

National Qualifications 2006

Senior Moderator Report

Subject: **History**

Assessment Panel: **History**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on moderation which has taken place within National Qualifications in this subject.

NATIONAL UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS MODERATED

D257 – HISTORICAL STUDIES - OPTIONS

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

In the vast majority cases the candidates' scripts had been assessed accurately and the centres had indicated where candidates had received credit or where a part of their answer was either inaccurate or insufficiently developed to achieve credit.

Consequently, it is clear that in most centres the national standards are understood and applied fairly to candidates. Most scripts were annotated which indicated that centres were using them as part of the learning and teaching process to help candidates for future assessments for other topics or for the external examinations.

However, at Intermediate 2 a limited number of centres submitted "old NABs" (where questions are source-based items for 6 or 8 marks). These were withdrawn in 2002 and they should not be used for assessments. Assessments using old NABs are not acceptable and centres who use these will have to re-assess their candidates using the current NABs, (which are clearly marked with a date in 2002 or 2003 in the bottom margin).

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Most 8 mark Short Essays at Intermediate 2 were well written and many candidates more than exceeded the requirements for passing these essays. An essay which is about one side of A4 paper (15-20 minutes of fast writing) and which addresses the question asked by developing several points should achieve a high mark.

The Short Essay is still causing difficulties for some centres. Structure is one problem. Three marks are awarded for an essay which has a sound introduction and a valid conclusion as well as a discernable use of paragraphing. The introduction should set the scene for the essay and also introduce the points which will be considered in the body of the essay. The introduction should be impersonal, and not use phrases such as "In this essay I will..." or "This essay is going to be about..."

The conclusion should sum up the content of the essay and then draw on this summary to answer the question asked directly. Marks can be allocated between introduction and conclusion on the basis of 2:1 or 1:2 but it is helpful to candidates if this is shown and explained on the candidate's script.

Candidates are awarded credit for "developed points" in the essay. Generally, a "developed point" is one where the candidate has explained its relevance to the title in the course of a sentence or two. Credit is not awarded for simply listing points or for mentioning them but ignoring the purpose set by the question. One frequent weakness is answers which drift away from "explaining" (which is what the 8 mark essay questions ask) to simply describing events (for which no credit can be awarded).

The following points apply to both Intermediate 1 and 2:

Some weak candidates have difficulty discriminating between “describe” and “explain” - type questions and, instead, they simply mention points in lists and expect credit. Generally a list (no matter how long) receives a maximum of one mark because the candidate has failed to carry out the task set by the question. Bullet point answers fare badly for the same reason.

A noticeable number of candidates are still facing problems with the source comparison question. To achieve credit, candidates must carry out a comparison by selecting a piece of evidence from one source, a comparable piece of evidence from another source and then explaining the comparison. The most common problems here are a failure to explain the comparison (candidates simply link two pieces of evidence with a single word such as “but” or “and” or even “whereas” with no explanation); sometimes candidates simply copy out the two sources and link them with “and” or “but”. It is not the duty of an assessor to discern an implied comparison in a candidate’s work – if the candidate has not carried out a clear and valid comparison then no credit can be awarded. In a few centres candidates used a table to indicate comparable pieces of evidence, but without a clear explanation of the comparison, no credit can be awarded. In this case, the “table layout” is probably not helpful.

A limited number of candidates are still attempting to evaluate a source by referring only to its content rather than to its origin and possible purpose. The identification of source content is worth a maximum of one mark. Where candidates identify a source as Primary, they must substantiate this by identifying when it was written in detail (not simply “written at the time of the events”). Similarly, it is not sufficient to identify a source as “biased” this too must be supported by some evidence from either the source or its rubric.