



A-LEVEL **HISTORY**

7042/C: Non-exam assessment
Report on the Examination

7042
June 2019

Version: 1.0

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Question Setting

There was an impressive number of interesting questions set this year. Whilst Black Civil Rights in the USA remained very popular, there was a clear broadening in the range of topics. The Tudors, Witchcraft, the Crusades and also westward expansion of the USA were increasingly common. Another notable trend seems to be the setting of topics from Ancient Greece or Rome.

The compulsory use of Question Advisors this year reduced the number of frankly unanswerable questions, although there remained some very challenging topics set, often in the form of a question with many foci. As in previous years, the straightforward question, which nevertheless provides evaluative challenge, assisted students in their argument and also in producing a clear and substantiated judgement within the set word guidance. The setting of an effective question will no doubt become an even more important consideration from 2020 onwards when a word limit of 4500 words will be enforced.

The most common approach to question setting appeared to be that of a centre offering five or six approved questions and allowing students a choice from these. The setting of one question for all was also reasonably common, although perhaps less so than in previous series.

AO1

Fewer students than in previous years were found to be out of tolerance as a result of issues in Assessment Objective One. However, the trend still appears to be that the more substantial adjustments in an individual NEA were a result of misapplication of the marking criteria in this AO. This adjustment was a consequence of two clear issues:

1) Coverage of the whole period in breadth.

A fundamental requirement of the NEA is for the student to provide evidence of contextual understanding of the whole period set in the question. This is not expected to be a mechanical coverage of equal weight across the entire period. Indeed, the few centres that included tick-list charts indicating that each decade had been covered by the student often led students to misconstrue the nature of a contextual response. The task is not, of course, to provide a comprehensive history of c100 years, but rather to answer a set question within a context of c100 years. Some questions began in, for example, 1865 but failed to mention anything at all of the circumstances at the outset of the period. This was most commonly seen in questions on Black Civil Rights in the USA where the first commentary was often about the 1890s or even slightly later. Similarly, questions on Women's suffrage in the UK in the period 1832 to 1918 often failed to do much with the period before the 1890s. Some NEAs on the Tudors set their question to begin predictably in 1485 but did not mention the reign of Henry VII in the answer. Other questions on Tudor rebellion might set the question in the period 1485 to 1603, but failed to cover any of the period after the Northern Rebellion. When setting the question it is imperative that the start and end dates make historical sense and that the student references both in their response.

A further issue seen with coverage of the breadth was ensuring that a stepping stone approach was not adopted in which students jumped from one event to the next without consideration of the broader context. This was commonly seen in questions on the Crusades and also on Tudor Rebellion. If the question set is designed to examine why knights went on crusade then the student needs to work hard to ensure that the substantial chronology around the crusades is referenced. Perhaps students who are less confident with contextual knowledge and its application would have been better placed considering a question that explicitly questioned why Franks travelled to

Outremer across the period. On a similar theme, questions considering for example, if religion was the most significant reason for Tudor Rebellion tended to jump from a description of one rebellion to the next, without registering that the named factor, religion, was the contextual element running throughout. This was a similar issue to that seen last year.

2) Effective argument and judgement.

The NEA is effectively a long essay with all of the demands and expectations as one would expect to see in the examined unit in this AO. There were a number of NEAs seen which adopted a very sectional approach – some even with chapter headings. Students should produce a consistently argued piece in which the primary and secondary sources are used to further the students own opinions. Longer NEAs rarely provided the consistency of argument and powerful evaluation expected of the higher levels, although it is expected that the word limit of 4500 words from 2020 will ensure that students find it easier to adopt an appropriately argumentative and analytical approach.

AO2

This was approached reasonably well with many students providing a more precise and academic approach to the evaluation of provenance than in previous cycles. There were still some NEAs that evaluated the primary sources by type alone and thereby produced generic commentary about the utility and value of newspapers for example, but most students evaluated the individual sources effectively. There was still a notable number of responses that did not address value very well, but one assumes that these students were just not quite aware of how the value of the source may differ from its reliability or accuracy. Provenance was generally considered well, although the date of a source continues to cause problems for some. Simple, basic assumption that because something was published or written at the time of the events then it must be valuable, was not enough to advance far up the level descriptors. Similarly, a simple description of the author of a source is not evaluative and therefore is not credited very highly at all. The more effective responses were those that had a clear view about the value of the source and were able to present a judgement to that effect.

AO3

Generally speaking, the same issues as in previous series were apparent. However, a more notable factor in centre marking this year was the number of times that AO3 was originally scored highly simply for the inclusion of secondary material. The focus of this AO is evaluation, namely the extent to which a particular view expressed by a historian is convincing or not. Hence, simply quoting a historical interpretation does not fit the AO. Students should therefore be careful in the original selection of their material and act to ensure that their extract contains a clear view that can be evaluated by use of specific contextual knowledge. Most students choose two clearly opposing views but did not always evaluate the various opinions using good detailed knowledge, or to identify the differences clearly. At its worst, students seemed to struggle to identify opinion. Evaluation of the context of the interpretations was done very well by some, but this was invariably a result of research. Students that were not aware of the background of the particular historian concerned too often resorted to generic ad hominem comments that could not really be credited. Whilst the majority of the evaluation in AO3 will probably be of the content, it is still necessary for students to show an awareness of context and to use this to perhaps account for the differences between the views expressed.

Administration

Centres are to be commended in their very organised and professional approach to the process. In the vast majority of cases, all required paper work was included with the original submission of the sample, although there were a handful of centres that neglected to include the Question Proposal Forms and the Signed Declaration Forms for all students, not just for those in the sample. Marking and annotation was also very impressive and it was clear that centres had taken considerable care to arrive at the final mark. Whilst continual annotation is not expected, it is welcome. A summative comment for each AO is much more helpful as it indicates to the moderator the thinking behind the original mark awarded. There should also be evidence of internal moderation where there has been more than one marker in the centre.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.