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# Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

## Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
In History (WHI04) Paper 1A  
International Study with Historical Interpretations  
The Marking of Modern Europe, 1805-71

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The candidature is too small to provide exemplification from 1A but general feedback is given below and centres should refer to the high Level responses provided in the Principal Examiners report for the other Options.

## Introduction

Please note: that it is recommended that centres look at a selection of Principal Examiner Reports from across the different options within WHI04 1A-1D and previous series to get an overall sense of examiner feedback, centre approaches and candidate achievement. It is also highly recommended that centres read the general Introduction and Section A and B introductions in the Principal Examiner Reports for June 2017. These generic introductions outline the assessment requirements for WHI04 and give an indication of the skills required.

Centres may wish to refer to the *Getting Started* guide that is to be found on the IAL History Pearson Edexcel website. It is also useful to take note of the indicative content in the mark schemes.

2018 is the second June series of the WHI04 paper. There has been an increase in entries over this time period and it is clear that the majority of centres have taken note of the feedback provided in previous Principal Examiner reports. Candidates were usually well prepared in relation to knowledge of the specification and centres are to be commended for this. Candidates have good knowledge and they often include material which is interesting and thought provoking. Many responses were well-informed and well-written. There was a definite improvement in the understanding and appreciation of the skills required for the Section A Historical Interpretation question which assesses AO3/AO1. Section B responses were also generally stronger with many more responses clearly showing the qualities of Level 4, and indeed Level 5. However, lower Level responses continue to exhibit the weaknesses highlighted last year in regard to a lack of focus on the wording of the question and/or the second-order concept being targeted and a tendency for candidates to write about everything they know rather than to select material relevant to the question.

It is worth noting that the responses are marked using a 'best-fit' process. Each bullet point strand within the generic mark scheme is considered to create an overall sense of Level and a mark applied within the Level. If a response has qualities which exemplify a variety of Levels or a strand is missing then this will be reflected by applying a 'best-fit' Level and mark. For responses which do not address one particular strand, for example a lack of contextual knowledge for Section A Strand 2, it is not possible to reward the strand and so this will be reflected in the mark rewarded.

There is also a tendency for a significant minority of candidates to write responses which seem to thread their knowledge into the language of the mark

schemes. The descriptors reflect the qualities examiners would expect to see in an essay answering the question set rather than a scaffold on which responses should be built. It is the examiner who determines whether criteria are valid or if the analysis is sustained rather than the candidate by asserting 'so it can be seen by the valid criteria I have used...' or 'In conclusion, this sustained analysis...'. This does not necessarily add value to the response and can be detrimental if this assertion is clearly not substantiated. This is also the case in responses that assert 'It is a compelling argument...' when that argument is not well organised or even contradicts itself.

Once again, candidates were, in general, clearly aware of both the structure and the timing of the examination paper; there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B.

### Section A

It was genuinely pleasing to see the improvement in the application and understanding of the skills required to answer the Interpretation question successfully. There were clearly more responses being rewarded Level 4 and some excellent responses in Level 5. There is sufficient time to read the extracts carefully and plan an answer (see below) but some high Level responses reflected an outstanding ability to address the viewpoint through superb analysis of the interpretations presented while integrating detailed historical knowledge in the time provided. The best responses are invariably those that are built around the views expressed in the extracts throughout the response. These responses were often thoughtful discussions of the viewpoint in the question and resulted in interesting answers that were very enjoyable to read.

The question requires candidates to make a judgement on a stated viewpoint, through the analysis of two extracts from historical works which address the historical issue and their own knowledge of the historical debate. It is worth reminding centres that the generic mark scheme clearly indicates the three bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks:

- interpretation and analysis of extracts
- deployment of knowledge of issues related to the debate
- evaluation of and judgement about the interpretations

The best responses reflected the qualities of each strand outlined in the Level 4 and Level 5 descriptors. However, it is worth noting that, although some candidates now clearly better understand what is required and write answers that can achieve Level 4, there are many candidates failing to reach high Level 4 or Level 5 because they are writing very long responses that include everything they know and develop a confused or contradictory argument/overall judgement

as a result. There is sufficient time to plan a response of sufficient length which interprets the extracts with 'confidence and discrimination' and in which the knowledge is 'sufficient' and 'precisely selected and deployed' to explore the view under debate.

There are also some candidates who are able to access Level 4/Level 5 for interpretation and analysis of the extracts but who either do not deploy knowledge of the issues related to the debate or do not come to a judgement in relation to the view in the question. Many responses reflected a structure that analysed Extract 1 and Extract 2 with some skill but then wrote a conclusion which just restated an understanding of the view in Extract 1 and the view in Extract 2 without coming to a judgment at all – so making it difficult to reward strand 3 of the mark scheme. Some candidates exhibited great knowledge of the debate central to the overall focus of the question but ignored the extracts altogether perhaps referring to them briefly to exemplify a point being made.

There are still a significant number of candidates whose responses reflect the qualities outlined in the lower Levels of the mark scheme. These responses often showed the following characteristics:

- answering the question without reference to the extracts at all or only using the views implicitly
- paraphrasing the extracts or just stringing together quotations from the extracts using connecting words or terms
- do not include any relevant historical knowledge to support the analysis
- use AO2 skills of source analysis to evaluate the extracts with regard to aspects of provenance.

