



Level 1/2 Certificate

Applied History

OCR Level 1/2 Certificate Applied History **J948**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates, which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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B951 Medieval History

Key features of the work seen

General Comments:

For this examination series there were approximately 250 candidates from 23 centres. This number represents a decrease on the previous year of approximately 500 candidates.

No centre entered more than 50 candidates with the largest being 32. Eleven centres entered more than 10 candidates with the remainder entering fewer than 10 candidates. As with the coursework and teacher assessed units, it is difficult to tell how centres are using this qualification. Some centres are FE establishments raising the possibility that it is being used as a vehicle for progression into Level 3 qualifications. The smaller centres may be using this alongside ASDAN and other entry-level qualifications.

Both 'Kings' and 'Raiders & invaders' were attempted.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Both questions show similar key features therefore they are set out together:

- If anything there was a slight improvement in comparison with the last series
- A few misunderstood completely what the task was about, producing just a source analysis rather than an answer to an historical question
- A few omitted sources altogether
- Often sources were poorly integrated (sometimes separate boxes) and too often the nature of the source was not identified
- Most were of a reasonable word total but some were very brief
- Often too much description at the expense of answering the question. For example, what the Vikings did in Britain and the key events associated with relationships with the barons
- Often too much background material about the monarchs or the two societies
- Sometimes criteria were produced to answer the question but were then not used
- Some lacked balance. For example, more on Normans than Vikings
- Sometimes focus was more on the skills and characteristics of Vikings and Normans rather than assessing how well they defeated their enemies
- Monarchs sometimes moved outside the reigns. For example, to their predecessors' time rather than concentrate on the time they were kings
- Whilst there is room for wide interpretation, by no stretch of the imagination can the Pope be described as an ordinary person
- Most attempted a valid conclusion – sometimes this was the best bit of the answer
- Some candidates tended to write an answer to the question they want rather than the one given
- Both sides of an argument were not always attempted
- The best candidates were capable of creating an evidenced-based argument and maintaining the focus on the question. This was rarely seen.

B952, B953, B954, B955, B956 and Teacher Assessed Units B957, B958, B959, B960

Key features of the work seen

General Comments:

For this examination series there were 373 candidate entries for coursework from 20 centres, and 228 candidate entries from 20 centres for Teacher Assessed Units. However, most centres entered candidates for two or even three units, so the true figure is that 22 centres took part in this year's assessment. Fewer candidates were entered than 2014, suggesting that more are being entered for GCSE following the introduction of the Ebacc. The somewhat uncertain future of this course may not encourage centres to take it up. However, there were slightly more centres taking part than in 2014, so the course is fulfilling a need, albeit often for small number of candidates. Many centres presented less than 10 candidates, but there were also some quite large entries, suggesting at least two full classes.

There were entries for all of the five coursework units and the four teacher assessed units. Many centres presented skilfully-designed assignments which enabled candidates to do some excellent work on some interesting topics which they had obviously enjoyed doing. Some of the International Studies (B953) and Heritage Marketing work, for example (B957 b) showed flair and originality. Candidates presented work showing a level of personal involvement in the issues, as well as a level of analysis, which totally justifies the existence of this course and its equivalence to GCSE History. Teachers should be congratulated on the amount of work involved in getting it right.

It is clear that some centres are inevitably using this course, with school-designed assignments contributing to 75% of the assessment, as a useful course for less able students or students with various kinds of learning difficulties. Most of these students presented work showing personal commitment to History.

As last year, the main point to be made to centres, both existing and possible new centres, is that **it is absolutely essential to read the specification carefully**.

Quite a high proportion of centres had their marks reduced because the work presented did not meet the requirements of the specification for the unit – and had not been well-enough designed to do so. This meant that, although candidates usually had good knowledge, they were unable to use it in answer to the questions set, or in the way that the specification demanded. This is unfortunate for candidates.

For coursework units B952, B953, B954 and B955 the expectation is that candidates will tackle one task and for B956 two separate, and different, tasks. Although it is possible to submit several pieces of work, this is not the part of the course for presenting portfolios of work. Candidates are unlikely to achieve good marks in a string of brief tasks.

The OCR website contains a useful Teacher's Handbook which also develops more fully the requirements for each Unit: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/other-general-qualifications-applied-history-level-1-2-certificate-j948/>

Many candidates presented their work in Powerpoint. These presentations sometimes included far too much text on each slide: if PowerPoint is going to be used, candidates need to be more aware of its strengths and limitations. PowerPoint is good for making strong, brief points, not so good for extended accounts or analyses. Adding a script, or accompanying notes to the slides could deal with this.

Centre marking was generally accurate. Most work had been annotated by the centre and Moderators found these comments helpful. It needs to be clear that this course is assessed to GCSE standards; some centres had apparently seen the course as sub-GCSE and marked more highly than the work actually merited. In a few cases, particularly the marking of weaker candidates, marking was sometimes too severe. Examples of candidates' work, with marks and a commentary, can be found on the OCR website listed above.

Comments on Individual Units:

B952: Local History Investigation. The Specification requirement to consider the current, as well as the historical significance of the site, is still weak. This need not be of equal weight or coverage, but its omission leads to reductions in the marks that can be awarded.

B953, International History. This was a popular unit. It should be an enquiry into an issue involving at least two states and some of the work on Vietnam barely achieved this, although the war involved several states other than the USA and Vietnam. The focus of the enquiry should be on the significance of the events chosen, rather than just a description of what happened.

B954. Whose History? Few centres made use of this unit. Responses should analyse not just how, but why, the interpretations differ.

B955. Change over time. This unit, familiar to SHP centres and therefore quite well-resourced, was done well by the few centres who entered.

B956. Study in Depth. This has two parts: a source-based enquiry; and the study of the role of an individual (which need not be source-based). This second assignment should not be a biography, but an analysis of the significance of the chosen individual.

There was some confusion over both these aspects: sources heavily used in the role of an individual task were largely biographical. For better marks in the first part candidates need to move up to GCSE-level source analysis. For better marks in the second part candidates need to analyse, as a part of their answer at least, the significance of this person. Again, the specification and the online Teachers Handbook are very clear on this, with examples.

The Teacher-assessed units (B957-B960) should consist of a portfolio of work from the whole period taken to teach the unit – probably a term. This should consist of at least six items – some centres present up to 12 – on a range of topics within the main enquiry, with different tasks tackling a range of objectives. Some centres only presented two or three pieces of work, covering only one or two objectives. The distinction between these units and the coursework units should be clear.

As in unit B956 the sources evaluation work, when covered, was mechanistic.

It was sometimes difficult for the Moderator to disentangle information provided by the teacher from the candidate's own work. It would considerably assist the moderation of the teacher assessed units if these items were removed and a list of the tasks set could be provided.

B957 Heritage Marketing. The link between the history and the marketing was often not very strong. An important document should be the marketing plan, making clear the target audience and how their needs were intended to be met.

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B958 Multi-media. The unit requires candidates to submit their own multi-media presentation in order to complete the unit. There were some good responses on a range of interesting subjects, to the first part. The second part was not always presented.

B959. Missing pages: the Migrant experience. An interesting range of topics was dealt with and centres had clearly worked hard to assemble resources. The two questions – ‘what were the reasons for migration?’ and ‘How successfully did migrants settle?’ were both covered well.

B960. Archaeology. Only two centres entered for this unit, with small numbers of candidates, but the objectives of the unit were well-met in both cases.

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