



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>History</b>
Level	<b>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

### Paper 1

Appropriate and developed levels of knowledge were evident in the vast majority of responses this year. Some candidates had a weak second essay, frequently caused by spending too much time on the first essay. Overall, candidates produced relevant responses with appropriate introductions, knowledge and conclusions.

There was evidence of good practice in planning, with many candidates attempting brief essay plans prior to writing their essays. There were also more examples of historiography integrated into essays than in the past. This was used appropriately to add to the analysis/argument of the essay for the most part.

Most centres presented candidates on the British: 1851-1951 and Germany: 1815-1939 topics, although there was evidence of a significant minority of centres answering questions on Appeasement and the Cold War topics.

### Paper 2

This was the first year of a new examination with new assessment criteria. In general the move to a four-question structure seemed to aid time management. However, some candidates needed to pay greater attention to the mark allocation when deciding on the length of their response.

Many candidates showed good awareness of the breadth of knowledge that the course assesses. The Scottish Wars of Independence, Migration and Empire, and the Impact of the Great War topics generated the vast majority of responses submitted by centres.

### Extended Essay

The criteria for the extended essay had been slightly altered this year, with Development removed from the structure mark and an update to the criteria for Argument/Evaluation. The majority of candidates were well prepared for the extended essay. There appeared to be a broader selection of subjects attempted this year, with essays on the Crusades, Cold War and Scotland and the Great War topics to name but a few.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Paper 1

There were some excellent responses across the breadth of the examination. Many candidates were skilled in the use of focused comment and analysis in answering the question. Knowledge of relevant content for all the essays was, on the whole, excellent. Particular comment was made on the following essays:

- ◆ Question 12: many markers commented on this essay being well answered.

- ◆ Question 27: in the main was attempted well, with some excellent and balanced responses.
- ◆ Questions 34, 35 and 36 from the American essay topic generated good essays according to many markers.
- ◆ Question 39: some responses were excellent and merited special comment from markers.
- ◆ Responses on the Cold War topic: Questions 40, 41 and 42, were answered well overall.

## **Paper 2**

The overall level of knowledge many candidates displayed was encouraging. Some candidates did extremely well as they developed their responses in terms of the posed questions in a focused way. Areas worthy of special mention include:

Question 2: the 'How fully...' question was well completed. The question allowed candidates to show a broad range of detailed knowledge on Issue 2. In topic 4, the experience of immigrants in Scotland was particularly well done by many candidates.

Question 3: the 'To what extent do the sources agree...' question was well completed overall. Many candidates showed skill in identifying the specific areas of difference/similarity and exemplifying this with relevant content. It was encouraging to see the majority of candidates building on their experience at Standard Grade and Intermediate levels.

## **Extended Essay**

Many candidates were extremely well prepared and produced work of a high quality. The feeling of markers was that there had been a good response from the majority of candidates. There was a 'marked improvement' in the quality of introductions and conclusions in many essays. Also, 'some candidates have well-developed analytical skills, which is encouraging.'

There were examples of high quality work in subjects ranging from the Crusades to Bismarck to the Labour Reforms of 1945–51. Many candidates used historiography to illustrate the debate of historical issues to excellent effect.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Paper 1**

The main concern from candidate responses was the failure to address the posed question. Some essays were generalised discussions on the overall topic rather than a focused response answering the question. Specifically, some candidates dealt poorly with, or ignored, the isolated factor in the questions worded in this way. Areas worthy of mention include:

Question 10: This question was misinterpreted by some candidates, leading to a narrative of reform acts rather than an assessment of the factors that caused democracy to grow.

Question 12: Some candidates answered a general essay on the success of the Liberal Reforms, rather than tailoring their answer to the specific demands of the question. These candidates made little or no attempt to address, 'how far the Liberals succeeded in resolving

the real problems facing the British people'. This led to responses which were largely narrative on the Liberal Reforms.

Questions 31, 32 and 33: The essays on Russia from some candidates were less secure. Candidates had difficulty assessing the pillars of autocracy in terms of 'how secure these made the Tsar in power by 1905' in question 31. Many responses to question 32 did not look at the October Manifesto, the Dumas and Stolypin. Question 33 saw some candidates failing to deal with the isolated factor of 'Bolshevik Propaganda' at all or doing it in a brief way.

Questions 34: Some candidates produced weaker answers. In particular, there was listing of factors causing changing attitudes towards immigration, rather than an evaluation of the differing reasons for this.

Question 38: Some candidates used evidence from outwith the 1936–38 period. While some factors leading to the policy of appeasement are general, others are specific to this period and the crises that occurred.

Question 39: Some candidates produced a narrative of events during the Munich crisis, rather than relating this to British foreign policy.

## **Paper 2**

Question 1: The 'How useful...' question led to some responses that were based on poorly developed Standard Grade/Intermediate skills.

Question 4: The 'How far...' question was poorly developed by some candidates. These candidates did not provide enough recalled information to contextualise and balance the significant views identified in the presented source. Areas worthy of mention include:

- ◆ Topic 1: Scottish Wars of Independence: some candidates struggled to give relevant recall of the opposition of many Scots to Robert Bruce.
- ◆ Topic 4: Migration and Empire: some candidates struggled to give relevant recall of the importance of Empire to Scotland's development. Rather, many gave recall that was relevant to the impact of Scots on the Empire or of the impact of immigrants on Scotland.
- ◆ Topic 5: Impact of the Great War: some candidates found radicalism in politics challenging to understand.

