this field of study there were few candidates who did not rise to the challenges of writing a dissertation, although the markers did point out that using peers to proofread might also be to their benefit.

#### **Scripts**

In Part 1 the weakest essay answers were where the candidate tried to answer a different question from the one set. A key difference at this level is that candidates need to use their knowledge base to answer questions that may be unfamiliar. It is not enough to learn set responses. As one marker put it there were 'still some bold attempts to turn a question'.

There were still a very small number who did not refer to historians at all in essays, which is the one bar we use to dictate the pass/fail in the essay. A small number of candidates misunderstood essay Question 3 and dealt with the Iron Age, clearly ignoring the dates in the title.

In Part 2 some found the pictorial source more challenging, but most did not. Some candidates tended to presume repetition of points was the same as interpretation. Candidates also need to relate wider contextual development to the question. Some candidates left facts dangling with no link to any part of the question set.

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

### **Dissertations**

Not all candidates provided sustained analysis, and the use of mini-conclusions was an obvious omission in weaker pieces of work. Candidates need to draw together their thoughts at the end of each section/chapter in order to build on their argument.

Some candidates were producing work that was substantially short of the 4,000 word limit. Many came in at 10% under and a significant few at 25% under. This had an impact on the grade awarded for thoroughness which is one of the main drivers of the mark awarded. At the other end a significant few declared well over the word limit and the penalty was applied.

For some the challenge seemed 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**

Some candidates do find the essays challenging. They employ basic structures and tend to write to the question they expect. While, in Part 1, Question 1 was tackled well, those who fell down did so because they narrowed the focus to the Great Cause alone. Others produced responses which lacked balance by being overly selective in the evidence examined.

In Question 2 some candidates wanted to write about 'Toom Tabard' in the sense of the success or otherwise of King John. They often needed to pay more attention to the reasons for John's failure, especially the Test Cases.

In Part 2 many candidates left themselves minimal time for the sources' questions, and the skills base for each type of question for some candidates is still not obvious. Source question 3 was problematic for some who had limited background knowledge. One marker commented that source handling had not made improvement when it came to provenance stating 'too many candidates adopt the Standard Grade approach'.

Poor English let some candidates down and in one case markers noted that legibility was a significant problem. Candidates seem more familiar with the beginning of the Course. The exam will sample any part of the Course and right across the Course.

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

### **Dissertations**

All were done well.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 candidates referred more to the views, interpretations and arguments of historians and art historians rather than relying too heavily on [accredited] quotes.

In Part 2, some candidates failed to recognise (from either knowledge or source content) that Pius II was highly critical of Cosimo de Medici. Greater care needs to be taken to relate provenance points to the question asked. This was particularly true where information about Vasari was not related to the issue of the relationship between artists and patrons.

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

##### **Dissertations**

Some candidates were using collections of authors' quotes which were noted in their bibliographies. This does raise the question of width and depth of reading.

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 a disappointing number of candidates failed to pick up the thrust of essay questions and merely wrote about the topics.

In Part 2 some candidates misunderstood the sources, for example 'arms' in Source B refers to weapons, not limbs. Although this is a minor problem it is important to highlight that poor written English damages a candidate's marks where poor expression means that the argument is unclear, the relevance is not explained, or the analysis lacks 'a firm grasp'.

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

##### **Dissertations**

There were missed opportunities when candidates produced limited introductions and conclusions. Weaker candidates over-employed narrative. Candidates did find 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 rather than employed to further the argument of the writer. As one marker noted, some of the candidates think that analysis is merely 'to play ping pong with two historians without any analysis of their own'.

Most did present within the word limit, but one was significantly over the word limit and was penalised.

Poor proofreading did suggest that some candidates had not managed their time throughout the year and had had to rush to finish and hand in work. For some this was a challenge (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 interpretation of key points and phrases in essays was a problem for some. The 'blundering generation' too often became a list of the causes of war. Similarly some found the word 'benign' challenging. Again this year, many seemed to ignore the isolated factor and answers became a survey of all points.

In the slavery question, rehearsed answers often betrayed themselves by inclusion of irrelevant detail eg the profitability of slavery. Quite a few answers dealt with only some of

the areas required by the question, and, while we do go with the candidate, significant omissions will cause the marks to fall. Candidates would either go into too much detail on a narrow range of factors, or were too brief and superficial.

