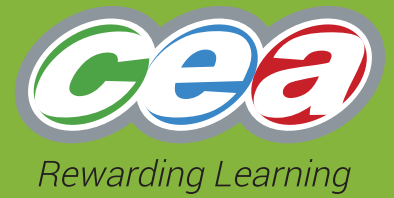


GCE



Chief Examiner's Report History

Summer Series 2023



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE HISTORY

Chief Examiner's Report

General

This series was the first since 2019 in which candidates were required to sit all units. While the standard achieved by some students was remarkable, it is clear that a number struggled. The level of response was mixed across all units, but particularly in AS1 and A22. Some candidates had issues with time management, and there was a tendency by many students to write lengthy answers which, while often detailed, lacked sustained focus and engagement.

Assessment Unit AS1 Historical Investigations and Interpretations

Unit Overview

This Unit provided a wide range of responses. The standard in Question 1 was generally good, but it is clear that some candidates still find Question 2 challenging, particularly Question 2(b). To achieve Level 4 marks, it is necessary to provide precise, relevant contextual knowledge. It is also essential that the response contains challenges to one or both interpretations, which means that candidates are expected to challenge an argument or assertion made in one or both extracts. Finally, candidates must provide a substantiated judgement, explaining why they find one interpretation more convincing than the other. One effective way to do this is by writing a paragraph at the end of the response, which many candidates now do well. With reference to Question 2 (a), candidates should be reminded that the quality of contextual knowledge is more important than its quantity. One or two good, precise points of relevant contextual knowledge will be sufficient to meet the criteria for Level 4 marks.

Option 1 England 1509-1558

This option attracted an entry of 65 candidates. The quality of the responses varied widely.

- Q1 (a)** This question on the organisation and doctrine of the Catholic Church in pre-Reformation England was the less popular of the two 10-mark questions. Most responses dealt better with the organisation of the Catholic Church than its doctrine. Weaker answers were apt to be too narrow in focus, concentrating on either the organisation or the doctrine of the Catholic Church in this period.
- (b)** This question on the measures taken to restore Roman Catholicism in England under Mary I was the more popular 10-mark question. The best responses provided accurate and relevant information in their analysis of the question, while less good answers only explained in general terms some of Mary I's actions and failed to analyse the steps she took to restore Roman Catholicism, such as the Acts of Repeal and the royal injunctions.

- Q2 (a)** This question required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the causes of the Many-Headed Monster Rebellions of 1549. The best responses made good use of relevant source content to support their judgements, as well as including references to relevant contextual knowledge.

Good responses also highlighted the strengths of the source, with good focus on its mode, author, date, motive, audience and tone. Some candidates were unable to obtain a Level 4 mark because they did not provide a valid limitation in their response. Similarly, some candidates did not provide relevant contextual knowledge, which is also a requirement for a Level 4 mark.

- (b)** Question 2(b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the role of Thomas Cromwell in Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the English Reformation they found more convincing. The best responses provided a clear summary of the different lines of argument put forward by the historians and analysed in greater depth the evidence on which the historians' arguments were based. The best answers reached clear and developed conclusions, well supported by the selective use of relevant contextual knowledge to justify their judgement. Less good responses struggled to provide appropriate contextual knowledge about the role of Cromwell in gaining the divorce for Henry VIII. Some candidates failed to explain clearly which of the two interpretations they found more convincing and did not present an effective challenge to one or both of the interpretations.

Option 2 England 1603-1649

There were 122 entries in total this year. The quality of the responses was mixed. While the best answers displayed some excellent knowledge and understanding, a significant minority of candidates struggled with technique in Q2(b).

- Q1 (a)** This question on the impact of royal favourites on political life in the reign of James I was the more popular of the two questions in this part of the examination. Most responses provided detail on the Duke of Buckingham. However, some candidates failed to access higher marks because they neglected Robert Carr, while others failed to address the impact of royal favourites, providing a simple narrative instead.
- (b)** This question on the weaknesses of the royalists in the English Civil War produced a large number of excellent responses. However, a number of candidates digressed by providing an analysis of parliamentary strength rather than focusing on royalist weaknesses.
- Q2 (a)** This question required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying James I's attitudes towards Catholics in the period 1603-1625. Most candidates appear to have found the source accessible and were able to provide detailed contextual knowledge to support their analysis. The majority of responses also included an evaluation of the provenance of the source. One common problem was the failure to address the content in terms of its utility. Another was a tendency to write extensively about context to the degree that other aspects of the source were neglected.

- (b) This question required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the reasons why Charles I decided to rule without Parliament in 1629 they found more convincing. The question provided a range of responses. The vast majority of candidates were able to demonstrate good understanding of both extracts. While the best answers provided examples of the foreign, financial and religious policies referenced in the two extracts, a significant number failed to provide sufficient relevant, precise contextual knowledge to access higher marks. Another common problem was the failure to provide a reasoned explanation of why one interpretation was more convincing than the other. Some candidates digressed by discussing Charles I's Personal Rule, which fell outside the scope of the question.

Option 3 Britain in the Age of Reform 1830-1880

There were 43 entries in this option. Questions 1(a) and 1(b) proved to be equally popular with candidates and the responses to both questions were of a good quality. However, the standard of the answers to Question 2 was less good, particularly with regard to Question 2(b).

