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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level

In History(WHIO4) Paper 1B

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## Unit 4: International Study with Historical Interpretations

### Option 1B: Option 1B: The World in Crisis, 1879–1945

#### 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.

Further resources that may be of use are the *Applying Criteria* and *Developing Student's Understanding of Historical Interpretations* documents to be found on the Pearson Edexcel History GCE website along with the Principal Examiner Reports for Paper 1 of the Pearson Edexcel History GCE. The *Applying Criteria* document gives guidance with regard to the application of criteria for the different AOs tested at A level. The GCE Paper 1 Reports will be particularly useful for exemplification of AO3 interpretations skills (but please be aware that there are slight differences within the general Level descriptors and that AO1 is assessed for IAL). Exemplification documents are also available on the Pearson Edexcel History IAL website.

#### General Comments

With two consecutive series having been sat it is possible to make some general comments about series-on-series developments. However, the candidates are still being prepared in challenging circumstances and most of the comments below refer to this specific series. (see below for more specific feedback):

**Selection and deployment of knowledge** - Candidates, in general, produce interesting responses that it is a pleasure to read and reward. The candidates were usually very well prepared in relation to knowledge of the specification and centres are to be commended for this. Candidates have good, detailed knowledge of the specification content and this is a facet that often stands out. Many responses were well-informed and well-written. However, there does need to be more discrimination in the selection and deployment of knowledge in both Section A and Section B. As in January, some candidates write 'all they know' about a topic without selecting and deploying information and evidence relevant to the question being asked. It was noticeable this series that in Section B candidates often could only be rewarded in Level 1 or Level 2 because they either misread the question and deployed supporting knowledge that was irrelevant to the time period or confused time periods to such an extent that it was difficult to determine whether knowledge of the time period was secure. In Section A, to reach the higher Levels, the use of own knowledge is required to discuss the views being presented in Extracts, not as stand-alone information, and in Section B, to reach Level 5, knowledge should be '*precisely selected*' (L5-BP2). For Q1, candidates often feel the need to develop a 'third' aspect of debate beyond the discussion being 'set up' by the Extracts. This is rarely necessary or relevant and often leads to responses that end up ignoring the Extracts or using them very thinly. The Extracts create

the debate for discussion and own knowledge is best used validating the evidence in the Extracts and showing understanding of the basis on which the Interpretation has been founded by the author(s). There were fewer candidates this series who wrote responses deploying solely own knowledge.

**Conceptual understanding and application of skills** - Despite good knowledge, candidates were not always able to access high Level 3 marks and above due to a limited understanding of the conceptual focus of questions and the application of analytical skills. Some candidates are still not using the Extracts as the basis of their response in Section A and candidates do need to reach a judgement on the given view to access the higher Levels. Many candidates assume that the debate will be centred around different factors (and here knowledge of other factors could be brought into the discussion if the candidate feels that another factor is more significant) but sometimes the Extracts set up and 'yes-no' debate that looks at argument and counter-argument in relation to the view. Many candidates write an explained commentary of both Extracts linking quotations with information or analytical phrases and then sum up each view in a conclusion. These responses usually are indicative of a Level 3 response and will be higher or lower in Level 3 depending on how much of the Extract is analysed rather than just paraphrased with some connecting word. The bottom of Level 4 can be achieved with a more analytical conclusion but to be rewarded in Level 4 there needs to be an understanding the Extracts are interpretations and it these interpretations that are being discussed. Some candidates are still just writing out the Extracts verbatim or paraphrasing without any hint of analysis or own knowledge. In Section B, lower-Level responses often lack focus on the wording of the question and/or the second-order concept being targeted.

This series it was noticeable that introductions to responses often did not clearly reflect what was later discussed (Section A and B) or provided detailed contextual knowledge that was not always relevant to the question or prevented the candidate from completing the response effectively. The best introductions are those that directly address the question and show an understand of the second-order concept(s) (causation, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference, significance) being targeted, the given focus and the time period. However, this should not lead to a formulaic indication of the question elements (see paragraphs below). In Section A, responses often seem to have a 'learned' introduction to the whole controversy that often bears no relation to the focus of the specification being targeted.

As in previous reports, 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 an aspect of a particular strand, for example reaching a judgement in bullet point 3 for Q1, this will be reflected in the mark rewarded.

Some candidate responses reflect the wording of the generic descriptors and the format of the indicative content in such a way that it becomes detrimental to the overall analysis and organisation of the response. 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. The indicative content is also not intended to provide a scaffold and is organised to give examiners an overview of what evidence might be included in a response.

As in January, despite the ongoing challenges faced by candidates, very few failed to attempt both Sections, and most were able to produce two balanced responses, so enabling them to show their ability across AO1 and AO3 skills.

General candidate performance on each Section and specific performance on individual questions for Paper 1B are considered below.

## Section A

See above for general comments but it was very pleasing to see some very good Interpretation responses and there did seem to be greater understanding of the Section A focus in this series.

