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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2017

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In History (WHI01)

Paper 1: Depth Study with Interpretations

Option 1A: France in Revolution 1774-1799

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International Advanced Subsidiary Level History Unit - WHI01 1A

WHI01 is a new International Advanced Subsidiary examination that is part of the new International Advanced Level History qualification, and was examined for the first time in the summer of 2016. WHI01 (unit 1) is a Depth Study with Interpretations, and comprises four options; 1A France in Revolution 1774-99, 1B Russia in Revolution 1881-1917, 1C Germany 1918-45, and 1D Britain 1964-90. The assessment criteria for all the options, and questions are AO1 and AO3, and all the options, and questions are covered by a generic mark scheme, based on Level descriptors.

This report is about the January 2017 series. It is important that centres take on board some generic comments which are based on the marking of the January cohort, and consider applying these when preparing candidates for future examinations.

- WHI01 is both a study of depth and a study of interpretations, and it is necessary for candidates to do both, at all levels in the mark scheme, in order to score marks. Ignoring the stated view in the question, and merely writing information that may be relevant to the general focus of the question does not fully meet the criteria for Level 1, and consequently none of the higher levels. Even at Level 1, the mark scheme expects simple or generalised consideration of the stated view in the question. Some candidates paid very little attention to the stated view (ignoring it completely or sometimes only referring to it in the conclusion) and narrated or described other information that was either relevant or irrelevant to the actual question.
- Across all of the options, in candidate responses, there was very little evidence seen of planning. As the examination is two hours long, implying that candidates might divide that time equally between the two essays they choose, it would seem sensible to devote some time (possibly no more than 10 minutes per question) to planning each question. That would hopefully ensure that when the answer is written the stated view is considered (Level 2, 3 and 4 all require to varying degrees understanding, analysis and exploration of the given view) and then other factors/views can follow. This will then allow the candidate to establish some criteria with which they are able to consider the importance, or not, of the given view and make some judgements. Those candidates who planned (this appeared on their examination script before they answered the question) invariably scored better than candidates who had not planned. Planned answers tended to score at the top of Level 3 and into, and including the top, of Level 4, whereas unplanned answers meandered and judgements tended to be stated, rather than supported by valid criteria, and often achieved marks at the Level 2 and Level 3 boundary or below.
- The need to stress to candidates that in examination situations they must read the question carefully, and not take the question as an opportunity to write all they know about the topic, or answer a question they would have preferred that is near to the actual question, but not the actual question.
- The questions do not need an understanding of historiography in order to attempt any of the questions. Candidates are required to understand that there are different explanations and be able to use those different explanations in order to make a judgement about the stated view in the question.

Option 1A France in Revolution 1774-99

- Question 1 proved to be the most popular, followed by question 2, question 3 and question 4.
- In question 1 many candidates were able to discuss the tension between the Estates as a challenge faced by the ancien régime, and then consider other challenges. The higher scoring answers invariably argued that while the tension was a challenge, it was not the main challenge, or that it so important a challenge that it linked to other challenges.
- In question 2 candidates were able to explain the nature of the two factors, and higher scoring candidates were able to decide which was more significant in the radicalisation of the revolution.
- In question 3 there was a lot of knowledge displayed about the Terror, but it was not always linked to the question in terms of reducing opposition. Candidates who considered its impact in this sense scored marks in the higher levels.
- In question 4 candidates were well aware of the threats and the ways in which the Directory handled them.