- Q1 (a)** Answers to this question on the impact of the social and economic reforms of Peel's Second Ministry between 1841 and 1846 displayed a good knowledge of Peel's drive towards free trade through his budgets of 1842 and 1845 and ultimately the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. Analysis of Peel's social reforms was not quite so insightful, but the better answers noted the legislation relating to factories and the mining industry, as well as reform of the railway system.
- (b) This question on the reasons for the rise of the Chartist movement in the late 1830s elicited some excellent answers, noting the legacy of bitterness felt by the working class after the 1832 Reform Act and analysing other important factors, such as the British radical tradition, including the radical press and organisations like the political unions. These reasons were then melded into a coherent explanation for the appearance of the Chartists in the late 1830s. Overall, this was the best-answered question on the paper.
- Q2 (a)** This question required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the circumstances and context in which the Parliamentary Reform Bill was passed. Overall, there was a significant variation in the quality of the answers. The best responses made good use of the content in tandem with relevant contextual knowledge which focused on the early stages of the parliamentary process that would eventually produce the Great Reform Act of 1832. Some candidates correctly noted that, based on this source, not all Whigs were supportive of the bill at the outset. While many candidates identified the date as a clear limitation, additional suggestions were less convincing. The mode and motive of the source were well handled.
- (b) The interpretation question, which required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the political achievements of Gladstone and Disraeli they found more convincing, produced a wide range of responses, but the general standard was disappointing. Many candidates exhibited good contextual knowledge of both Disraeli and Gladstone, tending to be stronger on the latter. However, more reference might have been made to Disraeli's idea of 'Tory Democracy', or one-nation Conservatism. A worrying flaw in quite a few answers was to subject each interpretation to a 'source analysis', applying the procedure of an answer to Question 2(a), which was not required in Question 2(b).

Option 4 Italy and Germany 1815-1871

This option attracted an entry of 23 candidates. The overall quality of the responses was very good and there were several outstanding scripts.

- Q1 (a)** Question 1 (a) on the role of King Charles Albert in the unification of Italy attracted only one response.
- (b)** Almost all candidates answered Question 1(b) on the reasons for Prussia's success in the Franco-Prussia War of 1870-1871. The quality of the answers was consistently high and there were some excellent responses. The best answers presented a wide-ranging and very well-developed analysis of the reasons for Prussia's success in the Franco-Prussian War. Less good responses tended to be too narrow in focus.
- Q2 (a)** Question 2 (a) required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the aims of the participants in the revolutions in Germany in 1848. The overall standard of the answers was very good and there were several outstanding responses. Most candidates evaluated the source well or very well in terms of its date, author, mode, motive, audience and tone. In general, answers evaluated the content of the source effectively and most were able to relate their observations to the wording of the question. Almost all candidates included relevant contextual knowledge in their responses, and some placed the Dresden petition in its chronological context, observing that it was presented less than two weeks after the overthrow of Louis Philippe in France. Most candidates correctly identified the date as a limitation of the source because, since the petition was issued at the very beginning of the German revolutions, the historian cannot know whether the aims of the revolutionaries changed as they achieved success.
- (b)** Question 2(b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the causes of the unification of Italy they found more convincing. Most candidates answered this question well and the quality of the responses was significantly higher than in the 2022 series. Most candidates provided a clear summary of the contrasting interpretations. The most common shortcoming in less good answers was a failure to relate their contextual knowledge to the focus of the question. Surprisingly few candidates challenged Riall's assessment in Interpretation A of the importance of the Italian National Society in bringing about the unification of Italy.

Option 5 Germany 1919-1945

There were 2344 entries for this option. With such a large entry, the standard of the answers inevitably varied widely, ranging from outstanding to very poor. As in previous years, there was a particularly wide range of standard in the responses to Question 2(b).

- Q1 (a)** This question on how the political leaders of the Weimar Republic from 1930 to January 1933 contributed to its decline proved to be far more popular than Question 1(b). The overall standard of the responses was good or very good and most candidates were able to discuss in detail the actions of the respective Chancellors and President Hindenburg.
- (b)** This question on the impact of Nazi propaganda on the morale of the German people in the period 1939-1945 produced some very good responses but, in general, was answered less well than Question 1(a). Weaker responses were apt to digress by discussing Nazi propaganda between 1933 and 1939, which was outside the time frame of the question. Another common flaw was to focus on other factors which adversely affected morale among the German people during the war, such as Allied bombing and rationing.
- Q2 (a)** Question 2(a) required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the development of the Nazi Party in the period 1924-1929. In general, the quality of the responses was higher than in recent series and it was pleasing to note that most candidates attempted to provide a thoughtful and informed evaluation of the content of the source in relation to the question. Most answers also evaluated the provenance of the source, although not all did this fully. Weaker responses tended to focus extensively on context to the degree that other aspects of the source were neglected. Another common flaw was to discuss events which fell outside the scope of the question and candidates are reminded to note the range of dates specified in the question.
- (b)** Question 2(b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of turning points in the development of Nazi policies towards the Jews in the period 1933-1939 they found more convincing. There was a wide range in the quality of the responses to this question. Candidates who attained a high level of response provided a detailed analysis of both interpretations, supported by relevant and precise contextual knowledge. In contrast, a feature of weaker responses was that the contextual knowledge they provided was vague, imprecise and often lacked development. In terms of challenges, the best answers challenged arguments made by the authors of one or both interpretations. Merely pointing out that one interpretation fails to include information mentioned in the other is not a strong challenge. Some candidates also failed to provide a substantiated judgement on why they found one source more convincing than the other. This is an important element of the question and should not be neglected.

Assessment Unit AS2 Historical Conflict and Change

Unit Overview

This year, Unit 2 was a compulsory unit. It was evident that some candidates still lack confidence in writing longer, essay-style responses. It was also noticeable that many candidates wrote long responses to the 8-mark questions – often matching the essay question in terms of length. Candidates are reminded that it is possible to achieve Level 4 marks for the 8-mark questions by writing a short, concise but comprehensive response.