Q1. Question 1 required candidates to analyse and evaluate the two Extracts provided while deploying knowledge related to the issues raised in the Extracts to determine how far they agreed with the view that a general European war broke out in August 1914 because Austria-Hungary and Germany were determined to go to war. The author of Extract 1, R B Mowat, put forward the view that both Austria-Hungary and Germany were determined to go to war in August 1914. The authors of Extract 2, Williamson and van Wyk, suggested that during the July crisis Germany attempted to step back from war in Western Europe but that circumstances, particularly plans for mobilisation, outpaced any attempts to prevent a general war breaking out in August.

It was clear that candidates had been well prepared for the Key Topic controversy and there was a noticeable improvement in the way in which candidates approached the analysis and evaluation of the Extracts. There was some excellent knowledge of the events leading to the outbreak of war but it is important that knowledge is precisely selected to address the discussion created by the Extracts rather than including vast amounts of detail about aspects on the specification that are not relevant to the particular view being addressed. For example, although the resolution of past crises in North Africa and the Balkans is pertinent to points raised Extract 2, it was no necessary for candidates to spend much of the time available giving a detailed description of events from 1905 onwards.

For Extract 1, most candidates were able to discuss the reaction of Austria-Hungary in the aftermath of the Sarajevo assassination and able to verify the material in the Extract with regard to knowledge of the ultimatum itself, the agreements of the Triple Alliance and Germany's use of the 'blank cheque'. For Extract 2, fewer candidates were able to develop the theme of the Kaiser's 'belated peace effort' but were able to develop the suggestion that prior planning and mobilisation made the outbreak of war inevitable. Some candidates were able to select material from both Extract 1 and 2 that pointed to the role of the alliance system as a factor in the outbreak of war.

There was no one question more popular than the other in Section B.

Q2. Candidates were required to determine the extent to which international diplomacy was successful in achieving and maintaining peace in the years 1919-33, so encompassing international relations in the period from the Versailles Settlement to the failure of the Disarmament Conferences. There was some excellent knowledge of the whole period and most candidates have a good grasp of international diplomacy in these years, referencing the individual Versailles Treaties, the League of Nations, disarmament, the Dawes and Young Plan, the Locarno Treaties and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. A few candidates provided

a confused chronology but most were secure in their understanding of developments across the period.

The best responses in Level 4 and Level 5 explored the relationship between the key events in international diplomacy and the ability to secure and then maintain peace. Some suggested that while the Versailles Settlement brought immediate peace it created longer term problems of diplomacy that were harder to settle, in particular 'blame' for the First World War, self-determination and disarmament. There were a significant number of responses at Level 3, and some at Level 2, which displayed good knowledge of events but tended just to explain what happened or describe events rather than exploring in relation to extent to which peace was achieved and maintained. This was particularly so when candidates were discussing the Versailles Treaties and the League of Nations. Long, detailed descriptions of the terms of the Versailles Settlement were not needed but well-selected evidence related to the question focus.

Q3. Candidates were required to determine the accuracy of the statement that the aggressive nationalism of Hitler's Germany was more significant than British and French policies in explaining the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. Candidates had strong knowledge of events in the 1930s and many responses went back to the policies of the British and French in the early 1920s and the reaction of Germans to the Versailles Treaty. There was a sound understanding of the policy of appeasement in the 1930s.

The best responses at Level 4 and Level 5 explored the inter-relationship between Hitler's aggressive nationalism and British and French policies towards German breaking of the Versailles Treaty and expansionism. At the highest Level, candidates also distinguished between the British and French response. In general, candidates suggested that the two factors provided were intertwined and fed off each other. Some suggested that ultimately Britain and France allowed Hitler to follow an aggressively nationalist foreign policy through appeasement while others suggested that Hitler's aims meant that war was always going to be inevitable, whatever the reaction of Britain and France. However, many responses were low in Level 4 because they did not clearly link the analysis to the actual outbreak of war itself and more with the deterioration in relations. At Level 3 candidates tended to explain the key events rather than explore the relationship between them. Low Level 3 and Level 2 responses tended to describe Hitler's attack on the Versailles Treaty along with the British and French response, the terms of the Versailles Treaty or the Czech crisis. Some responses were distracted with detailed descriptions of the aggressive nationalism of Italy and Japan. However, overall there was some very good knowledge and some very interesting responses to read.

### **Paper Summary**

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

#### **Section A (AO3/AO1)**

- Candidates should use the time available to read both extracts carefully all the way through before planning their answer; the information in the extracts should be the foundation upon which the answer is constructed
- 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 use their own knowledge of the specification content to validate and discuss the interpretations being presented.

- 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.

### Section B (AO1)

- Candidates should provide more precise contextual knowledge as supporting evidence. Use knowledge to provide evidence to support a sustained evaluation in relation to the conceptual focus of the question. Secure chronological knowledge enables candidates to produce a logical and coherent answer.
- Read the wording of the questions carefully, particularly if the time period of the question is stated; responses that refer to the wrong time period deploy irrelevant and inaccurate knowledge that does not directly address or only implicitly addresses the question.
- Introductions do not need to reflect a large amount of contextual detail; use introductions to establish the foundations of the argument you are about to present and to show that you understand the focus of the question.
- Use conclusions to state the judgement reached clearly and to show the relative significance of or the inter-relationship between key issues discussed in the main body of the essay; leave the examiner in no doubt as to what your judgement is and why.