In Part 2 the sources could fall prey to poor time management. Not moving on from a Standard Grade approach, quoting 'chunks' as interpretation points, having a certain degree of vagueness in recalled knowledge, and tackling the two source question as a comparison (like Higher) were the main weaknesses highlighted here. Where candidates fell down in Part 2 it seemed as if it was a lack of revision in that area, as essays in these papers were good.

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

### **Dissertations**

Candidates who tackled the isolated factor questions did not always rise to the challenge. There were narratives on the downfall of Tokugawa rather than engagement with qualitative debate. Many were not really engaging with the analysis expected by their question eg taking into account the 'How far...?' or 'To what extent...?' but were rather looking at reasons and arguments without weighing each against the other.

The challenge of writing to 4000 words was obvious for some, and a few were substantially under. To omit 25% of the possible word allowance will limit attainment, particularly in the area of thoroughness.

In some cases the extensive use of quotations did cause the candidate 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.

And, for some, the challenge seems to be proofreading 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**

In Part 1 only one essay contained no historiography at all and therefore could not pass. The isolated factor essay was often poorly done, with candidates often not attempting to really engage with and analyse that factor before going on to weigh it up against other factors. An example of this was when Question 2 became just a general account of the reasons behind the downfall of the Tokugawa, often approached in a chronological manner.

In Part 2, document answers were not as strong as usual. Too many candidates were not engaging with the source itself and lost relatively easy interpretations marks but preferred to write all they knew about the topic in the hope of gaining marks.

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

### **Dissertations**

Some dissertations on Hitler fell into the trap of taking the psycho-historical/biographical approach, starting with his childhood and building a chronological narrative from that point onwards. A few candidates wrote on their topic rather than addressing the issue involved.

As mentioned last year, some candidates had problems in their assessment of the 'effectiveness' of a policy, highlighting the number impacted on by it rather than its aims or intentions. Typically here the evaluation of the effectiveness of propaganda was less well done.

Some work suffered from over-inflated bibliographies. Markers prefer works to be consulted rather than mentioned, and websites were a challenge because reliability here should not be taken at face value.

When the candidate did not get to grips with the issue through the structure of the dissertation, the result was poor. In some cases it seemed obvious that the challenge was time management, with very narrative work and with proofreading not done well. And some were unable to adhere to formatting guidelines ie double spacing and 11 or 12 point font.

### **Scripts**

In Part 1 answering the question set proved to be challenging for some. This was caused by either a misreading of the question or keying in to phrases and producing a mechanistic response where narrative was strong and analysis weak.

The misreading of Question 1 meant that some candidates produced a balance sheet of the 'pros' and 'cons' of Versailles instead of weighing up how much 'resentment' caused 'instability'. Candidates also took too long over the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and an overview was given of them without linking the effects to the issue in the question. Quite a few failed to discuss the instability of the 1920s.

In Question 3 many candidates did not give due attention to the isolated factor and took the option of discussing other factors that strengthened Hitler's dictatorship. Many presented pre-planned essays and, although markers constantly will go with the candidate, they had to positively disentangle these answers, which usually limited them to a 'C' pass.

This year the use of historians was not as good. Frequently, essays had minimal references to views and markers noted that this area was significantly weaker than last year.

Part 2 proved to be challenging for some. Some candidates still cannot differentiate between the types of source questions. Some candidates were less able to go beyond interpretation. Other candidates would not interpret at all but simply used the source as a platform for their own knowledge. Some candidates tackled the two source question as at Higher and tried to force a comparison on them and did not bring in wider contextualisation.

Provenance was as challenging as ever for some. In some cases the process that is required by this part of the paper was simply not there.

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

### **Dissertations**

Adventurous titles did challenge some candidates. It is important to pay close attention to phrases eg 'political force', or 'how effective', and even specific words eg 'exaggerated', which must be addressed as the core point of the dissertation.

Candidates writing about the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism as a political force should be aware that it is important to consider why the politicisation of extreme nationalism accelerates after 1934. Almost all candidates succeeded in making a (supported) judgement, but many were not sophisticated.

The biggest challenge seemed to be to sustain and develop an argument throughout and between sections. Weaker candidates used historiography as the 'history' itself. Although it can be difficult to access material, markers noted that candidates did not always use websites cautiously. One candidate did rely totally on websites, which is not always the best option. Markers also noticed the limited use of primary sources.

