
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/C / NEA

Report on the Examination

7042

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Overall Comments

As in previous years, the NEA produced some truly exceptional pieces of individual work. Not only were these well argued, focused and effectively structured but they also had a powerful evaluative line for both sources and interpretations. Unfortunately, the NEA also produced a number of pieces that, as in previous years, failed to address the full date range, struggled to provide a judgment in response to the set question, or used sources and interpretations simply to offer uncritical commentary. There are a number of pertinent points worth mentioning as a result of this year's series.

Centre administration

This was the first year in which a couple of initiatives were implemented such as the 4500 word limit and the requirement to submit all Question Approval Forms. Almost all of the samples submitted had accurate word counts included, but it is worth remembering that this includes everything written in the main body of the text. However, footnotes, bibliography and any appendix should not be counted. There were very few pieces that went over the word limit and this new requirement did not appear to cause too much trouble and probably had a positive effect of making responses more well structured and focused.

It is exceptionally useful if centres can ensure that all relevant paperwork is included with their sample as moderators did spend a good amount of time chasing various forms from centres this year. In addition, some centres had not had their question approved by the coursework advisor and so were in the position of asking for retrospective approval, which brought its own potential difficulties. Every question to which there is a student response should have an approval form for that year signed off by an Advisor. The approval is valid for one academic year only.

Centre marking

There was more variation in marking standards between centres this year than in many previous years, with quite some generosity from centres at the top end of the mark range. Some centres had a keen awareness of the standard and provided clear evidence of effective internal moderation having been performed. However, in quite a number of cases it appeared as if the TOLs exercises that should be completed before marking commenced had not been done effectively as there was a marked generosity from some centres.

Although not a requirement, it would be helpful to moderators if some justification for the award of marks was given for each of the AOs, if only in summative comment. This gives some indication to moderators of the rationale deployed.

AO1

A driver of the marks achieved for this AO remains the quality of the question set. Whilst some questions were approved by Question Advisors with some very helpful comments on potential issues, a number of centres did not act on this advice. Most commonly, comments were raised about the need for students to avoid a narrative overview and to really engage with the evaluative and analytical arguments posed by the question. Some questions, typically those on Tudor rebellion and African-American civil rights, whilst entirely valid, do require just a little more effort to ensure that the full date range is covered rather than a focus of just a few years.

Whilst it was clear that many students had worked exceptionally hard to research material relevant to their question, these same students were often keen to include as much factual material as they could within the word limit. Just as in the examined units, it is important for students to be selective with their supporting material and to ensure that this material has a clearly supportive function, strengthening argument and evaluation. Lengthy descriptions or contextual overviews tended to obscure the higher level skills and weakened the sense of a powerful and focused argued response to the set question. The purpose of the exercise is to provide a convincing and balanced answer to the question. Students are advised to consider the NEA as a lengthy essay with all of the skill requirements for the higher levels similar to those they might already be familiar with in practice for the examined unit essays

AO2

The selection of source material was generally very good with some very helpful material selected by many. The greatest differentiator between high and low marks for AO2 was the effectiveness of the evaluation. At the lower end there was a tendency to use the sources simply as evidence of a particular view and as such sources were taken entirely at face value with very little attempt to argue the value of both content and provenance. Some centre annotation indicated very good use of AO2 but the student had merely quoted from the source. This is not really evidence of much quality in relation to the demands of AO2. The better responses linked the material in the source to a particular aspect of the argued response for AO1 and came to a clear judgement about how valuable the source was as evidence. It was very helpful to include the sources in an appendix to the NEA.

AO3

This objective was generally addressed well with good, incisive commentary about how convincing the view of the historian was in relation to the argued point made for AO1. Students often quoted short sections of their chosen interpretations to reinforce points made – again this was good practice and provided the evidence for views being expressed. It is, however, worth remembering that only two interpretations should be evaluated and that these two should be contrasting in some manner. The idea here is that students engage academically with a range of views and show the ability to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of two interpretations whilst also arriving at a firm judgement about how far they are convinced by each. As in AO2, the key element is effective evaluation, and simply quoting a section of an interpretation is not evidence for AO3. The engagement with the context in which the extract had been written was done more effectively this year than in previous years. The potted biography of an historian was much less common and students seemed confident in linking comments about the academic profile of a historian to the views expressed within. The evaluation of the context is not intended to be lengthy, but should complement the evaluation of the content. The intention here is for students to show some understanding that historical interpretation is not produced in a vacuum and that various factors may influence the extent to which a particular view is deemed convincing.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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