Candidates at all Levels tend towards using the term 'source' rather than 'extract' when referring to the material under discussion. If candidates are to see the material as interpretations, rather than sources of evidence, centres should encourage candidates to refer to Extract 1 or Extract 2 or the names of the authors. Candidates should be encouraged to see the sources evaluated in WHI02 and WHI03 as the building blocks which create the interpretations and views being discussed in WHI04. One extract will mainly reflect the view given in the question statement while the other will mainly reflect a counter argument to be discussed in the course of coming to an overall judgement.

As in the previous Reports please note the guidance given in the *Getting Started* document. *Students are not expected to be familiar with the writing of the selected historians but they should be familiar with the issues that make the question controversial. Reference to the works of name historians, other than the material in the extracts provided is not expected but students may consider historians' viewpoints in framing their arguments.*

Once again, many candidates appeared to create their discussion by reference to only the first few lines of each extract and so lost an opportunity to develop

key points made later in the extracts. Candidates have sufficient time to consider the extracts carefully and to draw out a variety of different key points in order to compare and contrast the interpretations presented.

Finally, centres should note that the response is set up for candidates to discuss the view put forward in the question in relation to the views being expressed in the extracts rather than using the extracts to exemplify the debate.

### Q1

Candidates have a good knowledge of the reasons for the downfall of Napoleon but they are less well prepared to deploy the AO3 skills required for interpretation questions. Candidates tended to paraphrase the extracts, deploy AO2 evaluation skills or answer the question without clear references to the view given. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and so analysed the extracts in regard to the downfall of Napoleon in general rather than Britain's contribution.

### Section B

There was a significant improvement in the quality of the answers produced by candidate this series. In particular, well-informed candidates were more able to respond to the focus of the question directly and to use the wording of the questions to create discussion and debate. There were some knowledgeable and well-organised responses. Once again, there was little evidence to suggest that the range and depth of essays were affected by the time taken to consider the two extracts in Section A.

It is important to note that questions can cover content which stretches across the key topics as well as within the key topics. In order to ensure that candidates are prepared to answer any question set centres should cover all the content outlined in the specification.

The question requires candidates to explore and discuss the given question while coming to an overall judgement. It is worth reminding centres that the generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks:

- analysis and exploration of key features and characteristics of the period in relation to the second-order conceptual demands of the question
- selection and deployment of knowledge
- substantiated evaluation and judgement
- organisation and communication of argument

Most candidates are clearly well-prepared and have good knowledge of the content of the specification with Strand 1 and Strand 2 often the strongest

elements of the responses seen. However, knowledgeable candidates are often writing detailed responses which include too much unfocussed supporting material and which often results in confused or contradictory arguments being developed. Level 5 Strand 2 refers to 'sufficient knowledge precisely selected and deployed'. Good responses are also often undermined by a lack of precision in the use of vocabulary when formulating an argument or establishing valid criteria. Some responses begin every paragraph by saying 'x is significant to some extent...' or 'x is the main reason...' or begin a conclusion by stating that 'I agree with the statement...' and then give an overall judgement that contradicts this. Many responses begin with 'It is a compelling argument...' and then argue the opposite. It is important that judgements are substantiated and arguments developed with logic, coherence and precision and so candidates should use discursive language relevant to the argument being proposed with thought.

Weaker responses were often those that did not address the question carefully, described the key features rather than explained or explored, wrote a response set within the wrong time period or included major inaccuracies. Many candidates seemed to be prepared for specific potential set questions and edited these to 'fit' the focus of the question asked resulting in Level 3 responses that showed some relevance but were not really suited to the focus of the question.

## Q2

Candidates were prepared to write a response on the general causes of the revolutions in Europe but the question did cover both Germany and Italy and so to reach the higher Levels some reference to specific events in both areas was required. This knowledge need not have been detailed but some awareness of the different conditions in the different areas was needed to meet most of the demands of the question. There was good knowledge of the economic and social distress experienced in Europe during the 1840s and the better responses contrasted this with the political developments of the time as well.

## Q3

There were no responses to this question. Centres should note that they should cover the whole of the specified content in their teaching and learning.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

### Section A

- Candidates should use the time available to read and consider both extracts carefully before planning their answer
- Candidates should read the question carefully and make sure that they address the view specifically stated in the question preferably beginning with the introduction
- Candidates should aim to interpret both extracts by analysing the issues raised and showing an understanding of the arguments presented by both authors
- Candidates should come to an overall judgement with regard to the view stated in the question; it is not sufficient just to summarise the views presented in the extracts
- Interpretations should be referred to as Extracts or by the author's name; the material presented are interpretations and not a sources of evidence.

### Section B

- Spending a few minutes planning helps to ensure the argument being presented is well organised
- Candidates must provide more precise contextual knowledge as evidence. Some Level 4 responses included too much information which led to contradiction and confusion in the overall argument being presented
- Candidates should think carefully about the language they use to evaluate the second-order concepts being assessed; do not use 'to an extent' to mean both 'a little' and 'a to a large degree' rather state the extent explicitly
- Candidates need to be aware of key dates as identified in the specification so that they can address the questions with chronological precision
- Candidates should try to explore the links between issues in order to make the structure of the response flow more logically and to enable the integration of analysis.