Option 1 Spain and Europe 1556-1598

There were no entries for this Option.

Option 2 The Ascendancy of France in Europe 1660-1714

This option attracted an entry of 110 candidates. Overall, there was a very good standard of responses with most candidates displaying a very good understanding of the period and impressive knowledge of the events and issues. There was no obvious question preference.

- Q1**
- (i) This question on the consequences of the Dutch War of 1672-1678 was generally answered very well. However, responses would have been improved by the inclusion of some of the direct terms of the Treaty of Nijmegen which concluded the war. Less good answers tended to lapse into an explanation of the events of the conflict rather than focusing on its consequences.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate whether the weakness of the French performance in the War of the Spanish Succession was primarily due to economic factors. There were a number of very impressive responses to this question with strong analysis of the proposition and consideration of alternative factors, such as the weaknesses in the French leadership, the impact of battlefield defeats, in particular at Blenheim, and the strength of the Allied war effort. More limited responses were apt to provide a short or more general account of the economic conditions of the period, rather than connecting this to the French performance in the war. The best answers focused on the more direct economic impact of the war itself and showed how France's ability to fight this long, widespread conflict was undermined by economic factors.
- Q2**
- (i) This question asked candidates to explain the aims and ambitions of the Grand Alliance at the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession. The quality of responses was mixed. The best answers examined the aims and ambitions of the individual countries within the Grand Alliance, and this proved to be an effective way to structure the explanation. Less good responses tended to be more generalised, with a lack of supporting factual evidence.
 - (ii) This question on the importance of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in causing the Nine Years' War produced some outstanding answers. These candidates displayed an excellent understanding of the impact of the proposition, outlining how it led to increased opposition to Louis XIV. These responses also provided an impressive analysis of alternative causes of the war, such as the clash with the Papacy, the formation of the Grand Alliance and the impact of the events in Cologne or the Palatinate. Weaker answers tended to lapse into a narrative or describe events rather than explaining how they caused the outbreak of the war. This was especially evident in some candidates' analysis of the impact of the Cologne Incident.

- Q3**
- (i) This question required candidates to explain the main successes of France during the Nine Years' War. There were a number of outstanding responses which displayed a superb knowledge of the events of the war. Weaker answers tended to lack precise factual evidence or include some of the successes of the Grand Alliance. There was no expectation that candidates would be able to include all the French successes in this period and responses were able to provide evidence from any of the theatres of war.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate the proposition that Louis XIV was solely to blame for the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession. Most candidates provided a strong response to this question by analysing the actions of Louis XIV which led to war and providing a counterargument by looking at the role of William of Orange or Emperor Leopold. Weaker responses were apt to provide an extended explanation of why Louis accepted the will of Carlos II or lapse into a narrative account of his subsequent blunders.

Option 3 Ireland 1823-1867

There were 165 entries for this option. The standard of the answers varied widely, ranging from exceptional to very poor. There was no obvious question preference.

- Q1**
- (i) This question on why both Daniel O'Connell and the Whigs were disappointed with the outcome of the Lichfield House Compact elicited a wide range of responses. While many candidates were able to recognise the disappointment of the three key reforms for O'Connell, fewer examined the disappointments of the Whigs. Very few answers looked at the impact of Drummond and many digressed by looking at the positive results of the Compact.
 - (ii) This question invited candidates to assess the extent to which laissez-faire ideology was responsible for the limited success of government relief measures during the Irish Famine. This question produced mixed responses. While the best answers analysed how the policies of Peel and Russell were dictated by laissez-faire ideology, more limited responses struggled to focus on the issue raised by the proposition. A minority of candidates produced answers which focused well on Russell but barely acknowledged the role of Peel.
- Weaker responses were apt to write a short acknowledgement of the impact of laissez-faire and then enumerate the actions carried out by Peel and Russell without linking them to the proposition.

- Q2**
- (i) This question on the tactics Daniel O’Connell used in his campaign to achieve Catholic Emancipation was generally answered very well. Candidates were, for the most part, able to identify a variety of tactics O’Connell employed in his campaign. A minority of responses provided details of the weaknesses of the British Government but failed to link this information to the question set.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate the proposition that the poor leadership of Stephens, O’Mahony and Kelly was the most important reason for the failure of the Fenian Rising of 1867. Although there were some outstanding responses, this question was, generally speaking, not handled well. The most common shortcoming of weaker answers was a failure to engage effectively with the proposition. Of the leaders named, Kelly received the least coverage. Most responses dealt well with the counterargument, discussing other factors which contributed to the defeat of the Fenians, such as the actions of the British Government and the role of the Catholic Church.
- Q3**
- (i) This question on the ideas and beliefs of the Fenian movement was generally well answered. Most responses provided good details of the ideas and beliefs of the Fenian movement, acknowledging their desire for independence and the creation of a Republic. Good responses also explained the aims of the Fenians in relation to the issue of land reform.
 - (ii) This question asked candidates to debate the proposition that the actions of Sir Robert Peel and the British government were solely responsible for the failure of Daniel O’Connell’s campaign to repeal the Act of Union. Most candidates produced good responses to this question, demonstrating a sound knowledge of the proposition and a good grasp of the other factors which contributed to the downfall of the Repeal movement, such as the re-use of O’Connell’s Emancipation tactics and the quarrel with the Young Ireland movement. Less good responses were apt to discuss only one part of Peel and his government’s response, some focusing on his actions in 1843 up to his ban at Clontarf, and others referring to his reforms after 1843 which weakened the Repeal movement.

