



GCE Examiners' Report

History
GCE
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
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Executive Summary

Assessment Objective 1, which is present in three of the four examined units, continues to offer a mix of responses. Some candidates have an excellent subject knowledge and deploy it with considerable skill to answer the specific questions that are posed to them on the examination paper. Others, apparently, have very little knowledge and struggle to pull together a sufficient number of ideas to attempt a competent response.

However, the majority find themselves somewhere in the middle: they have a sound overall knowledge of the topics, but their specific knowledge is less developed and, therefore, they seem to find answering specific questions more of a challenge. As a result, they tend to answer questions of their own creation, sometimes with tangential links to the set question and at other times without. These candidates need to have a deeper understanding of the material, and this will come with repeated attempts at practice essays, which will highlight the areas with which they need to become more familiar. It will also help them to iron out issues with their grasp of specific requirements, such as the timeframe of the question and the demands of the command term. Several candidates appear to treat all questions in the same way, offering a narrative introduction, a few paragraphs of “it could be this or it could be that”, with a brief conclusion that states what *it* actually was, but without explaining why.

Assessment Objective 2, which is tested in Units 2 and 4 offered better performance overall as, here, candidates are less reliant on their own knowledge and can use the sources and their skills of analysis and evaluation to mask any deficiency in historical understanding. Nonetheless, when prompted by the sources, candidates were able to draw upon some wider historical knowledge to support their ideas and, to a lesser extent, some specific knowledge to finesse them. We continue to see the vast majority of candidates taking the sources one by one, which is not the intention of the question, and we would once again ask that they are encouraged to consider them as a group: to consider their interrelationships and what they bring to – and detract from – each other. They are not required to rank them, which is a trend that we have seen increasing over the past few years, and we strongly discourage this.

Assessment Objective 3, which is tested in Unit 2, has improved this year and it was very pleasing to see. While many candidates continue to struggle with this challenging task, a growing number were adept at looking at the interpretation in the question, analysing and evaluating it against the alternative interpretation given, and also bringing in the third from their own understanding, focusing on how and why these interpretations may have been formed based on the evidence available to their authors. Usefully, this was also seen to the advantage of responses in Unit 5, the NEA. Moderators’ assessment of this work was, by and large, aligned with that completed by the centres and fewer adjustments were made this year than in recent years.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
<p>Specific and detailed historical knowledge for AO1 questions, particularly Unit 3's focused and breadth questions.</p>	<p> 3.1.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.1.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.2.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.2.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.3.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.3.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.4.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.4.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.5.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.5.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.6.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.6.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.7.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.7.2 HTTPS://RESOURCES.WJEC.CO.UK/PAGES/RESOURCESINGLE.ASPX?RIID=4771 3.8.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.8.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.9.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.9.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.10.1 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE 3.10.2 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE </p>	<p>Blended learning resources for Unit 3.</p>

Addressing the correct timeframes and responding effectively to command terms	UNITS 3 AND 4 RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE	Knowledge organisers to help learners clarify and express their ideas.
Considering AO2 sources collectively and analysing and evaluating what their value as a collective	HTTPS://RESOURCE.DOWNLOAD.WJEC.CO.UK /EWT/WG2020/ENGLISH/GCE%20HISTORY%20 UNIT%20%20EWT.PPTX	Exam walk-through (applicable to Unit 4 Question 1 also)

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UNIT 1 – PERIOD STUDIES

Overview of the Unit

Unit 1 provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in Assessment Objective 1 (the ability to demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding, to analyse and evaluate the key features of the period studied, making judgements and exploring concepts). The paper covers eight options of British (Options 1 to 4) and non-British History (Options 5 to 8). The demand in the questions across all eight options was comparable to previous years and the papers were a fair and reasonable test of candidates' abilities. Overall, the questions from Sections A and B performed well and candidates accessed the full range of marks available.

