# Course report 2025

## Advanced Higher History

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 1,379

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 1,306

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

| Course award | Number of candidates | Percentage | Cumulative percentage | Minimum mark required |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 424 | 32.5 | 32.5 | 98 |
| B | 335 | 25.7 | 58.1 | 84 |
| C | 293 | 22.4 | 80.6 | 70 |
| D | 163 | 12.5 | 93.0 | 56 |
| No award | 91 | 7.0 | 100 | Not applicable |

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ‘most’ means greater than or equal to 70%
- ‘many’ means 50% to 69%
- ‘some’ means 25% to 49%
- ‘a few’ means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

# Section 1: comments on the assessment

## Question paper

The question paper performed as expected and produced a wide range of responses. A few candidates wrote about the topic rather than answering the specific question. A few candidates did not complete the paper, choosing to answer one essay and the source questions. A few candidates missed out a source question. Candidates found the ‘Evaluate the usefulness …’ source question the most challenging but responses had improved from last year.

## Project–dissertation

The project–dissertation performed as expected.

Most candidates chose suitable titles and an appropriate issue that allowed them to meet the requirements of the project–dissertation. Some candidates engaged well with primary evidence, but this was not evident in all dissertations.

Most candidates adhered to the word count of 4,000 words for the dissertation. Candidates did not always use footnotes to highlight the origin of sources.

# Section 2: comments on candidate performance

## Question paper

Candidates should recognise in the question the three core aspects of the topic or issue they are being asked about. The question asks for only one of these:

- the causes of — asking for an assessment of the reasons why something happened
- the impact of — asking for an assessment of the effects of something
- the nature of — asking for an assessment of the way in which an event unfolds, or the way a topic or issue was considered at the time and how that relates to our current understanding of it

As in previous years, most candidates understood ‘cause’ and ‘impact’ but found ‘nature’ difficult, however markers noted improvement this year.

### Part A: Historical issues — essays

Most candidates gave considered answers to two essay questions and identified the key areas in the topic and the issue to be discussed. Some candidates did not address the term given in the question or the quote, both provided to help give a focus to the question. A few candidates wrote generally about the topic and did not answer the question. Successful essays contained robust factual evidence to back up the argument. Historiographical essays with little evidence tend to lose the ‘writer’s voice’, which is key to this task. With limited detail it is difficult for candidates to confidently say ‘this clearly shows…’ when it does not.

### Part B: Historical sources — source-based questions

The question paper has three types of source question. Each source question has a different question stem and assesses a particular skill. While the skills required to

answer each question are similar, candidates need to apply these skills in a different way. In all three the task is to contextualise the source as follows:

- In the ‘How fully…?’ question, candidates are required to contextualise the event being discussed by considering its fullness — what does the source bring to the topic and issue and what is omitted? Candidates were the most successful in this question.
- In the ‘Two-source historical interpretations’ question, candidates are required to contextualise the views of historians on an issue that might be similar or different by considering the interpretations given, providing evidence to justify or criticise views, and considering additional points that are omitted that might provide evidence to back these views. Many candidates tackled this question very well.
- In the ‘Evaluate the usefulness …’ question, candidates are required to contextualise the views of a document or source in terms of its usefulness to a particular topic or issue. Candidates assess that value by commenting on rubric provenance as follows:

    - author: what impact does the type of source (for example official document, personal memoir, letter or speech) have on the value of the author? Does it add value or limit it?
    - purpose: what is the intention of the source? What audience and what impact is wanted?
    - timing: does the timing of the source have value in relation to the event, topic or issue being discussed?

Some candidates found this challenging but markers observed a noticeable improvement from last year.

Some candidates made generic comments, and a few wrote about the ‘type’ of source rather than ‘purpose’.

Many candidates were better at content provenance, but some candidates interpreted without making any comment on the value of the source. The skill is to consider the value that the source commentary brings to the topic, for example, a formal recognition of a situation or a letter from a participant and their view. The

source might conform to an ‘official view’ or be biased because of the views of the author.

Candidates have many opportunities to add in recalled knowledge as wider contextual development (WCD) in all source answers. The candidate should relate that knowledge to the context of the source and the question. Overall, candidates linked knowledge to source points well. However, when adding omitted points, they must relate this information to the question asked and not list points by stating ‘Another point is …’, as a list is not answering the question.

Historians’ views are allocated 2 marks in each question, but more can gain marks for WCD. Most candidates gave historians’ views, but a few did not.

## Field of study 1 — Northern Britain: from the Iron Age to 1034: essays

### Structure

Most candidates correctly identified the focus of the question and identified relevant factors.

Most candidates set out a line of argument in their introduction, which they supported in their final conclusion. Very occasionally, a few candidates did not set out a clear line of argument.

Most essays were clearly structured with separate paragraphs, including an introduction and conclusion.

Some candidates did not address the historical debate (for example, by outlining schools of thought and/or highlighting key historians). Others provided only very basic reference to this (for example, ‘Historians debate…’).

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Most candidates demonstrated a good balance of breadth and depth — usually three factors or paragraphs, with detailed knowledge in each section.

Many candidates made effective use of evidence from a wide range of sources, for example, classical historians or literary sources and a range of archaeological evidence.

Some candidates produced outstanding essays in which they made extensive use of detailed evidence to advance their arguments.

A few candidates focused on breadth at the expense of depth, trying to cover too many factors. Weaker candidates tended to list facts with little attempt at analysis.

In rare instances, a few candidates misunderstood the question, for example they interpreted question 2 as the reasons for Rome's failure to conquer Scotland and not the wider impact of Rome. These essays lacked relevance and achieved low marks.

Very rarely, a few candidates did not address the isolated factor, for example they did not discuss evidence for (or against) the importance of warfare in the Iron Age in their answers to question 1. This is a serious error since essays that do not deal with an isolated factor cannot access the full range of marks available.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

In the best responses, some candidates demonstrated a clear line of argument in the introduction, and effectively and insightfully analysed the evidence throughout. They showed balance by considering arguments and counter-arguments.

Many candidates used sub-conclusions effectively to judge the importance of different factors.

Some candidates provided thorough and well-substantiated conclusions that synthesised the different arguments (drawing them together and weighing up their relative importance) before reaching their own final conclusion on the issue.

A few candidates focused on narrative and/or description at the expense of analysis and evaluation. Their expression lacked clarity, and their arguments were either poorly considered or poorly substantiated by the evidence presented.

### Historical sources and interpretations

In the best responses, some candidates engaged thoroughly with the historical debate, showing appreciation of different schools of thought (for example, traditional versus contemporary views), and considering the arguments and counter-arguments presented by different historians before reaching their own conclusions.

Some candidates included historians' views but made little attempt to use these views to advance their argument.

## Field of study 1 — Northern Britain: from the Iron Age to 1034: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Some candidates interpreted key points from the source well, showing good insight.

Some candidates demonstrated good, relevant use of recall and/or historians' views on the purposes of Hadrian's Wall, both to develop the views in the source (contextual development) and to comment on omissions (wider contextual development).

Some candidates struggled with the provenance points (author, purpose, timing), with comments on the author lacking insight.

Some candidates could not access interpretation marks because even though they identified the correct point in the source, they did not explain clearly what this suggested about the reasons for the wall's construction.

Some candidates provided WCD that was not always sufficiently focused on the question, for example the purposes of the wall. Some candidates provided far more WCD than they could gain marks for and could have used this time more effectively.

### How fully …?

Some candidates made good, accurate reference to historians' views in their answers.

Some candidates were not sufficiently focused on the question when adding WCD — relations between Norse settlers and natives, in the Northern and Western Isles specifically — so examples from mainland Scotland could not gain marks.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Many candidates focused effectively on the differing interpretations.

A few candidates attempted to answer this like a 'comparison' question by comparing the two sources point by point. This approach made it more difficult to access the full range of marks available.

