



A-Level **History**

7042/C Non-exam Assessment

Report on the Examination

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Overall Comments

We are now several years into the current Specification, and it was clear that most Centres and their students were very familiar with the specific requirements of the History NEA task. A lot of excellent work was seen, which looked analytically at change and continuity across the full c.100-year contextual period stated in the questions chosen and supported this analysis with well-chosen and effectively evaluated primary sources and historical interpretations. However, some more formulaic approaches were also encountered with, for example, students from one centre going rather mechanically through the same factors and the use of a very limited range of sources and interpretations across the student cohort. These did not always allow the students to demonstrate their individual historical skills to the full. Also noticed was a trend amongst some Centres to misinterpret the NEA as essentially an historiographical exercise and to emphasise Assessment Objective 3 at the expense of AO1. This point is more fully discussed below.

Centre Administration

This was the first year where script samples were submitted online. Despite a few teething difficulties, the system appears to have worked well overall, and Centres were able to upload the scripts and associated documentation successfully. However, Centres are reminded that the requirement to include signed Candidate Record Forms from all students, not just those in the sample, together with completed Question Approval Forms for each different question attempted by the Centre's students remains. There was still an issue with some Centres not initially providing copies of Question Approval Forms which had been processed by their Coursework Adviser. This is a Specification requirement and QAFs should be submitted for approval by the indicated deadline in October. The question attempted by the students should be exactly the same as that approved and any proposed amendments should be submitted in good time to the Coursework Adviser. Chasing up missing QAFs took up quite a bit of Moderators' time at the beginning of the process. A reminder, too, for Centres to check carefully that the scans of scripts are complete and that pages are in the correct order. There were some instances where this was not the case and a few occasions where the annotation and summative comments on the scripts were not legible on the scanned version.

Centre Marking and Moderation

The quality of annotation and summative comments explaining why particular marks had been awarded was generally good and very helpful for the Moderators. The best comments made direct reference to the details of the mark scheme and went beyond a simple tick with 'AO1' or similar. A large number of Centres, and not simply those using digital annotation, were exemplary in their thoroughness in this regard. Many Centres utilised unofficial mark sheets or grids to assist the process, which nevertheless accurately reflected the Specification requirements and gave a clear insight into their marking methodology. However, a few cases were seen where Centres were still using an earlier, out of date version of the mark scheme and, in a couple of instances, use of a non-AQA NEA mark scheme was even encountered. Centres should ensure that they are using the most up to date version of the mark scheme

when assessing future students' work. The majority of Centres provided clear evidence of the internal moderation and standardisation of marks, which was gratifying to see. The total mark and Assessment Objective breakdown should be recorded on each Candidate Record Form as this is the official document of record.

The 4,500-word limit has been in place for several years and did not appear to have caused any major difficulties. Centres are reminded that an accurate word count should be recorded on the Candidate Record Form. A couple of trends were encountered which appear to relate to the word limit restriction. One was the inclusion by students of additional factual information in footnotes which should have been in the main essay. Footnotes in History NEA should be used solely for the purposes of source citation and additional factual information contained in them should not be credited for the purposes of AOs1-3. A feature of some students' work was the use of non-standard abbreviations throughout their essays. An example would be 'AA' for 'African Americans' in essays on Black Civil Rights in the USA. This approach was at times carried to such a degree that it affected the quality of written communication and its use, and that of footnotes for additional factual information, should be discouraged by Centres.

Assessment Objective 1

Assessment Objective 1 is worth half the marks for the NEA and the degree to which it is addressed successfully forms the driver for the NEA overall. The NEA should be seen as an extended essay with primary source and interpretation components. The AO1 requirement to consider change and continuity over a c.100-year contextual period still causes difficulties particularly in certain topics, where students sometimes adopted a so-called 'stepping stones' approach to the period: focusing on particular incidents across the span of time but leading to large gaps in coverage of the period as a whole. This can have a potentially serious impact on the mark which can be attained for AO1. Topics particularly prone to this tendency include the Crusades, Tudor Rebellions and Witchcraft. In all of these cases, numerous examples were seen this year where the contextual period was engaged with very effectively indeed, but it required careful consideration by the student. The advice of the Coursework Adviser can prove very valuable in this regard.