In the main, the papers were accessible and the requirements for their successful completion were clear. However, there were individual questions that some candidates either misread or misunderstood. On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that some candidates continue to tailor their responses to questions they either expected or wished had been set. In these circumstances, the responses tended to explore areas of study that were at odds with the questions set in the examination papers. Candidates must display a greater awareness of the difference between an *Examine* and *Evaluate* question. Unlike in previous series, candidates are now more confident in answering *To what extent* questions though this sometimes elicit a simple two-sided response. Candidates are also urged to note the dates as they apply to individual questions. Some candidates appear to ignore them which resulted in responses going beyond either the start or end date.

The candidates who achieved the higher marks discussed or evaluated effectively, and they presented their responses in a clear, structured format. Although less prevalent than in previous series, some candidates are still inclined to provide simplistic content-driven responses. In some instances, the historical knowledge displayed is impressive, but knowledge alone is insufficient to gain the higher bands and marks without the necessary analysis and evaluation. More effective responses identified and focused on the key issue presented in the question and debated with considerable skill and invariably reached a supported or substantiated concluding judgement. As in previous series, some concluding or summative judgements were repetitious rather than focused and informative. Candidates might consider a brief period of reflection before commencing to write so that they can consider the best way to construct their responses.

Candidates are reminded of the need to try and ensure that there is proper coverage in Section B responses. Occasionally candidates do not ensure that their answers are sufficiently broad to meet the criteria demanded by the question. Some candidates offered too much depth in those areas where they felt particularly confident in their knowledge. Knowledge and judgments are key strands in any answer as is the ability to evaluate and analyse. The skill is in successfully integrating all four strands so as to provide a holistic response. Unfortunately, many candidates are not able to demonstrate these skills as fully, relying on stock, pre-learned comments that do not directly apply to the set question or demonstrate a learner's superficial understanding of the historical context and their undeveloped skills of analysis, evaluation and judgement. A more conceptual and nuanced approach will enable many candidates to achieve higher marks against the criteria of the mark scheme. Some candidates are proving adept at identifying the key requirement of the question, which is to analyse and evaluate the key features of a specified question. Where it was done well, we observed candidates engaging with the question throughout the response, making consistent and supported judgements on the question. We encourage centres to focus on the skills needed to engage fully with the key issues in the question as this will benefit candidates in their examination of this unit.

Sadly, there were no candidates for one of the optional papers – Option 6: *Europe in the age of absolutism and revolution c. 1682–1815*.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A (Assessment Objective 1)

For the most part candidates were able to debate the wider history surrounding the questions, but very many of them were happier to discuss the other factors rather than the specific one stated in the question. This was seen especially in Option 1 Question 1, Option 2 Question 1, and Option 4 Question 2.

In other questions, there was the usual attempt to deal with material chronologically, even when this was not the most effective way to manage the question. For example, in Option 1 Question 2, while candidates made efforts to engage with the debate, they tended to plod through the various reigns, one-by-one, making comparisons via mini-judgements, rather than considering the issue of significance across the period indicated in the question. This was a similar approach to the one taken in Option 3 Question 1, where candidates were asked to gauge the significance of achievements but eschewed this in favour of listing those achievements instead. Further, when considering the timeframes expressed in the questions, some candidates' apparent reluctance to deal with these timeframes continues to be a feature of many responses, with significant chunks of the period left out. This was especially noted in Option 2 Question 2 in which the Hanoverian succession was all but ignored, and in Option 5 Question 2, where Martin Luther's contribution to the German Reformation was assessed in only a small window of the timeframe required.

Overall, in these short-timeframe questions, there was a tendency among many candidates to ignore some aspect of the question, be that the requirement of the command term, the key issue raised in the question or the specified period. A notable example of this came in Option 7 Question 2, where many candidates were happy to discuss the process of German unification, but less happy to judge the contribution of the Zollverein to that process, nor to emphasize the scope of the timeframe, which was what the question demanded.