Option 4**France 1815-1870**

This option attracted an entry of 31 candidates. The questions elicited a wide range of responses. There were a number of excellent answers, many which ranged from satisfactory to good and a few which were disappointing. Question 1 attracted only a few responses. Although there were some very good answers to the 22-mark questions, a significant minority were poorly organised, displayed structural weaknesses and inadequate paragraphing.

- Q1**
- (i) This question asked candidates to explain the social and cultural developments which took place in France in the period 1830-1848. As a rule, this question was not well answered. Some responses focused on either social or cultural developments, but not both, while some strayed into purely economic matters.
 - (ii) This question invited candidates to debate how far Napoleon III achieved the aims of his domestic policy. This was a straightforward question which produced some good answers. Weaker responses often failed to analyse the aims of the Emperor's domestic policy effectively. This was particularly so in terms of his political aims and the issue of whether the move from authoritarian to "Liberal" Empire was voluntary or involuntary.
- Q2**
- (i) This question on the aims of the Charter of Liberties was, in general, not well answered. Some candidates knew the Charter well but struggled to explain its aims.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate the proposition that Louis Philippe's foreign policy was the most important reason for his overthrow in 1848. While there were a number of good responses, some candidates failed to offer much material on the proposition, suggesting instead a range of other reasons for Louis Philippe's overthrow. The economic crisis of the late 1840s was often ignored, despite its centrality to the events of 1848. Those who did cover foreign policy in sufficient depth often did so very well, although few seemed to recognise that the King's coup involving the Spanish Marriages soured previously good relations with Britain.
- Q3**
- (i) This question on why the Second French Republic was so short-lived was generally well answered. However, not all responses noted how the June Days pushed many moderate republicans into the arms of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, helping to shorten the life of the Second Republic.
 - (ii) This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that, as long as Louis XVIII remained alive, the Bourbon monarch had every chance of survival, but Charles X's accession to the throne in 1824 destroyed these chances. There were some excellent answers, while many others, although good, might have been improved had they offered a wider range of evidence in their discussion of the question. For example, some noted the domestic successes of Louis XVIII, but not those in the field of foreign affairs. With Charles X, the final stages of the Restoration, with the King's wish to cling on to the entirely unsuitable Polignac leading him to issue the Ordinances, were not always understood. Nevertheless, many responses offered good detail on the Bourbon Restoration, and it was pleasing to note the many responses which challenged the proposition on the grounds that 1820, rather than 1824, was the true turning point in the fortunes of the Bourbon restoration, rather than the accession of Charles.

Option 5**Russia 1914-1941**

This option attracted an entry of 1656 candidates. Most candidates performed well or very well and seemed very familiar with the course content. In particular, candidates demonstrated skill in the 22-mark questions, displaying a good awareness of how to analyse the proposition and introduce a counterargument. Questions 1 and 2 proved to be the most popular questions. Some candidates wrote too much in response to the 8-mark questions, which in some instances appeared to have an impact on their time management.

- Q1**
- (i) This question on the aims of Bolshevik economic policies between 1917 and 1924 produced a wide range of responses. The most common flaw of the answers was digression. Some responses neglected the aims of Bolshevik economic policies, concentrating instead on the features of their policies or their successes and failures. State Capitalism was not properly understood by all candidates.
 - (ii) This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that the Bolsheviks were primarily responsible for their success in the Revolution of October 1917. It was generally answered very well. Less good responses were too narrow in focus. Some concentrated exclusively on the mistakes of the Provisional Government and neglected other factors. A number of responses confined themselves to the strengths of the Bolsheviks, while others focused exclusively on the roles of Lenin and Trotsky.
- Q2**
- (i) This question on how the mistakes of Stalin's rivals helped him to achieve power in the USSR by 1929 elicited a wide range of responses. While the best answers provided a comprehensive explanation of the mistakes made by Stalin's rivals, weaker responses were apt to digress on to Stalin's own actions. Most answers dealt well with Trotsky but there were lapses when analysing the mistakes of Stalin's other rivals on the Left and Right.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate the extent to which it was the strength of the Bolsheviks which led to their victory in the Russian Civil War. It produced a large number of very good responses. Most candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding, although many were more confident in their analysis of the Reds than the Whites. There was also a tendency amongst weaker answers to focus almost exclusively on the roles of Lenin and Trotsky and provide little discussion of the weaknesses of the Whites.
- Q3**
- (i) This question invited candidates to explain how the impact of the First World War on Russia brought about the Revolution of February 1917. It was generally answered well by the minority of candidates who chose it. Responses were generally well structured and comprehensive.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate the proposition that in the period 1929-1941 Stalin totally failed to improve Soviet agriculture, but his attempts to improve Soviet industry met with considerable success. Although there were a few outstanding answers, this question also produced a large number of poor responses. Candidates often appeared to lack a detailed knowledge and understanding of either Soviet industry or agriculture, while a significant number of responses showed little or no awareness of the Five-Year Plans.

Option 6**Italy's Quest for Great Power Status 1871-1943**

There were 361 entries for this option. The overall standard was good, with most candidates able to engage successfully with the questions posed. While all three questions attracted a good number of responses, Question 2 proved to be marginally the most popular.

A feature of the scripts was that some candidates wrote long responses to the 8-mark questions, including an introduction and a conclusion. It should be stressed that this is not necessary, and it is possible to achieve Level 4 marks by writing a short, concise but comprehensive response. No judgement or argument is required in the 8-mark questions.