Other questions led students to focus only on one part of the contextual period, perhaps treating the early part of the span simply as brief background. Black Civil Rights in the USA is one topic where this can be a danger, but examples were also seen where this was a shortcoming in scripts on the Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire, Women's Rights in the UK and Anti-Semitism in Germany, amongst others. Again, careful thought needs to be given during planning and research of the NEA as to how to address the full contextual period effectively. In some cases, Centres might consider adjusting the scope or date range of their questions to facilitate engagement with the full contextual period. The contextual period can be between 80-120 years in length, providing that the start and end dates have relevance to the specific question. In connection with coverage of the contextual period, examples were still seen amongst Centre marking of 'tick sheets' recording mentions of each decade through the period. This indicates a misunderstanding of the requirement to engage with the context by making contrasts and comparisons across the full period, rather than simply providing, say, a chronological account of key events.

Assessment Objective 2

Assessment Objective 2 was in general addressed effectively and assessed accurately by Centres and their students. It was a strong feature of many of the scripts seen. However, Centres are reminded that the AO requires consideration of the value of the source in answering the specific question not, for example, its reliability per se, in order to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. In this regard, a high-level response would be expected to produce a balanced assessment considering both the positive value and limitations of the source involved in relation to answering the question. Mostly, students made effective choices of the three sources to be considered and blended them into the essay as a whole. A small number of students considered AO2 in a separate section of the NEA, which was not as good as an integrated response. There were a few cases where students looked at more than the required three sources, which was an unnecessary use of the limited word count available. A few students chose sources which were not primary to the period, including examples of graphs or diagrams from modern books. These incorporated historical data but were not themselves contemporary to the period in question, so were not valid for the purposes of AO2.

Assessment Objective 3

The choice of interpretations to be evaluated is very important for success in this Assessment Objective. Interpretations had to be long enough, and contain opinion rather than simply factual information, for relevant arguments to be extracted, while at the same time being manageable in the limited space available. In this regard, there seemed to be far fewer cases this year where students were attempting to assess the author's entire body of work or consider them as a representative of a school of thought. Students generally showed understanding of the arguments involved, although they sometimes simply described the arguments presented rather than actually evaluating them. Centres are reminded that there is no need to compare the interpretations directly to access the full range of the mark scheme, but they should be about the same aspect of the topic, in the manner of the extracts considered for the first question on the Examined Component 1.

The additional requirement to consider the timing/context/limitations of the interpretations posed difficulties for some students. A few concentrated on this aspect to the exclusion of assessment of the interpretation itself. Others did not look at the question of provenance at all, which restricted them to the lowest levels of the AO3 mark scheme. As noted in previous years, some students produced quite lengthy biographies of the historians involved which were not always properly related to the actual arguments they were making. In regard to timing and context, a number of students made speculative and unconvincing comments about events occurring at the time of publication possibly influencing the interpretation. This ignored the fact that the work represented years of previous research by the historian.

However, there was also a lot of carefully considered evaluation of interpretations which effectively combined assessment of the argument itself and the situation of the author. While in general a good range of interpretations on particular topics was utilised, in a number of cases it would have been better to see a wider variety of extracts chosen by students from the same cohort. A small number of unsuitable interpretations were selected, and Centres are reminded

that they should be in written form with clearly identified historians as the authors. However, textbooks and course books are specifically excluded from use for AO3 by the AQA A-Level Specification and Centres should ensure that their students comply with this restriction.

As noted at the outset of this report, some Centres misinterpreted the NEA as being primarily an historiographical exercise. In some instances, this involved examining a variety of interpretations beyond the two required for the purposes of AO3. In other examples, the whole essay became essentially a comparison of the two chosen interpretations with the overall conclusion, for example, sometimes being more a judgement on which of them was the more convincing rather than an answer to the NEA question itself. In both types of response there was a danger of the student's own analytical voice being lost and the diversion of valuable word count from consideration of the more important Assessment Objective 1.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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