Section B (Assessment Objective 1)

Many of the responses to the Section B questions reflected the issues that were observed in Section A; however, there are some longer-timeframe-specific notes that are worth drawing attention to. Among these was the tendency to trawl across the period of the option rather than focusing on the demands of the question in relation to the timeframe specified. For example, in Option 1 Question 3, many candidates seemed content to trawl through all rebellions offering descriptive and repetitious responses that did not engage with the issue of weak rebel leadership. That said, there were some exceptional responses seen for this question, with some candidates approaching it in a conceptual way – examining the reasons for the failure of rebellions.

In a similar vein, there was a tendency to narrative from a large number of the candidates, with many of them seemingly struggling to engage with the requirements of the question. This was particularly seen in Option 2 Question 3, Option 4 Question 4, and Option 8 Question 4. For all of these, the general historical knowledge on display was sound but without focused analysis and evaluation it was simply not enough to access the higher Bands and marks.

In several questions, there appeared to be something of a struggle to fully comprehend some aspect of that question. This was especially noted in Option 3 Question 4, in which candidates tended not to emphasise the contribution of humanitarian concerns about living and working conditions to social reforms, instead simply discussing, in general terms, the living and working conditions prevalent at the time and/or the social reforms, which were often listed.

There was also a little bit of confusion witnessed here and there, for example in Option 2 Question 4, a surprising number of candidates confused Charles II with Charles I and in Option 3 Question 3 some candidates appeared to be confused about the political/party affiliation of Gladstone.

Nonetheless, there was a lot to be commended in much of the work seen. It was evident that many candidates had a comprehensive grasp of the material: those candidates focused their responses on the set questions and offered some detailed and effective analysis and evaluation. This appeared to be particularly the case in Option 4 Question 3, in Option 5 Question 3 (although their treatment of Charles V tended to be more nuanced and authoritative than their treatment of Philip II) and in Option 7 Question 4.

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UNIT 2 – IN-DEPTH STUDIES (PART 1)

Overview of the Unit

Unit 2 provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in Assessment Objective 2 (the analysis and evaluation of appropriate source materials, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within their historical context) and Assessment Objective 3 (the analysis and evaluation, in relation to the historical context, of different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted). These are assessed discretely, with AO2 tested in Question 1 and AO3 in Question 2, both of which are compulsory questions. The paper covers eight options of British (Options 1 to 4) and non-British History (Options 5 to 8). Question 1 requires that candidates assess the value of three sources to an historian studying a specified issue. Question 2 requires that candidates assess the validity of a given interpretation (Interpretation 1) against an alternative (Interpretation 2), considering how and why these may have been developed, and what other interpretations may have been formed.

Overall, candidates performed more strongly in Question 1 than they did in Question 2, with this pattern being consistent across all eight options. It appears that candidates' skills of source analysis are improving year on year, although we would still like to see more consideration of the sources as a collective and a more focused discussion of their value to an historian. Question 2 continues to be a challenge for some, although more candidates this year were able to demonstrate an understanding of how and why interpretations may have been formed and thus achieved marks in the top bands.

We encourage centres to focus on the skills needed to engage fully with the interpretations question as this will benefit candidates in their examination of this unit as well as lay firm groundwork for their NEA in the A-level year of the course.

Comments on individual questions/sections

(Assessment Objective 2)

Q.1

The demand in the questions across all eight options was comparable to previous years and the papers were a fair and reasonable test of candidates' abilities to analyse and evaluate source material. A concern was identified in Option 7 (The crisis of the American Republic c.1840–1877, Part 1: Sectional differences and the road to civil war c.1840–1861) whereby the caption explaining Source A was misleading. This was identified prior to the commencement of marking and carefully monitored during the marking process to ensure that no candidates were adversely affected. Overall, however, the source-based questions performed well, and candidates accessed the full range of marks available.