## Field of study 2 — Scotland: independence and kingship, 1249–1334: essays

Most candidates performed well in question 12.

Some candidates struggled with question 9.

### Structure

Most candidates wrote acceptable introductions. Many candidates gave a clear structure and then outlined the historical debate. Very few candidates prioritised factors in the introduction.

Many candidates twisted questions to write the essay they were prepared for (Robert winning the civil war) rather than the one that appeared (Robert's usurpation).

A few candidates gave a huge volume of context, which is unnecessary.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Most candidates had a clear idea of the breadth and depth required. Many candidates coped well in adapting their knowledge to the requirements and specifics of the questions.

Some candidates produced strong, well-prepared essays, demonstrating exceptional detailed knowledge. Most candidates followed a straightforward approach to essays and topic areas.

A few candidates included irrelevant information as it was outwith the dates in the question.

Many candidates gave a broad overview but did not demonstrate a lot of depth.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Most candidates were aware of and used embedded analysis and evaluation, and consistently sustained their line of argument, which they clearly referenced throughout.

Most candidates linked their analysis to the question and provided balance. Most candidates had a very clear line of argument.

A few candidates provided a reasonable amount of knowledge but did not use this to advance their line of argument.

Many candidates provided summative analysis rather than evaluation to advance the argument.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Most candidates were well prepared for historians' interpretations and used these well.

Overall, many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of historical views and some candidates made connections between historians. However, most references to historians read like a list, for example ‘Watson says…, Barrow says…’.

Very few candidates did not use historians’ interpretations and historical works.

## Field of study 2 — Scotland: independence and kingship, 1249–1334: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Some candidates achieved good marks for provenance. In general, candidates evaluated the source well.

Most candidates provided extensive WCD and gained full marks for historical interpretations. Some candidates wrote more WCD than was needed for this question.

This question was a discriminator question for candidates, especially for provenance comments. Some candidates struggled with rubric provenance and provided very basic or generic comments and did not use context or detail to explain their provenance.

### How fully …?

Most candidates were very comfortable and confident in responding to this question. Most candidates provided extensive WCD and most gained full marks for historical interpretations.

Some candidates often wrote more WCD than was needed. Quite a few candidates picked out other parts of the source as an interpretation point.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Most candidates were very comfortable and confident in responding to this question. Most candidates provided extensive WCD and most gained full marks for historical interpretations.

Some candidates struggled with interpretation, not focusing on the question.

Candidate interpretations of Source B were weaker than Source A.

## Field of study 3 — Scotland: from the Treaty of Union to Enlightenment, 1707–1815: essays

### Structure

The question stems were worded to encourage critical thinking, which allowed most candidates to understand exactly what they were being asked and to respond appropriately.

In question 18, some candidates interpreted ‘internal divisions’ to mean regional patterns of support rather than divisions within the officer core. Candidates tended to resolve this in subsequent paragraphs in all essays that focused on leadership.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Almost all candidates were very well prepared, demonstrating an impressive breadth and depth of historical knowledge, typically featuring at least four factors.

All responses contained a reasonable amount of relevant information. Some candidates were limited by the evidence they selected, but most candidates accessed good detail and presented it well.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

All candidates demonstrated clear, accurate use of analysis and most candidates demonstrated careful evaluation, resulting in essays that were mostly well focused on the specific question asked.

Some candidates linked conclusions and demonstrated the interdependency of factors, particularly in relation to Charles Edward Stuart's leadership.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Almost all candidates had embedded historiography well in their essays. Most candidates demonstrated a high standard of knowledge regarding the viewpoints of historians.

Some excellent candidate responses included active engagement with authors' debates.

## Field of study 3 — Scotland: from the Treaty of Union to Enlightenment, 1707–1815: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

As in previous years, candidates' understanding of how to reference and gain marks for accurate rubric provenance has improved.

A few candidates tried to evaluate the wrong point from the source. Some candidates found it difficult to access the rubric provenance points.

### How fully …?

Candidate responses to this question were of a very high standard. Most candidates demonstrated strong interpretation skills and WCD knowledge, therefore achieving high marks.

Some candidates focused on the expression of radicalism rather than the cause.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Most candidates completed the two-source question very effectively, interpreting the sources well. Candidates often provided so many historiographical references that they became WCD marks.

## Field of study 4 — USA: 'a house divided', 1850–1865: essays

All essay questions were attempted, resulting in a range of responses.

### Structure

Some candidates used a basic structure, which was enough to reach the 13–14 mark range.

Some candidates provided answers that appeared to be pre-prepared and found it challenging to adapt to the specific focus of the question.

Markers commented that many candidates who attempted question 27 provided well-considered responses.

For question 28 on the importance of popular patriotism, some candidates linked this to ideological reasons why men signed up to fight during the Civil War.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Candidate responses were of better quality than in previous years. Candidates were clearly well prepared and engaged with the issues, which was demonstrated by the level of depth in responses.

Many candidates provided impressive detail for questions 25 and 29. Most candidates did well in question 29 — the women essay. Some candidates demonstrated fantastic thoroughness. In general, most candidates approached the essay well.

Some candidates did not answer the question set. Some candidates provided irrelevant points in question 26 — the abolitionist essay, for example, ignoring the

development and instead focusing on the successes and failures. A few candidates misunderstood the question so presented information for a question they wanted to answer, not the one being asked.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Overall, most candidates demonstrated analysis well. Some candidates adopted very strong analytical approaches, especially in questions 25 and 29.

Some candidates produced excellent responses that discussed the line of argument throughout. Some candidates used sub-conclusions well to support the line of argument. Most candidates had a clear line of argument in the introduction and conclusion. Some candidates lost the line of argument in the body of the essay.

Some candidates were not prepared to adapt their knowledge to the question asked and tended to write about the topic instead of the question.

Many candidates did not demonstrate as much evaluation as is required at Advanced Higher level.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Most candidates used a range of historians to support their analysis and to evaluate the question being asked. Some candidates gave very impressive examples of historical debate.

When candidates included historians at the start of paragraphs, they often provided excellent analysis of the views, which they used to advance their line of argument.

A few candidates did not give a named historian, meaning that they could gain no more than 12 marks for their essays.

Some candidates used historians' views by listing them but did little to evaluate the views.

Some candidates used historians incorrectly.

## Field of study 4 — USA: ‘a house divided’, 1850–1865: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Most candidates were able to achieve marks for WCD and content.

Some candidates demonstrated good recall for the question on criticism of Lincoln.

Some candidates found provenance challenging, providing general observations that lacked the accuracy needed for Advanced Higher level. Some candidates were unfamiliar with the authorship and some candidates gave ‘type’ provenance answers rather than ‘purpose’.

Markers observed a lack of focus on how many marks were available for each skill, for example some candidates gave up to 8 points of content provenance when only 4 marks were available.

Some candidates took the wording of ‘criticism’ to mean critical of emancipation. Some candidates misinterpreted the focus of the issue, for example on Lincoln’s approach to emancipation.

### How fully …?

Candidates displayed a wide range of WCD from within the time period. Some candidates provided excellent WCD on Buchanan’s failings and the rising tension of the 1850s.

Many candidates gave responses that were extensive and well-considered, successfully accessing a variety of information to support their answers.

Some candidates repeated the source as opposed to interpreting to help answer the question.

Some candidates were confused by distractors.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Most candidates were able to bring in lots of WCD, with many candidates doing very well and accessing the full range of marks.

Many candidates provided extended responses that demonstrated a full understanding of the issue and clear depth of knowledge.

Some candidates struggled with interpretations, which were either not accurate or did not answer the question.

A few candidates compared sources. Some candidates did not complete this question.

## Field of study 5 — Japan: the modernisation of a nation, 1840–1920: essays

### Structure

Some candidates wrote excellent and well-exemplified essays. Many candidates did very well in the ‘isolation’ essay (question 33).