- Q1**
- (i) This question invited candidates to explain why Mussolini chose to remain neutral in 1939 but decided to enter the Second World War in 1940. It was, in general, answered well, with the majority of responses attempting to discuss both Italian neutrality in 1939 and the decision to enter the Second World War in 1940. However, some answers tended to focus too heavily on either 1939 or 1940.
 - (ii) This question required candidates to debate the degree of success Giolitti achieved in his attempts to overcome the internal divisions in Italy between 1903 and 1914. There were some very good responses but some conflated Giolitti's handling of internal divisions with the general level of success he experienced in his policies. The best answers demonstrated an excellent knowledge of Giolitti's policies and were able to link them to the internal divisions in Italy, such as the North/South divide and the measures taken to ensure support for the government and the Liberal state. Some responses would have been strengthened by a greater knowledge and discussion of the measures taken by Giolitti to win the support of groups, such as the socialists, nationalists, middle and upper classes and the Catholic Church, and by assessing the level of success he enjoyed with these measures.
- Q2**
- (i) This question asked candidates to explain how Italy attempted to establish colonies in Africa between 1871 and 1912. Overall, it was answered very well. Most candidates displayed a detailed knowledge of Italy's main attempts to gain territory in Africa, such as Tunisia, Ethiopia and Libya. However, some responses might have demonstrated more knowledge on the acquisition of Italian Somaliland and Eritrea.
 - (ii) This question invited candidates to assess how far Italian disappointment with the terms of the Paris Peace Settlement was justified. The quality of the responses varied widely. The best answers debated the effectiveness of the Italian involvement in the First World War and were aware of the consequences of the involvement of Woodrow Wilson in the negotiations for the Paris Peace Settlement. More limited responses restricted themselves to a discussion of the terms of the Treaty of London and a subsequent comparison with what Italy achieved in the Treaty of St Germain. Most responses would have been improved by further comparison of the war efforts of the various victorious powers and their respective gains from the Paris Peace Settlement.

- Q3**
- (i)** This question required candidates to explain the social and political effects of the First World War on Italy between 1915 and 1918. Generally speaking, the question was answered well. However, most responses were more detailed on the social impact of the war than its political effects. Some candidates limited their discussion of political effects to the neutralist versus interventionist debate and would have benefited from including more on the weak coalition governments and the political isolation of Giolitti. A small number of answers digressed beyond the dates in the question, discussing the effects of the war after 1918.
 - (ii)** This question on the extent to which Mussolini's foreign policy was characterised by success in the 1920s but failure in the 1930s was generally answered well. Most candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the main events in Mussolini's foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s and appreciated that most of his policy initiatives had elements of both success and failure. Some responses could have been improved by including a more detailed discussion and analysis of the development of Italy's closer relations with Germany in the later 1930s.

Assessment Unit A21 Change over Time.

Unit Overview

This series saw a return to normality after the interruptions of COVID. In the majority of the options, the standard was mixed, with candidate responses ranging from outstanding to limited. Candidates who engaged fully with the question and maintained a good focus on that question, were able to access the full range of marks available. Most candidates demonstrated a range of skills and an impressive level of historical knowledge. Where there were shortcomings, particularly in terms of skills, these have been highlighted by the Supervising Examiners in the reports below.

Option 1 Crown and Parliament in England 1625-1714

There were 96 entries for this option. The standard was impressive, with a large number of outstanding scripts. Most responses demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the period and a good focus on the question. Question 1 was the more popular question.

- Q1** This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that James II weakened the power and position of the Crown more than any other monarch in the period 1625-1714. Most candidates provided a comprehensive survey of the period, dealing with each reign in turn and analysing the changing prerogatives of the monarchy. Some responses omitted one or more monarchs, which prevented them from accessing high level marks. A small but worrying minority neglected the reign of James II which, since it was the focus of the question, placed them at a significant disadvantage.
- Q2** This question asked candidates to debate the proposition that clashes over religion brought about the most important changes in the relationship between Parliament and the Crown in the period 1625-1714. Most candidates provided a focused analysis of religious conflict in relation to other factors. Some responses achieved lower marks because they did not address other factors and a small minority simply provided a narrative summary of the relationship between Crown and Parliament across the period.

Option 2 Ireland under the Union 1800-1900

A total of 336 candidates entered for this option. The quality of the responses varied greatly, ranging from outstanding to very poor. There was an impressive number of very good or excellent scripts. Less good answers exhibited several common flaws. Some did not engage fully with the whole period, while others failed to discuss one of the key strands of the course, for example, unionism or revolutionary nationalism. Limited answers were apt to present a narrative account with little focus on the actual question.

- Q1** This question asked candidates to assess whether nationalism was always more successful than unionism in getting what it wanted from the British government between 1800 and 1900. Strong responses considered both constitutional and revolutionary nationalism, as well as unionism, and provided a wide range of evidence to support their analysis. Weaker answers often lacked balance. A significant number of candidates focused most of their answer on constitutional nationalism, providing a comprehensive discussion of both Daniel O’Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell, but paid insufficient attention to both revolutionary nationalism and unionism. In fact, a number of candidates omitted revolutionary nationalism altogether.

- Q2** This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that Charles Stewart Parnell was the most successful political leader in Ireland in the nineteenth century. There was a wide range of standard in the responses. The best answers considered not only the successes of Parnell but the full spectrum of political leaders, including other constitutional nationalists, revolutionary nationalists and unionists. Weaker responses lacked balance and a significant number of candidates focused largely on Parnell and O'Connell to the detriment of the leaders of revolutionary nationalism and unionism who received only limited analysis.

Option 3 The Causes and Consequences of Great Power Conflict 1848-1945

This option attracted 28 candidates, all of whom answered Question 2. The responses elicited quite a wide range of standard.