Some pieces were significantly short of 4,000 word limit. Those under 3,300 are penalising themselves as they bring into question the thoroughness of their work. And for some the challenge seems to be proofreading (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**

Time management seemed to be a problem for some, and a significant minority did not complete half of the second essay.

In Part 1, Question 2, some candidates did not really deal with the view of the Broederbund given, although they did maintain focus on the issue. When writing about the Broederbund some candidates were tempted to write about the rise of Afrikaner nationalism without evaluating the role of the Broederbund sufficiently. It was also surprising that many were unaware of the debate about the significance of the Sauer Report, despite it being part of the italicised area.

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.

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

### **Dissertations**

Weaker candidates struggled with the ideological slant, for example in the discussion of Stalin as the true heir of Lenin.

Titles not on the approved list, if not agreed by the SQA, can prove to be problematic. The title 'How spontaneous was the February Revolution?' was done poorly. One marker commented on work that was little more than a re-working of a Higher essay, with little time spent addressing February itself.

Some candidates do require further guidance on the interpretation of 'rational explanation for the Purges'.

Some candidates did not read widely, the weakest was over-reliant on Corin and Fiehn. Some relied on three or four selected works without due consideration of their weight and

appropriateness. Both situations limit attainment with regards to thoroughness and the evaluation of the work read.

The challenge for others was to have a clear introduction that leads the reader to the analysis. Without this the direction can be at best limited and at worst confused.

Some work addressed the topic in general at the expense of addressing the specific issue. One example of this was 'October 1917, popular revolution or coup d'etat?' which could end up as a survey of the reasons for October and the fall of the Provisional Government.

Other dissertations lacked factual anchorage and had a lot of assertions or engaged with a lot of texts but did not look at the expected historians. And for some the challenge seems to be proofreading (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 still present rehearsed answers and some also had limited historical viewpoints. Candidates do struggle with the isolated factor essay, and if it is given a cursory reference and it is obvious that it is a low priority, the result will reflect this.

In the February Revolution essay many did not address 'born in the bread queues', seemed unaware of the Orlando Figes quote, did not focus on the events of February, and chose to write a generic 'causes of February' essay. The rise of Stalin question similarly produced some answers which did not look at the isolated factor.

In Question 4 a few candidates did not set out the aims of industrialisation before measuring the extent of success.

Candidates tackling Question 5 had a broad knowledge of the Generals and tactics, but there was the feeling that some had wished for a question on Stalin as Generalissimo.

In Part 2 provenance was for most a challenge. Interpretation for some was unnecessarily difficult as they did not always establish the view from the source and then interpret that view. In the worst cases, candidates would simply avoid the source and wrote all they knew on the topic.

Source D proved tricky for some in that it regarded the 'elites' and there was obvious lack of knowledge about daily life from some. In other cases there was misunderstanding of 'elites' so that the final part became a dumping ground for any background knowledge at all. Occasionally the Standard Grade responses slipped in; that a primary source is more reliable than a secondary source.

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

### **Dissertations**

There were the generic issues here. The only specific challenge seemed to be in the question on the prolonged Civil War. 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**

In a very limited number of Dissertations the issue was largely ignored. One exceptionally misdirected piece was presented where the candidate did not answer the question selected. Markers felt that some candidates had not been given the guidance needed and that this meant candidates suffered as work was irrelevant or inappropriate.

Some wrote over 4000 words and the penalty was applied. Equally, a few suffered from extreme brevity. As for other fields of study, it is important to apply the professional conventions in presentation.

### **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 2. Some candidates had prepared answers for set questions and found it challenging to apply their knowledge to the actual questions.

Provenance still remains a challenge for some. Others still treat the two source question like the comparison question at Higher. Searching for contradictory points here can lead to forcing differences that really do not exist. This also does not allow candidates to exemplify their interpretation skills with added knowledge and therefore gain rewards here.

## **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 for 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 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 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 2010	1193
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1204
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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	26.4%	26.4%	318	98
B	30.8%	57.2%	371	84
C	29.2%	86.5%	352	70
D	7.6%	94.1%	92	63
No award	5.9%	100.0%	71	-

## **General commentary on grade boundaries**

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.