Some candidates gave excellent detail on the isolated factor (government policies) in question 35.

A few candidates provided introductions that lacked the debate and the historians or schools of thought. Some introductions were very brief.

Some candidates did not complete the essays.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Most candidates used a good range of evidence to support their argument.

A few candidates took a narrative approach that dominated and did not directly link to the argument, for example in question 37, giving an account of Japanese industrial and imperial progress with little reference to its relationship with the West.

A few candidates focused on breadth but not depth.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Most candidates were analytical in their approach and the strongest candidates had some very good evaluation.

In question 33, some candidates built on good analysis across a range of themes to evaluate, having set the parameters in the introduction.

Some candidates provided stand-alone paragraphs rather than integrating them within the line of argument.

Some candidates made limited attempts at evaluation, usually by comparing factors.

### Historical sources and interpretations

All candidates made use of historians and some candidates engaged with historiography or specific schools of thought. Some candidates built a persuasive argument from historians' views and historical debate.

## Field of study 5 — Japan: the modernisation of a nation, 1840–1920: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Some candidates were good at paraphrasing (in all source questions), as opposed to writing out entire sentences. The risk with only paraphrasing is that the interpretation must be correct if it doesn't have the quote for context.

### How fully …?

Many candidates accessed this source well, giving full responses with added detail and accurate analysis. A few candidates lost the focus of the question (political developments).

### Two-source historical interpretations

Most candidates gave accurate interpretations, adding WCD and historians.

Many candidates had a clear understanding that they were expected to write about historians and their views.

For question 38, a few candidates included WCD on the structure of reforms without linking to the question on reasons for reforms.

## Field of study 6 — Germany: from democracy to dictatorship, 1918–1939: essays

The most popular questions were question 41 on domestic recovery between 1924 and 1929, and question 42 on depression as the reason for the rise of Nazism. Many candidates gave strong responses to question 42.

Candidates tackled question 43 on propaganda between 1933 and 1939, and question 44 on the racial Volksgemeinschaft well.

Few candidates attempted the economy essay (question 45).

### Structure

Some candidates discussed foreign policy in question 41 on domestic recovery. This was acceptable if they linked back to issues of jobs and wealth, for example. The same was true in question 43 on propaganda. Some candidates answered this as consolidation rather than linking points to keeping the regime in power.

In question 44 some candidates saw the word ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ and discussed women and/or children. Stronger candidates also did this but linked it to policies of exclusion. Some candidates included non-relevant aspects such as policies for workers. Some candidates did not focus on the ‘racial’ aspect of the question.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

In line with previous years, most candidates provided focused, relevant responses. Many candidates produced good essays.

Many candidates demonstrated excellent extended knowledge, which they used to advance the argument.

Some candidates used factors that were less obvious and therefore difficult to link back to the question.

Some candidates demonstrated limited knowledge, which lacked depth, for example no details of the depression or the SS.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Some candidates provided good examples of using mini-conclusions to advance evaluation (for example, ‘Overall, this shows…’) but then arguing why other factors were important.

Many candidates applied successful exam techniques in their responses.

Some candidates provided good examples of counter-arguments and achieved high marks.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Most candidates included named historians and views or quotes.

Some candidates used historians and historians’ interpretations to advance the argument and consider the counter-argument.

Some candidates made vague references to ‘some historians’ and a few candidates made no reference to any historical interpretations.

## Field of study 6 — Germany: from democracy to dictatorship, 1918–1939: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Most candidates picked two out of the three relevant source points and stronger candidates evaluated and added recall to exemplify points.

Candidates who commented on rubric provenance gained good marks for author, purpose and timing.

Some candidates either picked the distractor sentence and gave an irrelevant explanation or they selected the correct section to quote or paraphrase but did not evaluate the usefulness of the point correctly.

### How fully …?

Most candidates selected the relevant points and correctly interpreted them. Some candidates demonstrated some excellent WCD, building on previous points of interpretation.

For question 47 (1920–23), some candidates included knowledge and understanding outwith the time period, for example Revolution, Kiel Mutiny (from previous question), and a few candidates did not understand the difference between right wing and left wing. Some candidates did not make clear the difference between the army and the Freikorps.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Overall, most candidates did very well in this question. Most candidates accessed the source points. Some candidates added WCD that was post 1939, for example, Sophie Scholl and the White Rose. A few candidates attempted the overall interpretation mark.

## Field of study 7 — South Africa: race and power, 1902–1984: essays

All essay questions in this field of study were attempted and candidate performance was equal.

### Structure

Many candidates applied a clear structure of introduction, three or four paragraphs and a conclusion.

Most candidates understood what was asked, focusing on the isolated factor.

Many candidates used paragraph conclusions, which helped build arguments.

Many candidates did not include the main interpretations, prioritised in introductions.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

All candidates showed a fair understanding of the course and found essay questions accessible. Most candidates included content that was relevant to the topic, if not to the specifics of the question.

Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of historiographical debates — more so than in previous years.

Some candidates added information outwith the date specified in the question.

Some candidates appeared to be prepared for different essays as they didn’t answer the question asked.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Most candidates attempted analysis and evaluation, which they included throughout their essays.

Many candidates demonstrated a confident approach by adding evaluation throughout their essays, rather than saving it for the end of paragraphs. Some candidates did not provide analysis and evaluation in their responses.

Most candidates selected the isolated factor in the question, and this helped them remain focused on the issue and build a more sustained argument.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Most candidates included at least one specific historian, relying less on broad generalisations or references like ‘many historians say’. Many candidates used historical interpretations illustratively. Only a few candidates reached the 20–22 and onwards mark ranges for historical sources and interpretations.

## Field of study 7 — South Africa: race and power, 1902–1984: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Many candidates made links to the value, bias or perspective of the source.

Many candidates scored 3 out of 4 marks for rubric provenance, demonstrating clear progress in the understanding of this skill, compared with previous years. Most candidates accurately chose content provenance. A few candidates discussed ‘type’ rather than ‘purpose’.

Many candidates demonstrated good recall and historiography.

Most candidates showed good knowledge of the pre-1910 area of the course. Some candidates went beyond 1910, which had an impact on WCD, and they did not always make it clear how this proved British aims (focused on what they did rather than the why).

### How fully …?

Most candidates performed best in this question.

Most candidates managed and understood this question, giving strong historical interpretations.

Some candidates had difficulty identifying the second interpretation point, using distractors as a result, but most candidates secured 1–2 interpretation marks.

Some candidates strayed beyond 1939, demonstrating that they knew nationalism's growth extended to 1948, but had not read the question carefully.

Some candidates did not give enough WCD.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Most candidates structured the response clearly, tackling one source at a time.

Some candidates provided an overall interpretation mark, which worked in their favour as they appeared to find source D a little harder than source C.

A few candidates included other parts that were not the points, especially from source C, but often comments were not detailed enough to secure the interpretation mark.

Many candidates brought in WCD effectively but for some candidates, interpretation and WCD were vague.

Some candidates were confused between 1950s versus 1960s resistance.

## Field of study 8 — Russia: from Tsarism to Stalinism, 1914–1945: essays

Very few candidates attempted question 60 on the Arts.

Some candidates struggled with the isolated factor in question 61 on the Great Patriotic War.

### Structure

All questions were fair and accessible and recognisable from the course specification.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Some candidates provided very good detail in questions 57 and 61 but some candidates did not focus enough on the isolated factor. Some candidates provided excellent responses to question 58.

Candidates who achieved the highest marks demonstrated thoroughness by including evidence such as statistics supported by a historian's viewpoint.

Some candidates displayed good practice by carefully selecting evidence to answer the question successfully.

Some candidates gave irrelevant detail by having the wrong focus or misinterpreting the question.

A few candidates produced essays that were mainly narrative. Some candidates gave unsubstantiated statements.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Many candidates demonstrated balance in the argument and advanced the line of argument through all sections. The best answers focused on the line of argument and isolated factor throughout.

