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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2017

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In History(WHIO3) Paper 1C

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Principal Examiner Report WHI03 C

WHI03 is a new International Advanced level examination and this is the second examination series for it. WHI03 1C is divided into two sections. Section A comprises a compulsory source based question and assesses source analysis and evaluation skills(AO2). Section B consists of two essay questions of which the student is expected to answer one of them. They will assess the knowledge and understanding of the period in breadth (AO1). Questions, in this section, will be set so that they connect two or more of the key topics in the specification and will target a range of concepts which might include cause, consequence, significance, similarity/difference and change/continuity.

The time available for the paper did allow students the opportunity to plan their work and many took advantage of this as evidenced by the plans included. However, this was not the case with all and it would be advisable for candidates to spend a short while getting their thoughts in order before writing their answers. This would be relevant to both sections of the paper.

In general, it was section A that seemed to present the greater challenge to the students as they had to consider two primary sources and their use to the historian in investigating an historical issue. Difficulties were encountered in moving beyond surface comprehension of the sources and evaluation which was little more than either stereotypical judgements or, at best, questionable assumptions drawn from the sources. Those that were more successful drew inferences from the sources and interrogated the evidence with support from relevant contextual knowledge that was applied to illuminate the points being made.

Section B responses generally scored higher marks as there was much greater focus and engagement with the stated issues in the questions. Many responses showed good knowledge of the periods studied and were able to develop arguments which crossed the key topics being considered. Although some essays remained predominantly narrative they were in a minority.

Comments on Individual questions.

Question 1.

For question 1 stronger responses showed a clear understanding of both sources and were able to draw out inferences from them which related to the main reasons for German reunification in 1990. Good contextual knowledge was deployed to discuss the strengths of the evidence and some consideration was given to interpreting the material in the context of the values and concerns of the society from which it was derived. Therefore some students focused successfully on the wideranging geopolitical reasons given by Wörner and related these to the context of the changing political situation in Europe at the time. The very best interrogated the evidence and made clear supported judgements which weighed up the strengths or otherwise of the material in relation to the investigation under consideration. The latter point is important as the focus of responses needs to be directly on the area of investigation asked in the question.

Weaker responses appeared in a number of different forms. There were those where paraphrasing of the sources dominated and very few, if any, inferences relevant to the stated issue were made. In these types of responses contextual knowledge was often limited and, if evident, used to simply expand, confirm or challenge matters of detail in the sources. However, in some responses there was considerable knowledge displayed and focused on the specified enquiry but with almost no or exceptionally limited references to the sources. As this question is targeting AO2 (analysis and evaluation of source material) these kinds of responses cannot score highly. In other instances, where utility was addressed through the provenance it was often based on either stereotypical judgements or questionable assumptions. This sometimes took the form of comments such as Wörner, as a politician would know what he was talking about or as he is an American ambassador we can trust what he says (Source 2).

Question 2

This was quite a popular question. The question considered how accurate it was to say that Germany was less democratic but more united in the years 1870-79 than in the years 1918-24. Stronger responses clearly engaged with both issues across both periods and used criteria such as constitutional developments or opposition to judge the nature of democracy or unity. Key issues such as the Kulturkampf in the earlier period or political protest in the latter were explored well. Valid, supported and clear conclusions were reached.

Weaker responses tended towards either narrative or generalisation. If analysis was present, the support offered tended to be limited in both range and depth. Weaker responses also found it harder to compare and contrast the two periods and so struggled to make supported

judgements relevant to the question. In a significant number of cases only one time period was considered and so severely compromised the focus, validity and range of those responses.

Question 3

Again this proved quite a popular question but it tended to be done less well. The question considered the extent of nazification in Germany between 1933-39 and whether this was a significant factor in the limitations of de-Nazification after 1949. The best answers were wide-ranging and explored the extent of nazification by considering such issues as the nazi takeover of the state or the extent of the Volksgemeinschaft. Then such issues were discussed in the light of the limitations of de-Nazification and weighed up against other, possibly more pressing problems, confronting the FRG after 1949.

Weaker responses tended towards either narrative or generalisation. If analysis was present, the support offered tended to be limited in both range and depth. Weaker responses also struggled with their understanding of the concepts of nazification and de-Nazification. This made it harder to make supported judgements relevant to the question. Occasional responses only engaged with one aspect of the question, usually nazification, and so limited severely their ability to score highly.

Students are offered the following advice for the future:

Section A

- Students need to draw from the sources inferences that are relevant to the enquiry in the question. These inferences should be developed through the use of contextual knowledge which is relevant to the enquiry in the question.
- Students need to move beyond stereotypical judgements or assumptions that are questionable and unsupported when engaging with the provenance of the source.
- Students need to consider the weight the evidence has in helping them reach judgements relevant to the enquiry.

- Students should consider the stance or purpose of the author of the source and be aware how this might be affected by the values and concerns of the society from which it is drawn.
- Sources should be interrogated with distinctions being made between such things as claims and opinions
- Students must avoid engaging with the enquiry simply from their knowledge. The answer needs to be focused on how the sources help the historian and knowledge used to discuss the inferences or points arising from the sources.

Section B

- Students need to read the question carefully so as to fully understand the time periods being considered and the full range of issues that they are being asked to consider
- Students would benefit from taking some time to plan their answers. As the examination is quite generous in its time allocation this would still allow plenty of time to write the answers.
- Students should consider what criteria might be used to shape or reinforce the judgements being made
- Students need to avoid description and develop analytical responses which make clear and supported judgements relevant to the question
- Students should try to establish links between the arguments being made and, if relevant, weigh up the relative importance of them.

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