The most common way for candidates to answer the source-based question continues to be a trawl through the sources individually, and while this is not ideal, it does ensure that they are tackling the three sources; however, a more nuanced approach will enable many candidates to achieve higher marks against the criteria of the mark scheme. Some candidates are proving adept at source analysis, identifying the key requirement of the question, which is to gauge the value of the sources to an historian studying a specified question. Where it was done well, we observed candidates engaging with the question throughout the response, making consistent and supported judgements on the sources' strengths and limitations, integrating comments on the sources' content with their attributions. These higher-scoring responses then contextualised the material that was being drawn from the sources with both wider and more specific historical material, and this elevated the discussion of the sources' value. However, there were occasions when the lack of specific historical context was surprising. Source A in Question 1 of Option 8 referred to the Munich Putsch. This is explicitly referred to in the specification, yet examiners found that many candidates could not place this source in its exact historical context.

The very best responses considered the sources collectively, with comments relating to the sources' interrelationships, for example how some sources supported or undermined the others, which, considering the historical context and their authorship proved invaluable to an historian making judgements in line with the set question. There were fewer mechanical comments about bias seen: obviously biased sources can still be valuable to an historian.

Unfortunately, many candidates are not able to demonstrate these skills as fully, relying on stock, pre-learned comments that do not directly apply to the set question or demonstrate a learner's superficial understanding of the historical context and their undeveloped skills of source analysis. Several candidates provide strengths and limitations with no context and/or no focus on the specific question, whereas others provide context but do not address the issue of strengths and limitations.

(Assessment Objective 3)

Q.2

The demand in the questions across all eight options was comparable to previous years presenting a reasonable test of candidates' abilities to analyse and evaluate (in relation to the historical context) different ways in which aspects have been interpreted.

There was some improvement in answers to Question 2 in 2024 with understanding of the wider historical debate evidenced. There were fewer responses where this was restricted to an alternative interpretation randomly placed towards the end of the answer without much explanation. The examiners are looking for an awareness of the wider historical debate surrounding the issue in the question.

These issues are all set out in the specification and any preparation for the examination should include study of the main developments in the historical debate about the issue with some understanding of why interpretations differ and how they have changed over time. Importantly, candidates are expected to deploy their contextual knowledge of the depth study to inform their discussion of the given interpretations. The examiners noted how in Option 8 Question 2 candidates were able to successfully contextualise their discussions of the reasons for the instability of the Weimar Republic drawing upon their knowledge of the depth study. There were fewer answers just restricted to the material in the extracts and more opportunities gained to obtain credit for the deployment of appropriate contextual material. However, discussions about how and why interpretations differ and change should not be based on speculation about an historian or an attempt to quantify how much research she or he might have conducted. Such attempts are unhelpful and add nothing to the debate.

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UNIT 3 – BREADTH STUDIES

Overview of the Unit

Unit 3 assesses Assessment Objective 1. Unit 3 is divided into five British and five non-British options. Learners answer one of the two questions from Section A along with the question in Section B. Demand across all of these options was comparable to previous years. Performance in this unit is consistent across the options, giving candidates plenty of opportunities to deploy their historical knowledge to make nuanced judgements about the issues. This performance is in line with the overall trend of performance over the last few series.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A (Assessment Objective 1)

Questions in this section cover shorter periods of time from within the specification. They focus on a different theme than the question in Section B.

The most common way for candidates to respond to these questions is to trawl through key events, monarchs or governments. This was even the case when one of these leaders was mentioned by name in the question, but their contribution was not analysed until all of the leaders before them had been considered, as was often the case with Lenin in Question 1 of Option 10. This can help candidates to ensure that they cover the period of time in the question, but it can also lead to responses that are more narrative than analytical in style. Where candidates consider themes like the causes or effects of events or decisions rather than a chronological list of leaders or events their answers tend to be more evaluative.

Successful responses to these questions engage fully with the debate in the question, considering the positive and negative aspects of the issue the question is focusing on all through the response, rather than just leaving this to a conclusion at the end. They also try to cover as much of the period of time prescribed in the question, often considering a wide range of relevant issues rather than adapting a more narrative trawl. The best responses have a consistent focus in their evaluation that builds to a final sustained judgement that draws the threads in the rest of the response together.