Some candidates used sub-conclusions well to maintain focus on the line of argument. Some candidates did not integrate their analysis into the argument.

Some candidates presented an unclear or confused line of argument.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Almost all candidates referred to schools of thought or named historians. The strongest responses embedded historiography to advance the argument and provide balance. A few candidates referred to 'some historians', which does not meet the criteria to gain marks.

## Field of study 8 — Russia: from Tsarism to Stalinism, 1914–1945: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Many candidates provided specific comments on author, purpose and timing, which related to the question. Markers noted that this had improved from last year. Many candidates provided plenty of substantial WCD as accurate evidence. Many candidates used historians well.

Some candidates struggled with provenance and gave generic rather than specific responses.

Some candidates referred to sources as ‘less useful’.

Many candidates used a significant amount of time writing out quotes from the source, when ellipses and/or paraphrasing is sufficient at Advanced Higher level.

### How fully …?

Many candidates were confident in their responses and answered this question well. Many candidates provided excellent WCD and referred to plenty of historians.

Markers noted that some candidates did not give the right amount of recall (WCD). Some candidates were short of detail but many candidates provided too much, which can affect time management for the rest of the paper.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Many candidates were able to access interpretations.

Many candidates demonstrated good recall and WCD.

Most candidates appeared to find the sources accessible. Some candidates provided a minimal response when interpreting the quote.

## Field of study 9 — The Spanish Civil War: causes, conflict and consequences, 1923–1945: essays

### Structure

Most candidates structured their essays logically and effectively. All questions were clear and accessible.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Many candidates displayed an impressive level of knowledge, with some showing exceptional levels of expertise.

A few candidates made factual errors that undermined their arguments. For example, claiming the Republic had 900,000 fighters in 1936.

Some candidates misunderstood questions, for example when answering about the division of resources at the outbreak of the war, wrote about events much later.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Most candidates presented fresh and thoughtful arguments. Some candidates displayed great skill in building a line of argument. Most candidates demonstrated strong analysis.

Many candidates appeared to be prepared to write a different essay and attempted to fit their knowledge to the question, with some candidates managing this more successfully than others.

Some candidates did less well on evaluation and a few candidates struggled to identify a clear line of argument.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Most candidates provided strong interpretations.

Many candidates used paraphrasing, which is better than misquoting.

A few candidates did not refer to historians' interpretations.

## Field of study 9 — The Spanish Civil War: causes, conflict and consequences, 1923–1945: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Most candidates showed skill in evaluating the content provenance of the source and giving wider contextual development. Candidates answered this question better than in previous years. A few candidates were able to achieve the rubric provenance purpose mark.

### How fully …?

Most candidates did well in this question, interpreting the relevant points and providing strong WCD.

### Two-source historical interpretations

Most candidates did well with interpretations and WCD. A few candidates seemed to have problems with timing.

## Field of study 10 — Britain: at war and peace, 1938–1951: essays

Questions were clearly worded and accessible, enabling candidates to engage confidently with the paper. The demands of the questions were appropriate, and candidates responded well across the range of tasks.

While most questions were accessible, question 74 presented some challenges.

### Structure

All questions were fair and accessible and recognisable from the course specification.

### Thoroughness, relevance of information and approach

Many candidates demonstrated a thorough and relevant approach, with some candidates producing exceptionally detailed responses.

Most candidates were able to draw on sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge to address the demands of the tasks effectively.

Some candidates demonstrated limited breadth of knowledge, which restricted the thoroughness of their essays.

In question 74, a few candidates did not recognise the evaluative aims of the question and appeared to lack the necessary knowledge of the events of 1940, which affected their ability to provide relevant evidence.

In question 75, many candidates focused too narrowly on air attacks within the topic of civil defence, neglecting other key areas such as population control.

Several candidates demonstrated a lack of depth in their responses, with some offering only a single substantial point within a paragraph.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Many candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of how to link evidence to argument, with some responses showing impressively sophisticated levels of analysis.

A few candidates were able to build a sustained line of argument throughout their essays, clearly meeting the demands of analysis and evaluation.

Some candidates showed a limited awareness of the evaluative demands of the questions, with a few candidates neglecting evaluation altogether.

In question 75, some candidates drifted into analysis of the social impact of civil defence measures rather than focusing on their overall effectiveness.

For some candidates, evaluation was simple and lacked depth, indicating a need for more meaningful engagement with the issues they were exploring.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Many candidates demonstrated highly sophisticated and mature engagement with the debate(s), successfully integrating historians' viewpoints into their own arguments, and producing the best responses.

Many candidates took clear opportunities to showcase wider reading, using historical interpretations to strengthen their line of argument and add depth to their analysis.

A few candidates did not include any historical references or discussion of historians' viewpoints, which meant the essay could gain a maximum of 12 marks.

## Field of study 10 — Britain: at war and peace, 1938–1951: source-based questions

### Evaluate the usefulness

Most candidates demonstrated strong evaluative skills, with several excellent examples of understanding provenance and its impact on source usefulness.

Many candidates showed impressive wider contextual knowledge, particularly regarding Churchill's effectiveness as a leader, which enriched their evaluations.

Some candidates displayed highly insightful evaluation of the source in relation to its purpose and reliability, producing the best responses.

Some candidates gave a generic commentary on provenance.

Candidates who delivered weaker responses often struggled to move past broad or superficial statements about provenance.

Some candidates found it difficult to structure their evaluations effectively, frequently lacking a clear and balanced assessment of each element of the source's usefulness.

**How fully …?**

Many candidates demonstrated strong performance in this question, and it was well received.

Most candidates were able to interpret the source points accurately, and strong candidates excelled in identifying relevant omissions and contextual knowledge. As a result, some candidates were able to achieve high marks in this question.

While most candidates interpreted the source points accurately, some produced overly lengthy responses by quoting and interpreting each point in detail — an approach that, while not penalised, is unnecessary at Advanced Higher level as marks are awarded for the skill of interpretation.

Some candidates lost focus on the specific issue of the 'welfare state', either omitting it altogether or giving it insufficient attention, which limited their ability to fully address the demands of the question.

**Two-source historical interpretations**

Most candidates performed very well in this question. Most candidates successfully interpreted both sources, often demonstrating a strong understanding of the viewpoints presented.

Many candidates further enhanced their responses by including a wide range of relevant contextual knowledge, contributing to well-developed and balanced answers.

A few candidates did not attempt this question, missing an important opportunity to gain marks.

A few candidates approached this question as a comparison exercise rather than focusing on interpreting the views presented in each source and supporting them with contextual knowledge, which limited the effectiveness of their responses.

## Project–dissertation

The word count limit is 4,000 words. If the word count exceeds this by more than 10%, a penalty is applied. Responses were mixed in length. A few dissertations were brief and under 3,000 words in length and read more like an essay.

### Abstract introduction

This part of the dissertation can be accomplished in around 500 words. Most candidates performed well, demonstrating a clear line of argument and relevant knowledge. Compared with last year, more candidates recognised the demands of the abstract introduction and followed the current structure guidelines:

- giving their rationale for the study
- giving context to the topic or issue
- outlining their research methodology
- noting the key areas prioritised in the dissertation
- discussing the historical debate(s)
- giving a clear line of argument, hypothesis and conclusion

However, candidates should be aware of areas for improvement:

- include the hypothesis or line of argument
- be aware of overly dominating narrative, which does not link to analysis and evaluation
- engage with primary evidence by considering its value to advance the argument
- engage with and make critical use of historians
- include a bibliography to inform the reader of research undertaken and to justify the views adopted

## Field of study 1 — Northern Britain: from the Iron Age to 1034

### Titles

Candidates chose from a wide range of topics. The most popular choices were the Iron Age, Romans, and Vikings but questions on the Picts and the extent of unity by 1034 were also popular.

