Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:	**History**

Qualification area

Subject(s) and Level(s) included in this report	**Standard Grade History**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	-
Post appeal	21,516

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	21,414
Post appeal	-

General comments re entry numbers

Entries are largely stable, but the trend in recent years has been marginally upwards.

General comments

While the candidate appears to have been very similar in ability to previous years there was a noted improvement in their ability to perform the Enquiry Skills tasks at all levels.

Grade boundaries

	1	2	3	4	5	6
KU	21-24	17-20	14-20	12-13	10-14	7-9
ES	29-36	22-28	22-30	18-21	16-21	11-15

The corresponding a priori scores are:

KU	17	12	14	10	10	7
ES	26	18	21	15	15	10

Comments on grade boundaries

Credit Level

Evidence suggests that most candidates found the KU element of the 2002 Credit paper very accessible – with a straightforward 8 mark essay in Unit I and a pupil-friendly 5 mark descriptive item in Unit II. This contributed to the relatively high grade boundaries. This was caused by several factors including the desire to set an accessible 8 mark essay question as it was, for the first time ever, in Unit I and the first item in the paper in conjunction with five mark KU1 items in very accessible content areas in Unit II. With only 24 marks available (8 of them in one item) there is little room for manoeuvre. Reducing the pass mark by just 1 point can make an enormous difference to the numbers of candidates "passing" an element. The grade boundaries established for the Knowledge and Understanding element at Credit Level were broadly in line with teachers' estimates.

General Level

Knowledge and Understanding and Enquiry Skills boundaries were generally in line with teachers' estimates. Many 'weaker' candidates were able to benefit from the convention of the 'process' mark obtainable in four types of Enquiry Skills items. Without the 'process' marks, the cut off scores may have been much lower.

Foundation Level

Boundaries for KU were 10 and 7, the a priori scores. There was excellent evidence of increased (and duly rewarded) recalled evidence.

Enquiry skills boundaries were close to teachers' estimates and the a priori scores. There was a marked improvement in most Enquiry Skills responses, except in ES1 (source evaluation) items.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Foundation Level

Most markers commented favourably on the overall competence of candidates. Unit III items were particularly well tackled, perhaps because they were fresher in the minds of candidates. More recalled evidence appeared to have been used than in previously years and, although not a requirement of the examination, this trend is encouraging.

Most candidates still experienced difficulties with ES1 (source evaluation) items, despite the additional instructions which it was hoped would direct them to the rubric and away from the use of source content alone.

There was a marked decline in the number of candidates attempting more than two Unit Contexts. It would appear that the new instructions and the need to tick the two relevant boxes on page 3 made a difference in this respect. Where students were still tackling more than the requisite number of contexts this often occurred across a whole centre's entry.

General Level

Many markers commented that most candidates were well prepared and aware of the demands of General Level History, especially the requirements **not** to simply copy straight from presented evidence, **not** to write in list or tabular form and **always** to supply relevant recall in all Knowledge and Understanding responses.

It was encouraging to see that many candidates had been extremely well taught, especially in the techniques of responding to the demands of the Enquiry Skills. Many markers also commented that it was encouraging to see candidates actually answering an ES question and responding accurately to an item with a stated judgement, eg: 'This is quite a useful source'. It may be that this reflects good teaching and an awareness of the 'process' point available at General Level in four types of Enquiry Skills items.

Fewer candidates than in the past attempted inappropriate Unit Contexts and it would appear that the new reminders given on pages three, five, seven, nine, eleven and thirteen have worked well in reminding candidates to attempt the three Unit Contexts they have been taught.

Credit Level

Most markers commented on the overall competence of candidates. Well prepared candidates used a wealth of recalled evidence. Very few candidates attempted inappropriate Unit Contexts. There was considerable evidence of improved handling of Enquiry Skills – especially ES4 (putting a source in context) and ES6 (providing a balanced conclusion) types. Very few candidates failed to complete the paper.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Foundation

Candidates succeeded best in K1 items which required a description and in the ES4 item requiring the candidate to select evidence relevant to a given area of investigation. There were some excellent responses to all items in Unit III, Context D.

The new format for ES2 (source comparison) items has greatly helped students to respond appropriately.

General Level

Knowledge and Understanding

All items on population rise in every Context of Unit 1 were well tackled.

There were some very full responses to item 1 in Units IIB and IIC.

In Unit III the best responses were to item I in IIIA, item I in IIIC and item 2 in IIID.

Enquiry Skills

In the majority of cases, the investigation exercises in Unit 1 were well done with very few candidates failing overall.

There was some evidence that the concept of a developed point of comparison in response to an ES2 item was being well bedded in to centres' teaching.

In many cases, Enquiry Skills were better done than KU items.