Less successful responses tend to adopt a more narrative approach, relevant to the topic in the question but lacking evaluation of the key issues. For example, in Option 8 Question 2 many candidates discussed the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement but did not discuss the extent to which the Civil Rights Movement was successful as was asked in the question. Another issue with a number of responses was coverage of the period of time. Some candidates did not attempt to cover even a significant portion of the period of time specified in the question. For example, in many responses to Question 1 of Option 7 candidates began in 1945 but stopped around 1970, even though the question covers up to 1990. There were also some candidates who included material that was outside of the period of time in the question, which was not made relevant to the question.

An example of this was the 1861 emancipation of the serfs in a question ranging from 1881 to 1924 for Question 1 in Option 10, or the work of Martin Luther King in a question ranging from 1929 to 1952 for Question 1 of Option 8. Candidates should try to ensure they are covering as much of the period in the question as possible, and that their evaluation and judgements are focused on what the question is asking.

Section B (Assessment Objective 1)

Questions in this section cover longer periods of time, often the whole period of time covered by the specification. These questions focus on the other theme from the specification that is not assessed in Section A.

As in Section A, the vast majority of candidates respond to this question by trawling through the monarchs or leader or key events that cover this period of time. This tends to produce responses that are more narrative than analytical and where evaluation is often only seen in the conclusion rather than throughout the response. This can help some candidates with their period coverage, but for others it can be a limiting factor, especially if they are short on time as they often end up not completing the coverage anyway.

The best responses to these questions tended to take a thematic rather than chronological approach. For example, for Question 2 in Option 2 when candidates arranged their response around the different causes of the protests and rebellions against the Tudors rather than going through each rebellion in chronological order. Evaluation, considering the strengths and limitations of each argument happens throughout these essays rather than just being left to a summative judgment.

Weaker responses tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. They are mostly on topic, but do not address the debate in the question. For example, when answering Question 3 of Option 7 candidates would describe what each government did in relation to poverty and unemployment, but they do not consider the extent to which these actions were successful. Some responses were limited in their coverage of the period and in the case of some responses to Question 3 of Option 3 this meant only covering less than half of the period in the question and in some cases only considering Spanish and Portuguese exploration with no mention of the English, the Dutch or the French. In some options, significant portions of the period were not considered, for example there was little on the 1970s or 1980s or events before 1941 in responses to Question 3 of Option 8. Candidates should aim to cover the majority of the period from the question and should try to ensure that their analysis and evaluation is focused on the debate in the question set.

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UNIT 4 – IN-DEPTH (PART 2)

Overview of the Unit

For the source-based question, candidates need to discuss the strengths and limitations of each source and need to consider the specific and wider context in which they were produced. Comments on the authorship and value to an historian studying the named event are also important. Most candidates offered answers that were able to address the respective wider and some of the specific historical contexts of the provided sources. They undoubtedly did so because they were building on skills practised in a question of a similar demand in Unit 2. Most candidates were aware of the need to place the sources within their context, that is to know what else was going on at the time of the sources' production, and to gauge the strengths and limitations, and the overall value of the sources to the historian studying the named issue. However, very few did this collectively, and the vast majority did it on the basis of individual source treatment. The most worrying responses were those that provided detailed and well explained specific historical context of all three sources but did not discuss any strengths and limitations. The mark scheme does not allow these types of answers to progress very far in the mark scheme.

This has been said before but is worth repeating: some of the responses were extremely long and this appeared to have an impact on the work presented for the essay question. While the time allotted to the sources is longer, this is mainly for the purpose of reading and annotating the sources, thinking of strengths and limitations, and pondering the collective story the sources are showing. If you are on page 3 or 4 of your response and still haven't moved past a sole focus on Source A there is an issue of timing and the relevance of the response to the set question.

Two other issues are worthy of comment. Firstly, responses that comment on limitations by addressing what the sources don't tell us are to be considered weak responses. There is no requirement that sources should be telling us anymore than they actually do. Secondly, a continuing and worrying final judgement that weighs up 'which source is the most valuable' constitutes a weak judgement. Better judgements respond to how valuable the sources are collectively, given the question set. How this 'most valuable source' final judgement has come about is a mystery, but it is widespread and clearly misguided.

