
A-level

History

7042/2C The Reformation in Europe, c1500–1564
Report on the Examination

June 2017

Version: 1.0

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General Comments

In preparing students for the A-level examination teachers are advised to regularly remind their students that this is a depth paper, as such, it is likely that students will be asked narrowly focused questions. Therefore students need to hone in on the core of the question, any key dates contained therein, and tailor their responses with the discipline that those features of the question impose. Staff and students can also expect specification coverage and there is an expectation that students will have, and be able to demonstrate, conceptual understanding, an aspect of learning which is especially important to this particular paper.

Section A

Q1 Sources

Staff and students are reminded that the elements to tackling this question, based around three sources, are an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (with the support of own knowledge) and that these features should all be linked to the assessing the value of the sources to someone studying particular aspects of the period under review. These key features do not have to be treated equally in terms of the weight of response, for instance it is perfectly acceptable that tone (linked to value) is dealt with in one sentence. In some cases, GCSE approaches still appear to be affecting how students tackle the sources with some of them pointing out that the document lacked value because of a variety of rather random omissions of a generic nature. An example of this would be the identification of the date of the source before making a general claim that it fails to mention what happened next. Whilst there is some potential to this line of thought if linked to a specific feature of the source; a generic response along these lines is unlikely to have any great deal of merit. Similarly some students are still overly concerned with the trustworthiness, reliability and the accuracy of the source rather than its value allied to the question.

Argument and content were generally dealt with well but it is important that students do not simply approach this feature as a comprehension exercise and just limit themselves to what the sources say without a direct link to the core features of the question. Therefore staff would be well advised to establish with students what is meant by value. On some occasions students adopted line by line descriptions of the content of the sources without reference to value. Further to this issue, the word 'invaluable' was occasionally used to wrongly indicate that a source had less value. Therefore value needed to be a constant focus; some of the weaker practice left this aspect of the question to the very end so that it was dealt with in a rather sweeping, over-arching summing up. The focus needed to be far more consistent and persistent than this with individual phrases, words, ideas picked out from the sources and then explored to show what can be read into the important features of each passage.

Provenance was handled well in many cases however some weaker responses simply regurgitated the information which has been provided on the exam paper. Tone was not something that was not dealt with as a matter of routine. When tone was tackled it was occasionally not related to the question and the focus on value to the historian but rather took the form of a general summative comment.

Some students wrote an introductory paragraph to this question. This was not necessary and often was a waste of time as it involved little more than empty assertion with one source baldly identified as having the most value with nothing to indicate how this would be backed up later in the answer. For source questions, centres might want to think about whether students should be encouraged to

write introductions to the source based questions, although clearly this remains good practice with essays.

The vast majority of students dealt with each source separately and given that there is no requirement to compare sources this was a logical approach. However some students used a summary paragraph to identify which source they regarded as having the most value and this is not required as part of the rubric.

Source A. Quite a few students did not pick up the military tone of the language used, 'soldiers of God' for example. However there were very good answers that identified this and linked it with Loyola's early military life. Many students seemed to have some own knowledge of the 'Spiritual Exercises' mentioned and provided some development of what these entailed. Others picked up the educational role delineated in the source and expanded upon the work done in that area with the offspring of Europe's political elite. Some astute answers picked out the nature of the direct relationship the Jesuits enjoyed with the papacy suggesting a special status for them at the point of their creation. Most students provided a good context for where this document stood in terms of the bigger picture with the Catholic Church and also the narrower early development of the Jesuits themselves.

Source B. There was generally too little attention to the status of a papal bull and why such a document might be deployed, some responses identified this as being a legal document; most students were able to provide context for the date with regards to the Councils of Trent and the state of the Counter or Catholic Reformation at that stage. Tone was generally dealt with well, the relationship between Loyola and Rome was again a focus showing the degree of independence and trust the Jesuits had assumed by this stage. Some picked out the military angle again with Loyola referred to as the 'General' and some were able to use own knowledge to expound upon this, many picked up on the final sentence which hints at the missionary work the Jesuits were involved in and through which they made much of their reputation.

Source C. There were some astute answers which pointed out the maintaining of the commitment to good works, emphasised in this source, and that this appeared undiminished by their irrelevance in the eyes of Protestant reformers with their own emphasis upon the elect/pre-destination etc. There were some good responses to the exaggeration evidenced at the end of the source and the implications and reasons why this might be the case. This was more often than not accompanied by own knowledge regarding the missionary work of the Jesuits.

Section B

None of the three essay questions appears to have caused students major problems either in identifying what was required of them or in their ability to draw upon relevant material from their learning though question 4 on Calvinism was the least popular. They were generally well understood and students had plenty of material to work with in order to provide a balanced picture. Some used historiography which, although not required, was often applied to good effect. Occasionally an essay was let down by having a purely one sided argument but this was a rare episode. Stylistically students are sometimes writing quite long conclusions that offer no more than simple repetition of what has preceded. Teachers might want to focus some guidance upon what makes for an effective but efficient summary. Generally essays did show evidence of an attempt to structure. Sometimes this was less effective when a student would write a paragraph for the proposition of the question, the next paragraph would offer balance against that with the following one returning to the case for the proposition. The effect of this was to undermine a sustained, coherent argument thus showing an inability to structure the work effectively.

Q2 Essay

Many students chose this question. The majority were able to write effectively on the objectives of the humanists and there were some good answers that referred to their intellectual intentions but also the unintended consequences of their work. Some weak scripts identified Luther as a humanist and then expounded upon his work. Another not uncommon mistake was to provide detailed accounts of the efforts of Hus and Wycliffe which fell outside of the parameters of the question. Most students realised the need to provide balance with this question, this was done well when contrasted against the maintenance of popular piety so exploring the notion that for many people their relationship with the church remained unchanged. Students were also able to explore the rather elite appeal of the humanists in attracting the attention of the literate and the educated. Responses were often less successful when the general corruption of the church was focused upon without relating this back to what the humanists had to say about this which was the core of the question. Weaker answers used the cover of this question to draw upon material which they had obviously prepared on the abuses of the church.

Q3 Essay

Students who tackled this essay were mostly able to deal with the twin aspects of social and religious reasons and provide credible evidence as to why one might have provided a guise for the other. There was some impressive knowledge regarding the plight of the peasantry in the early part of the 16th century though students needed to be clearer about what or who was the source of their precarious life situation, whether this was down to local landlords, the nobility or the Church? The better scripts were able to develop the role of Thomas Muntzer and the vast majority could point to the writings of Luther that were misinterpreted and those which clearly identified Luther's stance on the matter of popular uprisings and so these essays explored the law of unintended consequences.

Q4 Essay

This was the least popular of the essays but that said there were some very good and detailed answers when it was chosen. Some very well informed responses exhibited breadth and depth in their exemplification from all over Europe with references to France, Scotland, the Netherlands, Poland etc. More limited responses focused in on and described the structure of the Calvinist church and then came to the conclusion that this was easily replicated in a variety of states. Another temptation, that should have been resisted, was a comparison with the loose structure of Lutheranism which should have been reserved for another question and not one exploring causation. Most scripts were able to provide balance with the example of Geneva itself, the quality of Calvinist preachers and the spread of thought via printing as other reasons for Calvinist thought gaining traction.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.