- Q1** There were no responses to this question.
- Q2** This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that incompetent leadership was the most important cause of the wars which broke out in Europe in the period 1848-1945. The best responses were well informed and thoughtful, focusing closely on the issue of incompetent leadership and doing justice to both the proposition and the counterargument. It was pleasing to note that some candidates argued against the proposition, suggesting, for example, that 'competent' statement such as Otto von Bismarck played a greater part in the outbreak of wars than 'incompetent leadership'. Generally speaking, the material candidates offered on the years 1918-1945 was better than that for the earlier part of the period. Weaker answers were apt to display common lapses. Firstly, Napoleon III was often described as pulling out of the Italian War of 1859 almost as soon as it started, ignoring the fact that he played a major part in removing the Austrians from Lombardy. Secondly, some candidates were under the misapprehension that the Rhineland was 'taken back' in 1936, when it was always part of Germany. Finally, Britain was held solely responsible for appeasement, without any consideration of, for example, France.

Option 4 The American Presidency 1901-2000

Option 4 attracted a total of 809 candidates. The best answered question was undoubtedly Question 1, where many candidates put forward good arguments, both in support of and against the proposition. Question 2 was more problematical, with many students finding it difficult to find links to Theodore Roosevelt in the later twentieth-century presidencies. Question 1 was the more popular of the two questions on the paper, though not by a wide margin.

- Q1** This question required candidates to debate the proposition that the power of the American presidency increased steadily in the first half of the twentieth century but declined steadily in the second half of the twentieth century. The question produced some excellent answers. The best of these noted that, while there was a general augmentation of presidential power in the first half of the century and a general decline in the second half, there were exceptions to both trends. They also pointed out that presidential power arguably reached its zenith in the second half of the century, specifically with the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964. Some weaker answers tended to equate presidential success with presidential power, which was unfortunately a false assumption.

Q2 This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) created the modern American presidency, and his successors simply copied his domestic and foreign policies. The overall standard was lower than for Question 1 and there were fewer excellent responses. Many candidates were able to make a well-supported case for Roosevelt's significance as president, but relatively few were able to trace his impact and influence across the century. It was surprising that many links with his namesake and relative, Franklin Roosevelt, were not identified, such as the naming of FDR's New Deal after TR's Square Deal, but also the second Roosevelt's open acknowledgement that Teddy Roosevelt was his role model. The same point applies to connections between TR's presidency and that of Harry Truman. Indeed, some candidates were not well informed about Teddy Roosevelt, one of the 'big' presidents of the twentieth century.

Option 5 Clash of Ideologies in Europe 1900-2000

This was the most popular option with 829 candidates. Question 2 proved to be slightly more popular than Question 1. While there were some excellent responses to Question 2, the overall quality of the responses was higher in Question 1. A frequent flaw of weaker answers to both questions was a failure to provide a counterargument to the proposition. It was also common for less good responses to focus heavily on Soviet foreign policy and provide limited analysis of the foreign policy of Western governments. Timing issues were also evident in that a significant number of candidates focused too much on the period 1917-1953 and did not leave enough time to discuss the period 1953-1991 in sufficient depth.

Q1 This question asked candidates to assess to what extent the foreign policies of the Soviet Union and Western governments in Europe in the period 1917-1991 were characterised by continuity rather than change. The question produced a high proportion of top-level answers and some impressively analytical responses. Top level answers covered the entire period, deployed accurate knowledge and showcased a balanced analysis of both Soviet and Western foreign policies. They were able to focus consistently on the question and develop their points with substantiated judgements. Weaker responses tended to provide a narrative summary but did not focus sufficiently on the question.

Q2 This question asked candidates to debate the proposition that the conflict in Europe between the Soviet Union and Western governments in the period 1917-1991 was due mainly to their opposing ideologies. The top answers provided a balanced response, which not only focused on the proposition but also evaluated the importance of other factors, such as the breakdown of alliances. Weaker responses tended to be imbalanced, paying insufficient attention to the counterargument. Another weakness of more limited responses was to focus on motivations in general rather than answering the specific question set.

Assessment Unit A22 Historical Investigations and Interpretations

Unit Overview

The standard in this unit was slightly lower this year than usual – a legacy, perhaps, of the interruptions to teaching and learning over the last few years. The supervising examiners for each option have provided a summary of their findings below, but particular attention is drawn to two issues. First, many candidates still fail to provide effective challenges to the interpretations in Question 2.

It is not enough to simply list items of knowledge as ‘omissions’; rather, candidates must make substantive challenges to the arguments presented in one or both of the extracts. Second, in relation to Question 3, candidates should be reminded of the importance of engaging closely with the question, providing analysis of both the proposition and counterargument.

Option 1 England 1558-1603

There were 84 entries for this option. The overall standard was high and there were some very good responses to all questions.

- Q1 (a)** This question asked candidates to assess the value of Source 1 as evidence for an historian in a study of Elizabeth I’s attitude to marriage. The best answers used the source content, enhanced by relevant contextual knowledge, to assess the value of Source 1 effectively. They also commented authoritatively on authorship, motive, viewpoint, audience and date to support their analysis. Weaker responses often displayed weaknesses in assessing the source content and addressing its provenance. A number of answers were unable to provide a valid limitation of the source.
- (b)** This question invited candidates to use the sources and their wider knowledge to assess how far the sources supported the view that Elizabeth I regarded marriage as a private and personal affair rather than a matter for Parliament. The best answers used both sources in a balanced manner to engage effectively with the proposition and were supported by relevant contextual knowledge. Weaker responses exhibited a range of shortcomings. Some made limited use of the content of one or both sources, while a few candidates neglected one of the sources altogether. Another common shortcoming was the provision of limited or irrelevant contextual knowledge.
- Q2** This question required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of Elizabeth I’s relationship with her leading ministers they found more convincing. It produced some outstanding answers. The best responses showed a clear understanding of both interpretations, supported by effective and relevant use of contextual knowledge, to provide clear and developed judgements about which of the two interpretations they considered to be more convincing. They also presented valid challenges to one or both of the interpretations. Weaker answers displayed several common flaws. Some candidates made limited use of one or both interpretations, while others struggled to provide relevant contextual knowledge about Elizabeth I’s relationship with her leading ministers. Another problem was the absence of valid challenges to the interpretations.