The second stage of the paper – the essay – requires candidates' consideration of one or more several key concepts. Candidates are expected to engage in a debate on one of the two questions and reach a substantiated judgement on the chosen question. In this series, many candidates addressed the key issue and managed to bring in other issues that were worthy of discussion. However, this often took the form of listing with a series of mini judgements that did not really discuss nor evaluate the specific question, ignoring, for example, the focus on 'mainly responsible', or 'the most significant'. As such their authors did not attain marks in the higher bands. Evaluative answers compare the main issue with other issues and do not just list them. Evaluating means explaining why one issue is of more or less significance and/or importance (or whatever is required by the specific question), not just stating that it is or is not without the all-important explanation.

Comments on individual questions/sections

(Assessment Objective 2)

Q.1

In the source-based questions candidates should refrain from providing long narratives and focus more on explaining what exactly influenced the author to say what was said at that particular period in time.

Both strengths and limitations of sources should be considered (this was done well by several candidates in Option 1) – in addition to their value to an historian – for the specific purpose of the question set. Context without the source evaluation is only a partial answer no matter how specific the actual historical context provided is. There is no requirement to discuss what the sources do not mention as a limitation. There is no requirement that a contemporary source say any more than is actually said unless there is a valid reason the writer has omitted to say something, for example this could be due to bias, deceit, propaganda purposes or perhaps because they simply were not – and could not – be aware of it.

There is no requirement to weigh up the sources against each other and it is in fact a futile exercise. The value of the sources is based on the question a historian would ask of them and as such this is the deciding factor when addressing value.

Specific issues that were identified include: the significant amount of copying from the sources in Option 1; a tendency toward narrative exposition (rather than contextualisation) in Option 3; and a lack of specific context in (once again) Option 3 (although Source C was handled relatively well), Option 4 (particularly with regard to Source A), Option 5 (very few candidates offered any contextual information for Source C), and Option 7 (where, for Source A, most candidates did not demonstrate their understanding of the specific circumstances of the material). Option 8, on the other hand – perhaps as the most widely sat option – offered many examples where candidates were well versed in the development of Nazi economic policy and provided well-contextualised responses. Knowledge about the economic contribution of Schacht, especially his policy of deficit financing through Mefo bills, was especially good.

It is worth noting that some candidates in all options showed a tendency towards mechanisation in some of the responses. This was particularly evident in Option 5 where several candidates seemed to use a set formula that did not really allow them to engage with the set question.

Finally, for Question 1 in nearly all of the options – although it was particularly evident in Option 3 – there was a tendency for candidates to discount a source because of its alleged bias. It seems that many candidates conflate “bias” with “valueless”, which shows little understanding of the historian’s craft.

Q.2 and 3 (Assessment Objective 1)

While, overall, there is much that is good in the essay work, there remain areas that need progression. Foremost among these is the tendency toward knowledge dumping where there should be responses that are focussed on and engaged with the demands of the particular question set, for example, an 'Examine' question will, more often than not, require an answer that examines a particular issue set, not wider, unconnected issues.

This tendency to tell whatever could be remembered was seen across all the optional papers but was particularly notable in: Option 2 Question 2 in which candidates rarely moved beyond description; in both Question 2 and Question 3 of Option 5 where candidates tended to make a chronological list of events relating to Lutheranism and the life of Calvin; and in Option 7 Question 3. While in this latter example many candidates offered cogent evaluations of the impact of Reconstruction, many others shifted the question so that they were responding to an imagined question that had asked if Reconstruction had the most significant impact on the lives of African Americans. While there is some, limited, scope for this in terms of the evaluation of the impact of Reconstruction, it can only be done to contextualise the various effects of that issue.