Unit IIB Enquiry Skills items were particularly well handled.

Candidates handled pictorial sources very successfully.

Credit

Knowledge and Understanding

There were some excellent, well evidenced responses to the 8 mark extended writing items in all three Unit Contexts. Many candidates wrote well structured essays with an introduction, a main body of evidence (usually well over the required six pieces) all presented in discrete paragraphs, and with a well worked, analytic conclusion. There was considerable evidence of good classroom training and preparation for more advanced history writing requirements. Some candidates even found time to present a brief plan.

Unit II, Context B, item 1 saw some excellent judgmental essays which weighed up the contribution of the presented factor of naval rivalry against other causes of tension pre 1914. Item 2 was tackled successfully in both Unit II, Context B and Context C.

Unit III, Context A, item 2 was well done as was Unit III, Context B, item 1, and Unit III, Context D, item 1.

Enquiry Skills

The "investigation exercise" in Unit 1 (items 2, 3 and 4) was usually well done. While the ES5 item is done better than the other two (ES1 and ES6 items), taken as a whole, these three items pose a considerable challenge to many candidates.

There was evidence of better responses to ES2 (source comparison), ES4 (contextualisation) and ES6 (provision of conclusion) items.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Foundation

Item 3 on the Suffragettes in Unit 1, Contexts B and C posed some problems for candidates. The similar type of item (KU3) in Unit III, Context D (question 7) posed similar difficulties.

The only ES2 item to cause any problem was Question 8 in Unit III, Context C.

Some candidates found Source F in both Contexts C and D quite hard to handle.

General Level

Knowledge and Understanding

There were many incidents of candidates over writing. These were probably well prepared candidates going on to tackle the Credit paper. However, candidates should take careful note of the marks allocated for all items.

In Unit 1A, some candidates struggled with item 2 and were unable to bring any recalled evidence to bear. Ten possible points of recall were itemised in the Marking Instructions.

In Unit I, Contexts B and C, some candidates offered inappropriate responses to item 2.

In Unit IIB, some candidates confused “rationing” with “food shortages”.

In Unit IIC, item 2, some candidates struggled to present recalled evidence.

Enquiry Skills

There was still some confusion about the appropriate approach to adopt in response to certain ES items.

Too many candidates are still offering evidence based solely on source content in an ES1 response.

Some candidates are still offering a source comparison by itemising what one source says and then going through the whole procedure with the second source. In these cases, the marker has to do the work and match up likely comparisons.

Some candidates appear to find it difficult to present recall in response to the ES6 (conclusion) item in Unit 1.

In Unit IIB, some candidates failed to spot that item 3 was an ES1 type and offered a response based on the usefulness of a tank.

In Unit IIIC there was some confusion in responding to items 3 and 4.

Credit

Knowledge and Understanding

Some candidates failed to demonstrate the process requirements of the 8 mark extended essay which asks specifically for an '**essay**' and for it to be written in paragraphs. Many responses failed to satisfy the basis essay requirements of an introduction; relevant evidence used in support of the response and directed at answering the question and the provision of a conclusion. Many candidates lost up to 2 marks as a consequence of their presenting flawed or non-existent process. In addition, too many candidates supplied lengthy, and not always totally relevant, background information. Several candidates who tackled Units IB and IC described how conditions changed but did not explain why peoples' lives improved.

Some candidates failed to grasp the specific requirements in Unit III. Context D, item 2 which asked for a description of the ways in which Hitler gained ***total*** power.

Enquiry Skills

The Unit I "investigation" exercises were generally well done although most candidates attempting Unit I, Context C found it slightly harder than in the other two Unit Contexts. In all contexts, too many candidates provided evidence on source content alone as their response to the ES1 (source evaluation) item. Many candidates come to the exam equipped with a formula for answering ES1 items and do not adapt this in a manner appropriate to the particular source being evaluated. This especially penalised them in Unit III where they struggled to achieve 4 marks.

Many candidates still fail to respond adequately to a secondary source and insist on stating that a historian's viewpoint is flawed/not as good as a primary source/biased/written by someone long after the event/the "work of an absent minded professor who will remember nothing".

In ES5 responses (selection and organisation of evidence), many candidates do not suitably organise their evidence selection and fail to itemise whether their choice is selected for or against the stated issue and/or from which source it has been taken.

Many candidates choose to ignore Source C and while it is not essential to refer to all three sources, it is good practice and can, in many cases, be beneficial to the candidate.

Perhaps as a result of not reading Source C, some candidates are misled into believing that they are supplying recalled evidence whereas in fact none is given. This reduced the mark to 2 out of 5 – as does the lack of a balanced conclusion which takes into account both sides of the presented argument.

