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AS

# History

7041/2B

Report on the Examination

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June 2017

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Version: 1.0

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## General comments

On the whole students continued to engage effectively with the new AS format and used their time to the full to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). With regard to the essay questions, Q03 proved the more popular, but there was, nevertheless, a range of very stronger and weaker answers to both. There was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The poor use of spelling, punctuation and grammar is an area of concern. Obviously students are writing under exam conditions, but centres should note that well-organised and effective communication is a part of the mark scheme. The volume of references to things such as the 'English throne', 'nobels' and phrases such as 'Richard of York became protectorate' was discouraging. Both centres and students need to work on the quality of written communication.

## Section A

### Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

Most students made a reasonable effort to consider the provenance and tone of the sources. However, the failure to do this in a meaningful manner proved the undoing of far too many students. The provenance 'steer' at the beginning of the source needs to be read carefully. Source A was profoundly misinterpreted by students who seem only to have given it a cursory glance. It was made clear that Source A was from a legal charge made against Sir William Oldhall. Far too many students seem to have noted his name and then argued that he was the author of the source. He clearly was not. The opening sentence of source A refers to him in such a way as to largely preclude this possibility as well. Students who argued that he was the author of source A fundamentally misunderstood the arguments in the source. Many of those students, seeing from the 'steer' that he was a loyal servant of the Duke of York, developed an argument that source A was pro-Yorkist regarding the crisis in England in 1450. Anything other than a cursory glance at the content of source A reveals that this is highly unlikely. There are only two sources, and to fundamentally misunderstand the provenance and tone of one of them severely restricts available marks. In too many cases knowledge was then frequently misapplied to the content of the source and the comparison was flawed. It is absolutely vital that students take time to fully read both the 'steer' and the source content before engaging in a written response.

With regard to the second element it was common to find, as was also the case last year, that responses attempted to evaluate content but a lack of contextual own knowledge made doing this very difficult and in many cases quite superficial. This continues to be a major area for centres to work on with students. It is important that responses use own knowledge in order to draw conclusions about the material in the sources. Repeating back the material in the sources without this is not really sufficient to demonstrate significant understanding or to make meaningful comments or comparison. Generally, students who addressed content through a sentence-by-sentence (or even phrase-by-phrase) approach produced far less satisfactory answers than those who summarised and commented on the overall arguments. In the case of source A, a failure to read the source properly led some students to miss that the points made about the king's

favourites and about the sale of England and France were Yorkist allegations criticised in the legal charges. They were not the 'view' of source A.

In terms of the comparison, many students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the debate surrounding the reasons for the crisis in England in 1450. This is an area where there has been an improvement on last year's performance. It is worth noting though that comparison can only be effective when both sources have been understood. It should also be noted that the students are being asked to discuss 'value' and not reliability, usefulness, validity or any other concept. As has been previously noted, 'bias' was frequently deployed but all too often in a highly simplistic and dismissive manner and, whilst it certainly can be effectively deployed, centres may find that other terminology is less problematic.

## **Section B**

### **Question 2**

Responses to this were largely weaker than to the other essay question. This was primarily because students did not relate their responses to the central question regarding the changes to the strength of Richard of York's position. The question required students to consider Richard of York's position before August 1453 and compare it to the situation in 1456, in the light of events that happened within the intervening time period. Some students noted that the second protectorate came to an end early in 1456 and that he was then vulnerable to the actions of Queen Margaret but too many restricted their answers just to what Richard did during the protectorates. Too many students largely related the events between 1453 and 1456. Such narrative responses gave views that were implicit at best. It is vital that students relate the points they make to the question asked in order to produce an analytical response. Students were required to consider the strengths of his position as well as the challenges. Not enough was made of the word 'much' within the question. Students could, and many did, argue that Richard of York was in a stronger position. However, the degree to which he was is an area that many did not consider. Those students who did, and thus fully addressed the question, were correspondingly rewarded by the mark scheme.

### **Question 3**

This question was handled very well by most students. The reasons for the successes of the Yorkists in 1460 and 1461 were well understood. Most students were able to consider Lancastrian mistakes and then compare them to other issues, such as the short term actions of the Yorkists, as well as longer term problems such as the inadequate kingship of Henry VI. Some students did struggle to relate what they were discussing to the Yorkist successes in 1460 and 1461 and instead merely related the events of the early 1450s. Issues regarding the loss of France and Jack Cade's rebellion could be relevant if related directly and clearly to the issue in hand. However, too many of these became narratives of seemingly long distant events where the question was largely forgotten. Such pieces often read like an attempt to turn the question into one about an earlier time period than the one indicated in the question, which should clearly be the primary focus. Brief essay planning may well help to counter this drift away from the question. It is vital that students relate the points they make to the question asked in order to produce an analytical response.

### **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.