## **Extended Essay**

The selection of an appropriate issue is vital to success in the Extended Essay. Some candidates are disadvantaging themselves by selecting issues that are too complex or too basic. This leads to confusion on the part of the candidate, or to listing of information rather than arguing a case in answering the question. Examples are given in the advice to centres section below.

# Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

## General

The majority of candidates were well prepared, with good overall knowledge of course content. However, candidates should be encouraged to read the syllabus descriptors and Specimen Question Paper carefully. This will ensure that they are properly familiar with all the concepts and issues within the course content.

## Paper 1

Candidates should be encouraged to read the posed questions carefully and tailor their responses accordingly. The ability to sustain and develop comment and analysis is fundamental to a good essay. As 10 marks are allocated to this, it is time well spent.

Clear understanding of the six issues that generate essays is very important so that candidates answer the posed questions with confidence.

As of next year, the way in which the Structure mark is derived will alter. Structure will exclusively be based on the quality of Introduction and Conclusion. Development will no longer be specifically credited within Structure. Good development flags up argument and the direction of the paragraphs. This will now be included in the overall Argument mark.

## Paper 2

### The 'How useful ...' question

Candidates are encouraged to follow the guidance and comment on the Origin and Purpose of the source in terms of its usefulness. It is not enough to describe these features of the source if the candidate wants to pick up two marks. Answers that only comment about the source being simply a primary source from the time are not credited at all.

To secure marks for Source content, the candidate needs to identify the relevant information and explain why it is useful in terms of the question posed. For Recall, candidates need to be careful in selecting evidence that is relevant to the posed issue. They also need to be careful to explain, and not simply list, the information.

### The 'To what extent do Sources A and B agree about ...' question

Candidates should be aware that ghost comparisons do not pick up any credit — ie 'Source A shows that Scotland suffered economic problems in the farming industry after 1918, but Source B does not.' Credit is given for identifying the specific points of agreement and disagreement between the two sources, then showing understanding of this through relevant selection of evidence from the two sources. One mark is given for this.

Candidates should also make a full overall comparison between the sources. By doing so, candidates are illustrating an awareness of the overall areas of difference and similarity between the sources. This helps in coming to a judgement as to the extent of agreement between the two sources. Recall can be useful in explaining the differences, but is not necessary to gain full marks.

### **The 'How far...' question**

Candidates should make a judgement in terms of the posed question. Individual points selected from the source should not just be listed. There needs to be some explanation of their relationship to the question and what they show. Also, recall should be specific to the sub-issue that is being asked about.

The question must be read carefully to ensure the correct knowledge is being applied. Also, candidates should make discrete points and not simply list things that are not covered in the source. Candidates are penalised heavily for simply listing factors.

### **The 'How fully...' question**

Candidates should make a judgement in terms of the posed question. Individual points selected from the source should not just be listed. There needs to be some explanation of their relationship to the question and what they show. Also, recall should be specific to the issue that is being asked about.

The question must be read carefully to ensure the correct knowledge is being applied. Also, candidates should make discrete points and not simply list things that are not covered in the source.

### **Extended Essay**

The selection of an appropriate issue to answer is of vital importance in a successful extended essay. The past papers are a good place to see how questions can be successfully structured.

Some common issues related to issue selection include:

- ◆ Narrative Issues: examples include 'Why did the Nazis come to power?', 'Why was life difficult for black people in America?' and 'Discuss the events which proved crucial to the success of Bruce in 1328.' Such issues lend to descriptive essays which score very poorly in the argument mark.
- ◆ Over-complicated issues: issues that have two questions in them or that are so worded to make comprehension difficult. Examples include; 'While women made significant social and economic progress between 1850 and 1914, to what extent was this matched by political progress during the same period?', 'To what extent were the social and economic changes of the time the primary cause of parliamentary reform between 1850 and 1928?' and 'Did John Balliol fail because he was trapped between upper and nether millstones?' While some issues may appear innovative they frequently disadvantage the student.
- ◆ Irrelevant issues: issues that were relevant under the old descriptors or are of dubious relevance. Examples include, 'How important was Foreign Aid in Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War?', 'How far can the growth of the Labour Party be attributed to the role of the Trade Unions?' and 'To what extent did the policy of attrition lead to an allied victory?'

As in previous years, marks can only be awarded where a candidate's extended essay relates to an issue drawn from the course content for Paper I or Paper II. Where the issue lies outwith the syllabus, points will be credited where possible, but it is likely that these will be few.

- ◆ Use of Paper 2 topics as extended essays. Frequently these were excellent, for example an essay on, 'How important was propaganda in recruiting troops in World War One?' On the face of it this could give a generalised essay, but when tailored to the Scottish experience of recruitment and propaganda a very good and relevant essay can be generated. However, there were too many sub-Standard Grade essays on Trench Warfare which did not refer specifically to the Scottish Experience.

Candidates are urged to ensure plans are 200 words or less. Some candidates sign for word counts more than this. While this honesty is creditable they immediately penalise themselves up to 10 marks, depending on how many words over the limit they are. There were a number of candidates who had plans of significantly less than 100 words this year. This can disadvantage the candidate as key information/argument can be missing as a result.

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	9189
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	9379
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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 100				
A	26.7%	26.7%	2501	67
B	30.5%	57.2%	2865	58
C	23.6%	80.8%	2209	50
D	6.7%	87.4%	626	46
No award	12.6%	100.0%	1178	-

## **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.