This attempt to shift the focus of questions was especially evident in A2 responses this year and indicates a worrying trend toward flipped responses. For example, where candidates are asked to assess the significance of Factor or Issue A, they immediately discount it and write about Factor B and Factor C (and in some cases Factors D and E), without ever attempting to explain why they think A is less significant. This is not what the question demands. Candidates are, of course, free to disagree that the named factor or issue is less significant, but the majority of the response must still be focused on that named issue and an explanation of why it is less significant (rather than why other factors are more significant). This was especially noticeable in: Option 3 Question 3 where many candidates offered some short narrative pieces about various protest movements and what they achieved or did not achieve and then a brief statement that they were successful or unsuccessful; and in Option 4 Question 3 where several responses demonstrated limited knowledge about the Education Act of 1918, instead providing lists of "other important social reforms". Candidates who think that the Education Act of 1918 was of limited importance, need to explain why it was of limited importance – what, in their view, it failed to achieve or why it wasn't it as effective as other social reforms in terms of its impact on people and society.

Where candidates' knowledge seemed to be somewhat on the thin side, this inevitably hampered their responses to the set questions. In Option 6 Question 2, a sizable proportion of the candidates were unable to detail what the federalist revolt was, and some confused it with the revolt in the Vendée. However, and on a positive note, where candidates appeared to have very good knowledge, they were often able to answer the question very effectively. This was seen especially in Option 2 Question 3, where coverage of unpopular aspects of Cromwell's rule was clear and effective as was the assessment that growing support for a restoration was turbo-charged during the ineffective and disastrous rule of Cromwell's son, "Tumbledown Dick". It was also evident in Option 8 Question 3, for which many candidates had detailed knowledge about Hitler's mistakes, ranging from his military errors to errors in preparing the economy. The best of these responses weighed up these factors against such issues as the involvement and, therefore, importance of the Allied nations and their substantial might.

UNIT 5 – NON-EXAMINED ASSESSMENT

Overview of the Unit

The NEA, which is marked out of 60, examines all three AOs with AO3 (Analysis and Evaluation, in relation to the historical context) worth 30 marks (50%) and AO1 and AO2 worth 15 marks (25%) each.

This unit examines candidates' ability to present, discuss and engage with historical interpretations. This is achieved by either selecting a question from the WJEC approved list or by centre-submitted questions that are approved by the Principal Moderator. Approved questions have a shelf-life of three years. The current three-year-cycle commenced in 2023 and will end in 2025. Centre submissions for the next cycle will be accepted from Autumn 2024. The questions in the NEA are framed in such a way as to elicit a number of interpretations.

Students are expected to consider three interpretations: that given in the question itself and two alternatives (sometimes three alternatives depending on the scope of the material). Suggested topics must fulfil quite strict criteria: the debate must be credible and fully supported by a range of contemporary sources drawn from the period under consideration, with no fewer than six and no more than 10 contemporary sources (approximately 8 is recommended). Allowances can be (and are) made for very early titles where contemporary sources are scarce, but these are sources within a close parameter of the events – perhaps a century or so. These sources can and do cover a range of different types from letters, dispatches, official reports and enquiries, diaries, speeches, newspapers, contemporary statistics, photographs, cartoons and so on. The key point to note and emphasise is the source must be contemporary to the topic under consideration. There is a provision for individual candidates to devise their own questions, however, these must be approved by the Principal Moderator on an annual basis.

The general impression on evidence seen by the Principal Moderator, Assistant Principal Moderator and Moderators was that there were fewer issues pertaining to the work of centres during this round than in previous rounds. The work of fewer centres was called in for further examination based on requested additional samples.

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

The most successful pieces of work seen were those that were lucid and coherent: they addressed the key issue and analysed it through the provision of selected contemporary sources without slipping into a pattern of source followed by source with intermittent analysis and evaluation bolted on. This work was concise and met the requirement that it did not exceed 4 000 words (excluding source extracts), with those that were either explicitly stated, or judged, to have been in excess of this limited to Band 5 in AO1. Some candidates continue to state word counts that are not a true reflection of the scale of the work and it is incumbent on centres to penalise them for this.