- Q3 (a)** This question asked candidates to debate the extent to which the Elizabethan Church Settlement was shaped by the religious beliefs of Elizabeth I. It proved to be a more popular choice than Question 3(b). The question produced a wide range of responses, the best of which provided an excellent evaluation of the proposition and the counterargument. Good responses were able to demonstrate that Elizabeth I was willing to compromise but deliberately kept her personal religious views unclear throughout this period. Many of the weaker responses provided a narrative account of the religious policies of Elizabeth I but neglected to analyse how far her personal religious beliefs shaped the Church Settlement.
- (b)** This question invited candidates to assess the extent to which poverty in Elizabethan England was the result of population growth. Although the less popular of the alternative questions, it was, as a rule, handled well and there were some excellent answers.

Strong responses focused closely on the proposition, demonstrating convincingly that the rapid growth of population in England created problems, such as food and housing shortages, as well as inflation. In support of the counterargument, good answers were able to show that a series of poor harvests in the 1590s forced the government to introduce Poor Laws to deal with the increase in poverty.

Option 2 Ireland 1685-1714

This year there were 101 candidates entered for this option. It was pleasing to note that the level of response continues to improve, with most candidates demonstrating good knowledge and skills.

- Q1 (a)** This question asked candidates to assess the value of Source 1 as evidence for an historian in a study of the policies of James II in Ireland in the period 1685-1689. It produced a large number of very good responses. Candidates were, in general, quick to appreciate the value of the source and produced answers that reflected on content and provenance, with strong supporting knowledge. A small number seemed unaware of the significance of Sunderland's authorship of the source, which was surprising considering his prominence. Some candidates evaluated the content of the source solely in terms of its accuracy, which should be avoided. It is important to remind students that an inaccurate source may still be valuable.
- (b)** This question invited candidates to use the sources and their wider knowledge to assess how far the sources supported the view that the Earl of Tyrconnell was successful in his administration of Ireland in the period 1685-1689. The question was handled very well, with most candidates demonstrating very good examination technique. Strong responses gave equal attention to both extracts and supported their analysis with precise, relevant knowledge. The level of knowledge provided was, in many cases, exceptional. A number of candidates performed poorly in this question because they lapsed into digression by evaluating the reliability or value of the sources. Some also neglected the source and focused almost entirely on their own knowledge.

- Q2** This question required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the impact of the Treaty of Limerick they found more convincing. It produced a range of responses. Most candidates appear to have been well-prepared, in that they demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of the Treaty of Limerick. Strong responses provided good, detailed analysis of both the civil and military terms of the treaty. Most candidates were also able to explain the difference between the two interpretations. Some, however, struggled to provide challenges to one or both of the extracts. They simply listed omissions rather than engage critically with the arguments presented by the two historians. A significant minority also failed to provide a clear, substantiated reason why they found one extract more convincing than the other.
- Q3 (a)** This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that James II lost the English throne because his policies lost the support of the Tories. It produced a range of responses. There were some excellent answers which provided a strong analysis of the proposition and counterargument. A small but significant minority struggled to produce any counterargument at all. Others mishandled the proposition and, instead of explaining clearly how James II lost the support of the Tories, simply provided a narrative of James II's reign.
- (b)** This question asked candidates to debate the proposition that the Williamites were victorious at Aughrim because they possessed better leaders, men and equipment than the Jacobites. The majority of responses to this question were very impressive. Many candidates provided a detailed analysis of the reasons for the Jacobite defeat in the Battle of Aughrim. The quality of evidence used to support the analysis was very impressive, and most candidates were able to provide at least some counterargument. A minority of candidates failed to engage with the question and provided a general analysis of the battle which, although often detailed, could not access higher marks.

Option 3 Ireland 1778-1803

A total of 44 candidates sat this option. The responses varied greatly in quality, with a number of outstanding scripts, but also papers that suffered from disappointing levels of knowledge and technique.

- Q1 (a)** This question asked candidates to assess the value of Source 1 as evidence for an historian in a study of the attitudes of Irish MPs to the proposals for an Act of Union between 1798 and 1800. The question was, in general, handled quite well. The best answers explained the value of the information contained in the source and why it was valuable for the historian. The deployment of relevant contextual knowledge associated with the Union was essential if candidates were to access higher marks. For example, the initial defeat of the Union proposals in the Irish House of Commons was addressed by Castlereagh through meetings with MPs such as Charles Coote with the hope of persuading legislators to change their minds. The value and limitations of Source 1 through a discussion of its provenance were addressed effectively. Candidates should, however, note that omissions in the source that limit its value need to be relevant to the issue in hand. Reference to authorship, date, mode, purpose and audience must be applicable to the source in question and not discussed in generalised or perfunctory ways.