### Structure: abstract introduction

All candidates wrote a combined abstract or introduction, as opposed to dealing with the two separately, which was sometimes the case in previous years. This is best practice and avoids unnecessary repetition.

Many candidates did a good job of providing the context to their chosen topic, identifying key areas for discussion and setting out their line of argument.

Many candidates addressed the methodologies of their research effectively, discussing the relative strengths and weaknesses of classical sources and archaeology.

Some candidates considered differing sides of the historical debate — traditional and contemporary views.

Some candidates provided a very traditional introduction and did not address the full requirements of the abstract introduction. In particular, they did not outline their research methodology by identifying the sources used and outlining their relative strengths and limitations.

Some candidates focused too much on the context at the expense of other aspects of the abstract introduction. Some candidates did not address the historical debate, for example by outlining schools of thought (where appropriate) and/or naming key historians.

Some candidates often listed factors without explaining their relevance or prioritising them. A few candidates did not outline the factors at all.

Some candidates added the line of argument but with no explanation about why their conclusion would be reached. Weaker candidates did not set out a line of argument at all.

**Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach**

Many candidates had a good balance between breadth and depth, identifying three (or four) relevant areas and discussing them in detail. Stronger candidates stayed focused on the question throughout.

Many candidates demonstrated considerable research, using a wide range of appropriate evidence, including literary sources, archaeological evidence and historiography. Most candidates focused effectively on information that was relevant to the issue, without digression.

Many candidates demonstrated a good balance between knowledge and analysis, using the evidence effectively to advance their arguments.

Weaker candidates lacked detail and/or made significant omissions. For example, a dissertation on the impact of Rome on native societies will struggle to gain a good mark if it only considers the short-term impact of the Roman invasions and occupation without considering long-term impacts such as Christianity, literacy and the emergence of the Picts.

A few candidates included large sections irrelevant to the issue. For example, a discussion of Hadrian's Wall is not relevant to a dissertation on the Roman invasions of Scotland.

Some candidates lacked a clear structure with no chapter headings and paragraphs or sub-sections. They were structured as long essays, which often made it more difficult for candidates to develop a clear and coherent argument.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Many candidates combined factual detail and/or historiography with effective analysis and evaluation to advance the argument.

Some candidates demonstrated very good awareness of alternative views, analysing arguments and counter-arguments before reaching their own conclusions.

A few candidates produced dissertations with sub-conclusions at the end of each chapter or section, building the line of argument.

A few candidates demonstrated synthesis in their final conclusions, making connections between factors and/or evaluating their relative importance in order to reach an overall judgement. These candidates delivered the very best dissertations.

Most candidates had a clear and consistent line of argument throughout.

Some candidates focused on narrative and/or description at the expense of analysis and evaluation. This was especially true of dissertations on the Roman invasions, which sometimes 'told the story', without offering insightful analysis about the relative successes and failures of the different invasions.

Some candidates presented dissertations that were very one-sided, neglecting to consider alternative interpretations. These lacked balance and tended not to gain high marks.

Some candidates did not make effective use of sub-conclusions to build their argument throughout their discussion. Dissertations in the 30–34 mark range tended to offer final conclusions that were largely summative. Some candidates gave conclusions that were brief and/or poorly substantiated by the evidence.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Some candidates made very good use of historians' interpretations to advance the argument. Some candidates used historiography to develop a point. A few candidates considered arguments and counter-arguments before reaching their own conclusions.

Many candidates showed good awareness of both traditional and more contemporary views, with some awareness of the reasons for change (in particular, the development of archaeological research).

Many candidates used a wide range of primary evidence, including literary sources and archaeology as available or appropriate. Some candidates did so critically, for example by questioning the reliability of classical authors or monastic chroniclers, and/or by showing an understanding that archaeological evidence can be open to interpretation.

In weaker responses, candidates used historians to exemplify knowledge rather than opinions.

Some candidates simply added on historians' views, without commenting on them or using them to develop an argument. A few candidates showed very limited evidence of having done their own research as opposed to 'lifting' historians' views, which they had not referenced.

Some candidates had limited reference to primary evidence. A few candidates used primary sources uncritically, for example by accepting Tacitus' account of Mons Graupius entirely at face value.

**Referencing and bibliography**

Most candidates made consistent use of footnotes and provided a bibliography.

Some candidates provided large quantities of footnotes and extensive bibliographies, showing considerable research, which they used effectively to write their dissertations. In some cases, candidates' use of footnotes did not follow a clear or consistent system of referencing.

Some candidates quoted historians' opinions without adequate referencing and were therefore unable to prove that they read the resources they claimed to have used.

Some candidates included bibliographies that were poorly structured and often lacked annotation.

## Field of study 2 — Scotland: independence and kingship, 1249–1334

### Titles

A few candidates chose unusual titles, but most worked well. Many candidates chose to answer on King John and the Guardians.

Some candidates presented excellent responses to resistance post-Falkirk but few candidates chose Alexander III questions.

Some candidates set themselves specific date ranges but then went outside these parameters, undermining the coherence of their dissertations.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Some candidates produced excellent introductions that were focused and met the demands of the abstract introduction. Most introductions included context and the main issues to be covered.

Some candidates did not address the abstract elements, particularly the research methods, which were missing in many responses.

Some introductions were very short and did not provide a clear line of argument, and a few did not provide sub-issues or factors.

Some candidates separated the abstract and the introduction, which increased the words used and was therefore inefficient. A few candidates had overly developed context.

Some candidates did not use the abstract to define their terms.

### Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach

Some candidates presented unusual reading and some included unusual detail, interesting inclusions and relevant ideas.

Some candidates presented evidence of excellent reading, for example articles.

Most candidates used an appropriate approach, and a few candidates confidently adopted insightful approaches.

A few candidates presented irrelevant information. Some candidates had quite a lot of evidence from outside of the dates in the question and a few candidates did not cover the full period of the dates set in their question.

A few candidates delivered weak responses, with very basic detail and little depth — even when a considerable amount of information was available for their question.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Many candidates included good analysis and were focused on the question set, linking knowledge and often using it well to further the argument.

Some candidates evaluated successfully by linking factors and assessing them against each other.

Some candidates presented responses that were highly analytical and cleverly evaluated, with real insight.

Some candidates displayed a lack of balance, especially dissertations on Wallace. Some had implied conclusions or evaluations.

A few candidates did not evaluate, as in previous years.

A few candidates included final conclusions that were summative rather than showing synthesis.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

All candidates included primary evidence, but with mixed success. A few candidates used primary evidence in a critical way.

Many candidates included a good amount of historians' views. Many candidates who provided good responses used historical interpretations to advance the main argument in each chapter. These responses engaged well with historical debate.

Some candidates who were less successful used historical interpretations in an illustrative way, without engagement. A few candidates struggled to show the variations of historical interpretations.

### Referencing and bibliography

All candidates included some footnotes but some candidates had very few.

Many candidates consulted a good range of sources.

Most candidates presented their work in size 12 font and double-line spaced.

Some candidates had very short bibliographies and did not use the standard format. A few candidates organised the list by primary, secondary, and online references. A few candidates provided annotated bibliographies.

## Field of study 3 — Scotland: from the Treaty of Union to Enlightenment, 1707–1815

### Titles

Candidates chose a wide variety of titles. As in previous years, many candidates chose to focus on the Jacobites, although there were also many other titles — Highlands, Tobacco, Politics, Agriculture and Enlightenment.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Most candidates adhered to the new structure guidelines, showing a clear improvement over last year.

Some candidates were inconsistent in their understanding of the difference between abstracts and introductions (referral to individual sources). A few candidates had introductions alone without the abstract.

**Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach**

Many candidates were well-read — typically including 10 secondary sources and three primary sources — and therefore demonstrated a very informed standard of knowledge.

A few candidates featured a narrow range of books in their dissertations, although some questions relate to fields that are highly specialised, and texts are therefore inaccessible, so other resources are used.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Most candidates included very strong analysis and evaluation.

