
A-level **HISTORY**

7042/C – Historical Investigation
Report

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Introduction

There were many excellent examples of student work seen this year. Much of the work was well expressed and was firmly focused on arriving at a clear answer to the set question. Such pieces tended to be written in the style of a lengthy and engaging essay, using subject knowledge, an evaluation of sources and also a critique of historians' interpretation, to support the student's own views and thereby to arrive at a substantiated conclusion. Many of these pieces did slightly exceed the word guidance of 3000-3500 words, but the number of excessively long pieces was lower than last year. It is worth reinforcing the fact that the longer the piece, the harder it seems for many students to achieve the higher levels in AO1, the realisation of which requires a good, sustained analytical approach. There were a number of pieces that struggled to advance much beyond relaying information or, at worse, simply summarising information found in the sources and interpretations. The longer responses did tend to offer a précis of lengthy interpretations and consequently to lose focus on actually answering the set question in an analytical manner.

School administration was much better than last year, and the vast majority correctly included the signed declaration forms, topic forms and also question proposal forms with the submission of the sample. Annotation of the sample by the school was also generally very good with some excellent examples of detailed and considered summative commentary that offered reasoning behind the level and also the mark awarded. Some schools included bespoke mark grids which clearly indicated the rationale for the level given for each of the Assessment Objectives. Whilst such detail is not an expectation, schools that offered no summative commentary at all made it very challenging indeed for the moderator to fully understand what qualities the original marker had seen in a piece. Evidence of internal moderation, where appropriate, often added further to a sense that a school was well-organised.

As was seen last year, one of the biggest determinants of success was the choice of a workable and effective question. It is crucial that the question is one to which a substantiated answer can be arrived at within a reasonable amount of work. Schools are urged to fully utilise the services of their NEA Advisor. The contextual element of the question must be historically valid, and the full date range set in the question should be addressed. There are still questions set that simply do not offer the student an opportunity to display their understanding of change and continuity over approximately 100 years. For example, questions that asked about civil rights movements, or about female suffrage movements, did not provide an easy opportunity for a student to chart development over a lengthy period of time simply because most of these movements were short term in nature. There was also a tendency towards an episodic approach when students considered a particular theme such as rebellion. What might appear to be a very straight-forward question about the causes of Tudor Rebellion for example, very easily became a stilted and episodic description of just three or four rebellions in a period of c100 years. A central demand of the NEA is for the student to be able to prove that they are capable of stepping back and of seeing the broader themes and factors at work across a much broader period of time than in questions in the examined units. A realisation of what has changed and of what has stayed the same helps to reinforce to the student the notion that they are to illustrate a command of the whole period set in their question, not simply of a few isolated events that happen to fall within the chronology.

Assessment Objective One

That this AO carries the greatest amount of marks, should encourage students to realise that the main purpose of the NEA is to produce an argued response to a historical question, much as with

any essay set in the examined units. The NEA is not primarily a research task, nor is it about finding the most obscure or difficult to access source material. The focus of the NEA is the quality of the argued response and it is this that AO1 addresses. Hence, lengthy narrative or descriptive pieces that, for example gave little more than potted biographical detail of key individuals, unfortunately lost an overall direction. At the very worst, NEAs that divided up the response with separate headings or even chapters, undermined any sense of a coherent and sustained analysis. It is within this analysis that the evaluation of the sources and of the interpretations should be integrated. Attempts to provide a summary of a source or of an historical interpretation could work but only if such a summary was brief and was clearly linked to a judgement about the overall value of a source or how convincing an interpretation was. On occasions, students quoted the historical interpretation as an accepted truth and thus failed to maintain a good level of analysis. Students should, by the time that they write the NEA, have an excellent awareness of how to write an essay and of the differences between narrative and description, and analysis and commentary.

Assessment Objective Two

This was generally approached in an effective manner. Most students seemed fully aware of the need to evaluate the sources and to do more than simply quote them. However, a number of NEAs did not really focus on the value of the source, making rather generic statements about the reliability or accuracy without then explaining how this might affect the value. As on the examined units, some students seem not to be fully aware that a source can be inaccurate but still be of value and that value cannot exist in the abstract but must be valuable in effectively doing something. Hence, commentary about the tone of a source is very useful if there is some explicit attempt to explain how an emotive tone, for example, affects the value of the source. As last year, most NEAs contained reference to the sources scattered throughout the final piece and this seemed to be the most effective approach. In this model, sources were referred to when appropriate to the answer being argued.

Assessment Objective Three

There remains some variation in approach to this AO. It is worth remembering that the interpretations selected do need to be differing and that the student should make an effort to account for these differences. Sometimes, such differences were so subtle as to be virtually non-existent and it would have been better for the student to have identified a greater historiographical debate. A student fully conversant with the time period selected for their NEA might be expected to have some awareness of the approaches that have been taken by other historians to the key questions of the period, and might have a judgement that they are able to express about which view they find the most convincing. Such interpretations are often most easily managed by the student if they relate to a relatively narrow concept or shortened chronology rather than two interpretations that attempt to come to conclusions about the entire period. In a similar vein, students that quoted entire monographs made their task much more challenging. The most effective responses to AO3 were often from students that had identified a couple of paragraphs that plainly expressed the view of a historian, and then set about integrating their evaluation of this view into their overall judgement about the set question. Part of this evaluation should include commentary about time/context or limitations but the focus of the AO remains an evaluation of the historical interpretation using clear and precise subject knowledge to support or refute the views of others.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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