Many candidates found the Enquiry Skills items in Units IIB and IIC quite daunting.

Although the idea of a developed point of comparison is bedding in to most centres' teaching, some candidates still fail to take advantage of this response and make life very difficult by trying to find five simple comparisons across two sources. This was particularly noticeable in Unit II, item 4. A suitable response, worthy of 2 marks, would be:

The sources agreed that the Treaty of Versailles was hard on Germany as Source A calls it a "peace of vengeance" while Source B agrees by saying it was a "stern" treaty.

Areas of common misunderstanding

Foundation

As stated, ES1 items still pose a challenge for many candidates. Although more candidates than previously were responding in terms of authorship, contemporaneity, purpose etc., too many students were still tackling source evaluation in terms of source content alone. On many occasions the problem was evident across a whole-school sample. This item may need further rewording and highlighting of the requirements in order to elicit the required response. A few candidates are still obviously tackling the wrong Unit Context(s). Some candidates were ticking the correct two boxes on page 3 but then going on to tackle alternative Unit Contexts in the actual examination paper.

General

It is quite permissible to use a table or a chart in responding to the ES5 (selection and organisation of evidence) item. It is also acceptable to use a list approach or bullet points. In no other response is it acceptable to use lists, bullet points or the use of tables or charts (eg – in response to an ES2 Source comparison item.)

Credit

Too many candidates do not understand the concept of an 'essay' in their responses to the 8 mark extended writing exercise. Candidates must always provide an acceptable essay structure when tackling this item which appears once in the Credit paper.

In all responses (except in the ES5 item which tasks for selection and organisation of evidence) candidates must avoid using lists or bullet points. It is not appropriate to use a table or a chart – especially in a source comparison response. A chart or table can only be used, if desired, in the ES5 exercise.

In responding to an ES3 (assessment of attitude item), candidates must avoid straight copying without any discussion of the points of view being exhibited. A 'holistic' statement where the candidate gives an overall assessment, eg: "the writer hates the Treaty of Versailles" can usually only be rewarded if suitably reinforced with reference to the source. It is always good practice for the candidate to use (as far as possible) his or her own words to discuss an author's attitude(s).

Recommendations

Summary of feedback to centres

Foundation

Candidates should be made fully aware what **TWO** unit contexts they are to tackle and to tick the relevant two boxes on page 3 of the exam paper.

Candidates need to be made aware of the requirements of an ES1 (source evaluation) item and how to respond effectively to the new prompt.

Many markers commented on an increased number of problems with illegibility of handwriting. It was also reported that, on occasion, scribed scripts were equally hard to read. The possibility of using electronic word processing could perhaps be explored further.

General

Candidates must always be made fully aware of what three Unit Contexts they are to tackle.

Candidates must respond to an ES1 item in terms of authorship, contemporaneity, purpose, bias etc as well as content.

Candidates should response to an ES2 (source comparison) item in terms of a developed comparison, eg:

The source agree that tanks were used against barbed wire = a simple comparison
as Source C shows a tank about to come up to some wire and Source D says they were used against entanglements of barbed wire = a development of the above simple comparison.

A response which gives both the simple comparison, followed by the development merits 2 marks. The provision of either a simple comparison or a developed comparison (as stated above) merits 1 mark. In the case of the response example given above, the candidate attempting the General paper would also receive a process mark for correctly identifying and making the relevant judgement that the sources agree. Only 1 process mark is available in each appropriate ES item. A candidate who responded to an ES2 item in the manner stated above would thus merit 3 marks. This acts as a differentiating factor and suitably reward a response given to an item in the General examination as against an identical response given to an ES2 item in the Credit paper.

Candidates must be fully aware of the requirements not to present evidence as a list or in bullet point or in the form of a table or chart unless in response to an ES5 (evidence selection and organisation) item.

Credit

Candidates must be made aware of the requirements of an 8 mark extended response. Up to 2 process marks may be deducted for a failure to produce an introduction and/or a conclusion or the omission of structured paragraphs.

Candidates need to be made aware of the requirements of an ES1 (source evaluation) item and how to respond effectively to the demands of this item through the **effective and appropriate adaptation** of any rehearsed formula. Too many appear to have learned the skill mechanically and cannot adapt their skills training to evaluate a specific source.

Candidates should be familiar with the reasons why a secondary source, such as the work of an eminent historian, is valuable historical evidence.

Candidates should be aware of the nature of a developed point of comparison.

Candidates should always write in properly constructed sentences and not through the use of lists, bullet points or tables, except in a response to an ES5 (selection and organisation of evidence) item.

Many markers commented on an increased number of problems with illegibility of handwriting or candidates using pencil. Occasionally, scribed scripts were equally hard to read. The possibility of using electronic word processing could perhaps be explored further.