Many candidates demonstrated synthesis with the line of argument and generally sustained this throughout their dissertations.

A few candidates who produced weaker dissertations had more problems with evaluation than analysis.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Some candidates included excellent historical interpretations, which led to evaluation and a real engagement with the debate.

Many candidates used primary evidence and some candidates used this critically.

In weaker responses, some candidates used historians to exemplify knowledge rather than opinions.

### Referencing and bibliography

Some candidates demonstrated excellent presentation by including footnoting and dividing bibliographies into primary, secondary and digital evidence.

Some candidates used double-line spacing, chapters, and a table of contents, which are all signs of an academic presentation.

## Field of study 4 — USA: ‘a house divided’, 1850–1865

### Titles

As in previous years, the causes of the Civil War was the most popular area but candidates selected a good variation of titles this year. Interesting titles included the role of women, the Emancipation Proclamation, the breakdown of the two-party system and the industrial nature of the war.

Fewer titles focused on individuals in the Civil War era and the number of titles considering the military aspects of the war also declined.

A few candidates gave minimal attention to the isolated factor in their chosen title. Given that the candidate chooses their title, they could have focused on another factor in their question.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Most candidates used the structure of an abstract introduction and the outline of the line of argument helped candidates to focus their intentions and construct a more thorough line of argument throughout the dissertation.

Some candidates only had an introduction, did not refer to the sources used, or did not outline the sub-issues. A few candidates did not present a clear line of argument. Some candidates did not prioritise arguments well. Some candidates cited historians but not the historical debate.

Some candidates used chapters but not always chapter headings, which may help them to organise their work and is advised.

**Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach**

Candidates with titles on the causes of the Civil War showed depth of knowledge.

Markers noted that some candidates had clearly undertaken substantial research and knew the topic or issue well.

Most candidates had written 4,000–4,400 words, and very few dissertations had a very low word count.

Some candidates had large sections of irrelevant knowledge, which could be addressed with more careful planning.

Some candidates provided excellent first chapters but sometimes the excellent detail had faded by the last chapter.

A few candidates opted for more than three chapters, which can limit the depth of research.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Some candidates consistently pursued a line of argument throughout the response.

Some candidates used sub-conclusions well, and not just at the end of the section or dissertation but throughout, which enhanced the level of evaluation and development of the line of argument.

A few candidates produced work that contained a very bold argument based on very thin evidence.

Some candidates seemed to simply add on the debate at the end of each paragraph.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Some candidates used evidence, historians and primary sources to sustain their line of argument. Some candidates engaged very effectively with the historical debate. The best responses included the context of the historians.

Some candidates used primary evidence well, which included the voices of enslaved peoples, women and politicians.

A few candidates included quotes or names, which lacked development. Some candidates used historians as illustrations rather than to engage with the debate. Some candidates barely referred to primary sources.

### Referencing and bibliography

Some candidates demonstrated excellence by using footnotes in an appropriate way. A few candidates used footnotes very briefly or inconsistently.

Some candidates did not explain sources properly or reference them.

## Field of study 5 — Japan: the modernisation of a nation, 1840–1920

### Titles

Candidates presented a range of titles, with many candidates choosing the Meiji period and domestic policy, as in previous years.

Fewer candidates moved away from the approved list of titles, although some successfully made minor amendments to refine their title.

As in previous years, a few candidates gave outstanding responses on the ‘religion and philosophy’ question.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Many candidates demonstrated good practice, with context, identification of interpretations, line of argument, and evaluation of sources.

Some candidates did not address all the components of the abstract, for example not acknowledging and evaluating specific works of reference or identifying different historians' interpretations.

### Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach

Most candidates were thorough and produced well-exemplified dissertations. Overall, the standard was better this year than last year.

A few candidates came close to basing their analysis almost entirely on historians' opinions without much factual detail, leading to their own voice failing to come through.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Most candidates attempted evaluation across the whole dissertation and within chapters. They almost always followed a line of argument, which helped to generate some high marks.

Some candidates provided conclusions that tended to be summative, especially mini end-of-chapter conclusions.

Some candidates had good historical analysis but lacked exemplification to substantiate the point.

### Historical sources and interpretations

All candidates used historians' opinions and showed evidence of engagement with reading.

All candidates had primary evidence, and some engaged critically with that evidence. A few candidates included primary evidence but did little to engage with it.

Some candidates used historians' opinions in an illustrative way.

### Referencing and bibliography

Some candidates showed excellent examples of footnoting, as appropriate for academic writing.

## Field of study 6 — Germany: from democracy to dictatorship, 1918–1939

### Titles

Most candidates used approved titles. Candidates chose a good variety of titles, for example Treaty of Versailles, Stresemann, a great European or good German debate, Weimar, the SS and Gestapo and propaganda in the maintenance of power, rise of Nazis (various factors), culture and Volksgemeinschaft.

As in previous years, candidates found culture titles challenging. Only a few candidates chose the topic of resistance. A few candidates found the Hitler: strong leader or weak dictator challenging. The revised dissertation titles from 2025–26 may support candidates wishing to research these topics.

Some candidates had created their own titles without feedback or refining, which was unhelpful to them.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Some candidates produced good abstract introductions. Some candidates had established clear parameters (dates and factors) for their study and produced successful responses.

Many candidates included traditional introductions. Some candidates did both an introduction and an abstract and therefore used a huge number of words.

### Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach

Most candidates used the 4,000-word limit, with many candidates using the 10% leeway (writing over 4,000 words and up to the 4,400-word maximum).

A few candidates produced very short submissions of 3,200–3,500 words.

Some candidates chose to have four or five chapters, and some candidates chose to have multiple sub-sections within chapters, which led to issues of breadth at the expense of depth.

Chapter headings helped give the work focus and direction.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Candidates showed evidence of wide reading, which enabled them to synthesise contemporary and historical views. In the best work, candidates used historians to back up analysis. Most candidates tried in some way to weigh up arguments and factors.

Some candidates had a weak sense of argument and were confused as to what their focus was — partly caused by limited research.

A few candidates looked at only one part of the argument where more viewpoints were possible. Had they extended their reading, they would have been able to extend the debate and viewpoints and engage with historical debate.

Some candidates focused too much on dealing with factors separately, forgetting that they needed to consider how they combine to answer the overall question.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Many candidates engaged well with primary and secondary views and opinions, which they used well to advance their argument.

Some candidates had well established titles, with well-known views, for example Sally Marks and ‘Stresemann being a superlative liar’.

A few candidates referenced up-to-date work and modern revisions of interpretations, for example Catrine Clay and Richard J. Evans.

Some candidates transferred their evaluate question technique to interpret the primary source and discuss provenance (purpose, author and timing). Candidates achieved higher marks if they presented and critiqued the primary and secondary sources.

Some candidates used sources merely as illustration to meet the criteria of using a primary and secondary source. A few candidates did not use a primary source.

Some candidates provided quotes and references from anthology websites despite not all being relevant. In these cases, many candidates did not use these views to advance arguments.

### Referencing and bibliography

Most candidates included a bibliography. Many candidates included an annotated bibliography, which assisted markers in judging which aspects of their research they had focused on.

Most candidates did well with footnoting, providing accurate references. However, many references were quotes from websites not known for serious research.

A few candidates did not have an annotated bibliography.

Many candidates did not have page numbers, double-line spacing, an appropriate font size and a word count per page. Many candidates had problems with proofreading.

## Field of study 7 — South Africa: race and power, 1902–1984

### Titles

Candidates selected a good range of titles. Earlier topic areas were popular.

Some candidates selected ambitious comparative questions, which allowed for excellent evaluation and sophisticated lines of argument.

Some candidates were not always focused on the timescale and parameters of the question, which then became self-penalising.

**Structure: abstract introduction**

Most candidates provided good context, clearly identified factors, and approached the dissertation in a coherent way.