Sources and pages should be clearly numbered, and attributions provided which indicate what the source is, who produced it and when it was produced. A bibliography indicating the range of references consulted by a candidate needs to accompany each assignment and the sources must be incorporated into the body of the work and not attached as an appendix. Further, sources need to be clearly readable as, once again, a number of largely illegible screenshots were seen this year. These were mostly images of documents that had not been transcribed and could not be read, rendering them of little value.

As for the interpretations given and the arguments made about them, these need to be clear and precise in meaning and presentation. To attain the upper bands of AO3, candidates must offer valid reasons as to how and why an issue had been interpreted in different ways and to discuss why different interpretations would be formed based on the evidence in the sources used. In essence this reflects the changing ways in which the past has been interpreted by historians (and other commentators). Many candidates persist in discussing how a source supports an historian's opinion as opposed to discussing how an historian's interpretation might have been shaped by the source.

As was noted in the 2023 report, too many moderated assignments lacked coherence and sources were not integrated into the response and this is a significant weakness. It was obvious that entries from some centres were following a clearly defined plan (or template), consisting of a brief overview with some reference to different historians and interpretations with perhaps a hint of how or why these were formed. This is then followed by a half a dozen sources, each followed by an evaluation and a reference to how it might have been of use to an historian before moving on to the next source without any coherent link to the question set. In many instances the only reference to the question appeared in a concluding paragraph. Centres that provide guidance for candidates as to how to structure their responses run counter to the instruction that the NEA must be an individual piece of work.

Finally, one common misconception noted in a small number of centres' submissions was that the issue in the question was interpreted in such a way that alternative causes for an event were presented, rather than an alternative interpretation by historians.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

The NEA, unfortunately, presents opportunities for candidates to exploit the possibilities of AI, hence the amendment to the authentication forms this year; however, once again, this year there was evidence that some of the work produced had been generated in this way. This runs counter to the requirements of the NEA and centres must be vigilant in its use, with the potential consequences of its use clearly outlined to all learners.

Word count breaches which were not capped were noted from a number of centres. The requirement for the maximum length of 4 000 words is to give all candidates the same opportunity to provide coherent and focused responses. Where this limit is breached candidates might well have an unfair advantage to develop points in an extended way. This is unfair and candidates cannot be permitted to supply work in excess of the word count. The longest piece of work submitted this year approached 8 000 words and while it was apparent that the learner had been warned against this in the feedback, the warning had not been heeded. WJEC recommends that teachers stop marking at 4 000 words to enforce the message that the wordcount must be adhered to.

A few candidates persist in including non-contemporary sources in their assignments and in many cases this is not being flagged – or dealt with – in the marking of those assignments. Centres need to emphasise in their preliminary advice to candidates of what is permissible and what is not: that sources produced long after an event where there is an element of reflection, such as memoirs or interviews conducted are not acceptable. Maps and graphs from contemporary textbooks which may have been filtered and amended by authors were also included by some candidates and these also are not acceptable. Data or statistics drawn from contemporary sources are acceptable.

Other areas where teachers need to be vigilant is in the number of contemporary sources used by the learners. As indicated in the 2023 report the instruction in the NEA guidance that NEAs that do not include the minimum number of contemporary sources cannot be deemed to have deployed source materials appropriately and so cannot access Band 5 or above of AO2 and this was not always enforced, leading to adjustments during the external moderation process.

The tendency to overmark at the top end and undermark at the bottom end persists. At the top end, too many candidates were given Band 5 and Band 6 for AO3 by the centres when they had not fulfilled the criteria of those bands. To reach these, candidates must offer valid reasons as to how and why an issue had been interpreted in different ways and to discuss why different interpretations would be formed based on the evidence in the sources used.

Finally, annotations by centres need to be clear, relevant, frequent, appropriate and accurate as this greatly facilitates the moderation process.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4277

Email: GCEHistory@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/history-as-a-level/>

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

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Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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