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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level

In History(WHIO4) Paper 1C

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Summer 2022

Publications Code WHI04\_1C\_2206

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## Unit 4: International Study with Historical Interpretations

### Option 1C: The World Divided: Superpower Relations, 1943–90

#### 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 understanding 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 1C are considered below.

## Section A

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 whether, in the years 1946-47, the development of US Cold War policies was influenced mainly by economic factors. The author of Extract 1, LaFeber, put forward the view that US Cold War policies developed in 1946-47 in reaction to potential difficulties in the post-war American economy and wider post-war economic problems. The author of Extract 2, Kennedy-Pipe, suggested that policies such as the Truman Doctrine, containment and the Marshal Plan were in more as a result of ideological and geostrategic factors.

Candidates were well prepared for discussion of major themes raised by the Key Topic controversy. Most candidates were able to explain the context of the interpretations and some were able to show clear understanding of the basis of the views being outlined in the Extracts. For Extract 1, responses referred to the relationship between US exports and post-war economies in Western Europe, the British withdrawal of military and economic support for Greece and Turkey and the suggestion that the basis for the Truman Doctrine announcement was economic. For Extract 2, responses referred to the geostrategic role of Greece in decisions made, Truman's commitment US leadership in the defence of democracy and the ideological reasons behind the US decision not to return to isolationism. Some candidates did not read the question carefully enough and wrote a response based around the development of the Cold War itself rather than the development of US Cold War policies. It is important for candidates to note that the views stated in the question need to be specifically addressed.

Candidates were, in general, able to deploy contextual knowledge to underpin the discussion of the interpretations in the Extract. For Extract 1, candidates were able to use their knowledge of the post-war economic situation in Europe, the Greek civil war, Churchill's Iron Curtain speech and the Marshal Plan. For Extract 2, candidates referred to the ideological differences between capitalism and communism, Britain's decision to withdraw aid from Greece, Churchill's Iron Curtain speech and Kennan's Long Telegram. Some candidates wasted time by writing long explanations of the developments of the Cold War since 1917 or events after 1947.

Examiners noted that students generally did use the Extracts and very few answered solely as an essay answer and that a number of students superficially used the extracts to just explain a difference of interpretation rather than using them analytically to approach the question. Own knowledge was often more linked to other factors than evaluating the ones provided by the extracts.

## Section B

It was particularly noticeable for Paper 1C that a significant number of candidates wrote responses with a confused chronology or completely outside the timeframe of the question itself. The date periods for US Presidents and the Soviet leadership are also often confused. It is very important that candidates have a secure chronological awareness of the whole period from 1953-1990.

In section B, Q2 was much more popular than Q3.

**Q2.** Candidates were required to determine the extent to which détente between the superpowers was maintained in the 1970s. Candidates needed to determine the extent of continuity across the 1970s. However, some responses deployed too much contextual knowledge from the 1960s and/or discussed the reasons for détente rather than its progress over time. Some candidates discussed just the relationship between the USA and the USSR while others also referred to China; either approach was valid.

Overall, there was some excellent knowledge shown by candidates. Most candidates were able to show the development of détente over the years with reference to arms negotiations, general diplomacy, summit meetings and co-operation. The extent of détente was often measured against the success of diplomacy, e.g. the Helsinki Accords, types of co-operation, the extent of actual arms reductions and the development of proxy wars in less developed areas of the world at the time. In some of the best responses "maintenance" of détente became the focus and conclusions often evaluated the way that détente developed/disintegrated across the period rather than dealing with it as a yes or no answer.

At Level 2 and Level 3, responses often described or explained the main features of détente or concentrated on the reasons for détente. Lower-level responses, despite have some good knowledge and understanding, often confused the chronology of events and this could also be found to some extent at low Level 4. These responses also tended to deploy more contextual knowledge from the 1960s than was needed or went on to discuss event in the early 1980s. At higher Levels, there was some excellent analysis of SALT 1 and the Helsinki Agreements, the impact of Sino-Soviet disagreements, Nixon's visit to China and the deterioration of relations as the 1970s came to an end.

**Q3.** Candidates were required to determine whether the most significant factor in heightening Cold War tensions in the early 1980s was the deployment of new missile systems in Europe. There were only a relatively small number of responses in relation to Q2. Examiners noted that a significant number of candidates 'skimmed' over the given factor and discussed other factors instead. This approach can reach Level 3 or even, if well argued and analysed, the bottom of Level 4 but it is a requirement of the question to

determine other factors relative to the given factor so making these responses difficult to access bullet points 2 & 3 of the mark scheme. The given factor here - deployment of new missile systems in Europe - is specifically highlighted in the specification and so candidates should have knowledge of this aspect. Please see the indicative content of the mark scheme for exemplification of this factor. Candidates also often assumed that this referred to either missile systems deployed by either the western powers or the USSR, when there are examples from both sides during the period. Other factors that were discussed included the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, events in Poland, the impact of Thatcher, Reagan and SDI, the gerontocracy in the USSR and economic factors. The role of Gorbachev here is relevant but only at the very end of the period and so candidates needed to select information here carefully.

### **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.