Most candidates clearly set up the argument, providing more than just a statement.

Most candidates did not outline areas of research or prioritise debate.

**Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach**

Many candidates were better on breadth than depth.

Most candidates demonstrated accurate and relevant knowledge, although they did not always fully explain this so that the relevance was clear.

Many candidates were strong on thoroughness.

A few candidates did not connect knowledge to analysis or evaluation directly, implying it instead.

Some candidates commented on alternative views and clearly showed these but did not account for why the views were less convincing.

Candidates who linked knowledge to analysis added fluidity to arguments, achieving higher marks.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

All candidates attempted analysis and evaluation however some candidates lacked depth of evaluation and not all were able to sustain the line of argument.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Markers observed an increasing confidence from candidates in integrating historical interpretations and using this to support their own evaluation.

Some candidates engaged well with primary sources and integrated them in their dissertations, rather than using them as knowledge.

Candidates demonstrated greater confidence in assessing historical perspectives, helped by using South African History Online.

Most candidates used historians' views illustratively rather than discussing or engaging with them.

Some candidates produced dissertations in the 40–44 mark range, which touched on variations in viewpoints but often they did not have the word count to engage more critically with it.

Some candidates used primary evidence as illustration only and produced less successful responses.

Some candidates consulted no primary evidence.

**Referencing and bibliography**

Most candidates included a bibliography. Many candidates included an annotated bibliography, which assisted markers in judging which aspects of their research they had focused on.

Most candidates did well with footnoting, providing accurate references.

Some candidates were inconsistent in referencing. Many candidates clearly used books cited in bibliographies but did not include them in footnotes.

## Field of study 8 — Russia: from Tsarism to Stalinism, 1914–1945

### Titles

Most candidates selected appropriate topics and issues to examine. Candidates presented a good variety of titles this year, for example the Provisional Government, the leadership struggle, Bukharin, the Church, women, and the Purges. Candidates did well on the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War.

Some candidates chose titles with too wide a timeframe, which hindered depth and analysis.

Some candidates chose inappropriate titles from outwith the approved list, which tended to result in a narrative.

A few candidates did not answer their selected question — choosing an isolated factor and giving it very little attention.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Most candidates showed an understanding of the requirements and included the main aspects of the abstract introduction. Many candidates had a clear framework, which also gave insights into their methodology.

Some candidates engaged with schools of thought and included a meaningful discussion on the merits of different ones.

Some candidates provided overly long abstract introductions.

Some candidates did not include a clear line of argument, which was limiting. Some candidates were also limited when they overlooked their choice of factors to debate and their line of argument. A few candidates had irrelevant context.

Some candidates did not treat historiographical debate as a priority.

**Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach**

Candidates showed evidence of a wide range of reading: books, articles and online resources such as e-journals. A few candidates included the views of guest speakers and lecturers.

In the best responses, candidates presented a good depth of knowledge and probing detail and statistics, which helped them pursue the main argument.

Most candidates focused on the issue or topic they were examining.

Some candidates relied heavily on Corin and Fiehn.

Some candidates had chapters that were heavy on narrative.

Some candidates showed over-reliance on online resources (especially those with questionable reliability). A few candidates presented irrelevant evidence.

A few candidates included content that overlapped, depending on the chapter headings they chose.

**Analysis, evaluation and line of argument**

Most candidates had a line of argument. Many candidates included mini-conclusions, which advanced the argument. Candidates who produced the strongest responses applied a tighter range of factors to achieve greater depth in analysis and authority in evaluation.

Some candidates evaluated each factor in isolation, without referring to their overall line of argument.

A few candidates lost focus on their line of argument and were unable to advance the argument. A few candidates were so focused on the line of argument at the expense of the question they had set.

Some candidates made assertions without evidence to support the line of argument.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Most candidates used historians' views. Most candidates included at least one primary source, and many candidates used them to build their line of argument.

A few candidates embedded the historians' views and critiqued the primary evidence, remarking on the value of this evidence in relation to the question.

A few candidates who produced strong responses had an impressive way of integrating, debating or refuting the views of historians.

However, many candidates used historians' views for illustrative purposes rather than to advance their argument.

A few candidates explained the context of the historians' views.

Very few candidates used primary evidence critically and most candidates took it as read without being a little more sceptical as to why that view was being presented, for example Khruschev may have been keen to lessen Stalin's role in the Great Patriotic War.

**Referencing and bibliography**

Most candidates included referencing, although the quality varied.

Most candidates included an extensive bibliography. Some candidates had good, annotated bibliographies, which showed considerable depth of reading and access to primary material — some from archives.

Some candidates presented their dissertations excellently, with double-line spacing and font size 12. A few candidates used single-line spacing in a smaller font.

A few candidates did not provide footnotes or endnotes. This is self-penalising because it shows evidence of research and the location of viewpoints.

Some candidates had opted for quantity over quality in their bibliographies, for example, extensive lists but not using resources fully. Some candidates did not annotate bibliographies.

## Field of study 9 — The Spanish Civil War: causes, conflict and consequences, 1923–1945

### Titles

Candidates chose a good variety of titles.

Candidates did not favour any particular area more than others, although Fall of the Monarchy, International Brigades and La Pasionaria were popular.

Candidates who amended titles were not often successful. While doing this can narrow the focus, it can lead to problems.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Candidates produced abstract introductions that were better written than in previous years, which showed a real improvement.

Some candidates chose chapters that limited their attainment.

### Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach

Most candidates were well read and showed good understanding of their topic.

Most candidates used the 4,000-word limit. Most candidates used the 10% leeway, writing over 4,000 words and up to the 4,400-word maximum.

A few candidates included chapters with less relevance to the topic. A few candidates had questions as headings, which misled them into not answering their main theme.

Some candidates allowed narrative to dominate and responses did not adhere to the scope of the question.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Generally, candidates were strong on analysis.

Most candidates presented straightforward and logical arguments that were well-executed and consistent throughout.

Some candidates did not evaluate well, tending to provide evaluations that were summative and reporting what they had already mentioned.

A few candidates struggled with building a consistent line of argument.

Some candidates were less strong in the conclusions than they were in the abstract introductions.

**Historical sources and interpretations**

Some candidates made good use of primary evidence. A few candidates took primary evidence at face value.

Many candidates made good use of historians' views in supporting their line of argument. Some candidates used historians' views to illustrate rather than forward their argument.

**Referencing and bibliography**

Most candidates did well with referencing. Many candidates included a full bibliography.

Some candidates had very good, annotated bibliographies, which showed considerable depth of reading and access to primary material — some from archives.

Some candidates were excellent in how they presented their dissertations, using double-line spacing and font size 11 or 12. A few candidates used single-line spacing in a smaller font.

A few candidates did not include footnotes or endnotes. This is self-penalising because it shows evidence of research and the location of viewpoints.

## Field of study 10 — Britain: at war and peace, 1938–1951

### Titles

Candidates selected a good variety of titles, with a noticeable increase this session in the number of candidates choosing to tackle titles on the Battle of Britain and the planned invasion of Britain.

An increased number of candidates chose titles that were not on SQA's approved list of titles or they had altered an approved title. Some candidates were disadvantaged by this and a few candidates therefore produced responses of a lower quality.

### Structure: abstract introduction

Many candidates demonstrated an improved approach to abstract introductions, and most looked at the context and the historical debate. Some candidates wrote a traditional introduction, ignoring the part that is an abstract.

Some candidates had issues formulating a line of argument that fully addressed the question rather than the general issue or topic.

Some candidates lacked consistency between the parameters set out in the abstract introduction and the content thereafter, which compromised the effectiveness of the response.

### Thoroughness and relevance of information and approach

Many candidates engaged in detailed research. Most candidates selected relevant material. The strongest candidates engaged with the line of argument and used evidence to back it up.