(b) This question invited candidates to use the sources and their wider knowledge to assess how far the sources supported the view that government pressure on Irish MPs was the most important reason why the Act of Union was passed. The best answers showed a confident handling of Sources 1 and 2, with relevant content drawn from both sources to show agreement and disagreement with the proposition in the question. Discussion of the source content was combined with relevant knowledge to discuss the reasons why the Act of Union was passed. Sources 1 and 2 refer to the painful negotiations with MPs that saw pressure being applied and, later, patronage dispensed, and compensation arranged. Candidates are advised to look carefully for 'hooks' in the sources to help them respond to the question and allow them to maximise the opportunities for the inclusion of other evidence they have studied.

Q2 This question required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the period known as Grattan's Parliament (1782-1800) they found more convincing. The best answers showed a very good understanding of both interpretations, which were then analysed and considered in terms of contextual information that supported and challenged each interpretation. The extent to which the interpretations were convincing was addressed by most candidates, although the quality of the explanation of the judgement varied greatly. The best responses saw candidates make regular and supported statements on how an interpretation was convincing rather than make a brief comment in the introduction and/or conclusion.

Beckett's largely positive interpretation of Grattan's Parliament encouraged the best responses to discuss the political and economic confidence of the age, while Bartlett's interpretation focused more on the issues that were left unresolved by the Constitution of 1782 and the eventual outbreak of sectarian disorder and rebellion.

Q3 (a) This question, which invited candidates to debate the proposition that the decline of the Volunteers from 1783 was due primarily to their irrelevance after the end of the American War of Independence, attracted more responses than Question 3(b). The question was generally well answered. The formation of the Volunteers in 1778 was a response to the vulnerability of Ireland after the garrison had been reduced and France and Spain had declared for the American colonists in their war against Britain. Ireland's strategic weakness was demonstrated by the appearance of an American privateer in Belfast Lough in April 1778, just one month after the first Volunteer company was established in Belfast. Military drills and exercises were central to Volunteer activity, such as the emergency during the 1778-1781 period. After the British defeat at Yorktown in 1781 and the gradual return of the garrison over the next couple of years, the need for the Volunteers seemed less obvious and this helps to explain their decline. Of course, the Volunteers had assumed a political importance soon after their formation and internal divisions and disputes were also very relevant to their decline. Most candidates highlighted a range of factors in the decline of the Volunteers, but, for some, discussion of the proposition was too light.

- (b)** This question asked candidates to discuss whether the effectiveness of the government's repressive policies in Ireland from 1796 until the outbreak of the insurrection in May 1798 was the most important reason for the failure of the 1798 Rebellion. Responses saw candidates engage with the proposition by discussing the Insurrection Act and the imposition of martial law. Candidates also referenced General Lake's dragooning of Ulster, the infiltration of the United Irishmen by an intelligence network masterminded by Edward Cooke in Dublin Castle, and the encouragement of sectarian tension as a means of derailing the United Irishmen's objective of abolishing religious distinctions and uniting the different denominational groups under the common name of Irishman. Additional explanations for the failure of the Rebellion were also discussed by most of the candidates who attempted this question. Better answers revealed sophisticated analytical arguments rather than lists of undeveloped explanations.

Option 4 Partition of Ireland 1900-1925

There were 1,869 entries for this option. While the overall standard was lower than in previous years, there were nonetheless some excellent responses to all of the questions.

- Q1 (a)** This question required candidates to assess the value of Source 1 as evidence for an historian in a study of the reasons for the rise of Sinn Féin in the period 1916-1918. Most candidates produced a satisfactory response and there were many very good answers. For the most part, candidates dealt well with the provenance of the source and the best answers pointed out limitations relating to the author, date, audience or motive. Most responses also focused strongly on the content of the source but often struggled to enhance the answer with suitable contextual knowledge. Many candidates looked back to events in the direct aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising, despite this not being directly linked to the German Plot of 1918.
- (b)** This question invited candidates to use the sources and their wider knowledge to assess how far the sources supported the view that the mistakes of the British Government were the most important reason for the rise of Sinn Féin in the period 1916-1918. The quality of the responses varied widely. The best answers handled both sources well and supported their analysis with precise, relevant knowledge. However, some candidates were apt to quote the source and move directly on to their own knowledge, without developing their point in relation to the question.
- Q2** This question asked candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the causes of the Irish Civil War they found more convincing. The responses to this question were, for the most part, good or very good, though a minority still struggled. Most students demonstrated a good understanding of the key arguments contained in the interpretations. In general, the level of contextual knowledge responses displayed was good or very good. Similarly, most candidates were able to provide a substantiated judgement about why they found one interpretation more convincing than the other. However, judgements were usually confined to the introduction and conclusion, with only fleeting references in the remainder of the response. Weaker answers were apt to simply paraphrase the extracts before moving on to discuss their contextual knowledge. Candidates must attempt to highlight why sections of the interpretation are convincing in relation to the issue raised by the question.

- Q3 (a)** This question required candidates to debate the proposition that the poor leadership of John Redmond was mainly responsible for the crisis over the Third Home Rule Bill in the period up to September 1914. This was by far the more popular of the two essay questions and was chosen by the vast majority of candidates. The responses were, in general, of a good standard and there were some excellent essays. The most common flaw of the responses was a failure to do justice to the proposition. Relatively few answers dealt in sufficient depth with the poor leadership of John Redmond, focusing much more effectively on the other political leaders.
- (b)** This question invited candidates to debate the proposition that the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 was acceptable to the British Government but unacceptable to all parties affected by it in Ireland. Few candidates chose this question, and it was, generally speaking, not well answered. Most responses displayed an awareness of some of the groups affected by the Act but lacked a detailed knowledge of them. A sizeable minority of the candidates who attempted this question wrote about the impact of the Anglo-Irish Treaty instead of the Government of Ireland Act.

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