A few candidates found selecting relevant information difficult, with some evidence selected not relevant to their question.

A few candidates included comments and knowledge that lacked specifics.

Some candidates did not extend to the full 4,000-word count, which can have a negative effect on thoroughness.

### Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

Most candidates understood the role of analysis in historical writing. Some candidates did not engage with the required debate and weaker candidates offered statements without exploration or explanation.

Candidates should consider how the structure of their response supports a coherent line of argument.

### Historical sources and interpretations

Most candidates included primary evidence and generally used it well. Stronger candidates incorporated this into the flow of argument.

Some candidates simply added historians' views into the response without clear engagement with the text or quote.

Less successful candidates used primary evidence in an illustrative way, without engagement.

### Referencing and bibliography

Most candidates included a full bibliography. Very good, annotated bibliographies showed considerable depth of reading and access to primary material — some from archives.

Some candidates were excellent in how they presented their dissertations, using double-line spacing and font size 11 or 12. A few candidates used single-line spacing in a smaller font.

A few candidates had no referencing.

A few candidates included no footnotes or endnotes. This is self-penalising because it shows evidence of research and the location of viewpoints.

# Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

## Question paper

### Part A: Historical issues — essays

You should remind candidates of the following:

- Read the question very carefully. One word can change the response expectation. The topic may appear, but the question is worded specifically to invite a particular type of debate. Notice the terms used or the wording of the quote. Define what is being asked if it is a significant term.
- The isolated factor means that significant attention should be given to it, not just a brief comment. It should be given due attention because it is highlighted in the question. It is usual to address this in the first paragraph of the development.
- It is important to refer back to the question and line of argument when discussing subsequent factors. Use sub-conclusions to build argument as the essay progresses.
- Historians' views are vital to gain more than 9 out of 25 marks. Try to provide names and views, not generalisations. Generalised references might gain up to 12 out of 25 marks.
- Try to include historians' views to back up arguments, not as factual illustration, and try to cross-reference views.
- Balance in the discussion is vital. This means considering more than one view. It does not mean equity. Counter-points do not always exist. Use historians to highlight the range, or not, of arguments — not as history but as evidence of the arguments. Views can be challenged as long as they can be justified. Candidates should come to a reasoned conclusion.
- The reader must be able to read the candidate's view, not a synopsis of the viewpoints currently held. Candidates' own conclusions are vital.

You should encourage candidates to familiarise themselves with the marking instructions.

## Part B: Historical sources — source-based questions

Candidates should prepare by using the guidance in the course specification. You should remind candidates of the following:

- The aim of source analysis is to contextualise the evidence in the source in three different ways. This is what is meant by the term wider contextual development (WCD). By interpreting the source candidates might add context WCD and gain marks for this.
- Interpretation is more than repetition of sources — the candidate needs to give an explanation about why the selected point is important to the issue being discussed. It does not mean selecting the correct quote and leaving it at that. Quoting part might help the candidate focus on the answer but the mark is given for the interpretation — what is written in candidates' own words.
- Adding further recall (WCD) will gain more marks. However, a maximum of 2 marks is given for any developed WCD.
- Historians' views are worth 2 marks. Candidates should provide two relevant historians' viewpoints, not a list of names and one view. However additional historians' views can gain WCD marks.

### 'Evaluate the usefulness…' question

For the 'Evaluate the usefulness …' question the intention is to contextualise the views of the document in terms of its usefulness (its value) to help understand the topic and issue in the question. That value is assessed by commenting on rubric provenance:

- author — whether official document or personal memoir or letter or speech, comment can be made on what this brings, or limits, in terms of the value of the source author
- purpose — what is the intention of the source? What audience and what impact is wanted?

- timing — does the timing of the source have value in relation to the event, topic or issue being discussed?

It is a primary source of evidence.

All sources are useful, not just the ones that agree with the candidate's thinking. It might give a critical or positive view at the time — both are still useful.

The content is considered in terms of its value — content provenance — and must be evaluated Three points are in the source, which candidates should contextualise in terms of their value as evidence, and in this way comment on the provenance of the source text.

WCD means recall that adds something to the content points or is something important that is omitted. In this question 4 marks are allocated. A maximum of 2 marks is available for any WCD. Overwriting will not gain more marks. This applies to all three types of source question.

**Two-source historical interpretations question**

You should remind candidates of the following:

- This question has the viewpoints of two historians in an academic work that they have written.
- The sources are not set out to contrast with one another. Candidates should look for nuances rather than distinctly opposed views.
- The two-source question is not a comparison question.
- Candidates could use comments such as 'This view given by the historian is', rather than state it as if it is a matter of factual accuracy.
- This question requires a substantial amount of WCD — 8 marks are available for this.

**'How fully…?' question**

You should remind candidates of the following:

- This question is about a topic and/or issue and how fully the source answers the question. There is no need to comment on the rubric.
- The content contains three points that should be interpreted — in the candidate's own words — to get 3 marks. Quoting a part might help candidates focus on the key message being given.
- WCD is worth 7 marks, which can be either developed WCD from the content point or omitted points.

You should encourage candidates to familiarise themselves with the marking instructions for the mark allocation for interpretation, contextualisation and historians' views.

## Project–dissertation

The dissertation requires the same skills as the question paper, combining these into a personal research piece.

Poor proofreading can affect the clarity of the argument.

### Titles

You are encouraged to read the 'Approved list of dissertations'. If a candidate chooses a title that differs significantly, you are encouraged to seek feedback.

Some titles do not give candidates enough scope to write 4,000 words or do not easily suit well-directed responses. It is important that the title allows for the depth and breadth required. Equally it is important to allow this to be possible in 4,000 words. In the research phase, candidates might find more than is possible to include in 4,000 words. Advice is to limit the question, either by setting a specific timeframe, or by limiting the areas covered, or both. The question is very important. It can evolve over the year of research.

## Abstract introduction

This should be concise. The Understanding Standards webinar on the project–dissertation and the associated exemplars give guidance on what is expected, including abstract requirements. Most candidates aim for an allocation of around 500 words.

Candidates should include:

- the rationale for the research — why it is important and can be justified as an exercise
- the methodology undertaken and key resources used — what was found and by what means

In a dissertation introduction, candidates should give:

- context to the topic or issue
- a brief discussion of the key historical debate(s)
- note of the key areas prioritised in the dissertation
- a clear line of argument, hypothesis or conclusion

## Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

The clarity of argument is key and sometimes the more straightforward the argument, the better the evaluation and sustained analysis. Candidates are also less likely to lose their line of argument.

The extent to which the candidate fully grasps the question and implications of it directly impacts the depth of analysis.

## Bibliography

Candidates should include the bibliography at the end of the dissertation, and separate into:

- primary evidence
- secondary evidence

- digital evidence

## Research

Quality is as important as quantity and candidates can reach a very high standard from reading a few good books in detail.

## Historians' viewpoints

Candidates should embed historical opinions or debates throughout the dissertation. Quoting historians without footnoting or including their work in the bibliography and/or having an uncritical over-reliance on internet sites can affect attainment.

## Presentation and referencing

Presentation conventions are important. It helps authenticate the research and direct the reader. You should encourage candidates to use the following guidance when presenting their work:

- proofread the final piece
- use font size 11 or 12
- use double-line spacing
- reference quotes, statistics and arguments using footnotes, which gives the work validity
- include a contents page with chapter titles
- include chapter titles stating sub-areas
- number the pages — usually at the bottom
- include a bibliography: primary, secondary, and digital evidence — alphabetical order by author surname and URL where relevant
- include an annotated bibliography, which reinforces research undertaken — this should have a very small commentary by the candidate on the value, or usefulness, of the texts, primary evidence and other resources consulted
- include a word count on each page — usually at the bottom of the page
- do not staple

- print single-sided pages

Candidates should refer to the detailed marking instructions in the coursework assessment task to help understand the progression in this assessment.

# Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy.