

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2013

GCE History (6HI01/B)  
Unit 1: Historical Themes in Breadth  
Option B: Power, Belief and Conflict in  
Early Modern Europe

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## **6HI01/B – Power, Belief and Conflict in Early Modern Europe**

### **General comments**

Examiners once again reported that the majority of candidates understood the essential requirements of the Unit 1 examination. Many were able to structure their work effectively, provide a range of relevant and accurate material to support the points they were making, and maintain a sustained focus on the question set. At the highest levels of attainment were those who displayed the ability to analyse a range of factors in detail and present a convincing answer overall.

However, examiners also noted that there were a significant number of responses which were limited by specific areas of weakness. Although more candidates are attempting analysis (Level 3) and, indeed, producing analytical responses with some good understanding (Level 4) many are limited to the lower bands due to a lack of accurate and relevant exemplification. In this session, in particular, examiners commented on a lack of secure supporting knowledge and chronological awareness. It is important that arguments be supported with sufficient secure and accurate evidence to make the points stand up. In addition, higher level responses explain how these points relate to the question, whether supporting or challenging the premise of the question.

Also once again many candidates failed to read the questions carefully leading to responses which did not focus directly or, even well, on the key issues. In general, this led to marks being awarded at low band Level 4 or Level 3. For example, in Option E/F many candidates confused the Weimar Constitution with the Weimar Republic itself leading to a limited discussion of the problems caused by constitutional issues. In other cases the complete misreading of questions led to Level 1/Level 2 marks and in a few unfortunate cases there was no rewardable material despite a developed response having been written.

Quality of written communication is integral to the awarding of marks within the Level descriptors. Although areas of weakness have been highlighted in

previous reports it has been felt that the general quality of organisation, expression and spelling, punctuation and grammar has been good.

Therefore, it is a little concerning to note that many examiners observed that in this session they had seen a slight decline in the quality of written expression, punctuation, particularly the use of capital letters, and spelling. Some candidates were also clearly disadvantaged by a lack of choice of questions within their topic area studied. It is vital that centres cover all the content specified in the bullet points in the specification if candidates are to have a choice. Questions may be asked on specific bullet points or across the bullet points and so failure to cover the specified content adequately may lead to a lack of choice and/or imbalanced answers. Examples of topics where content is clearly not always covered include A2, B5, D4, D5, E/F2 and F7. In particular, centres should note that topic D5 refers to Equality in the USA, 1945-68 and is not focused wholly on the civil rights of African Americans. Topics which have clearly benefited from increased coverage in past sessions include D3, E/F2, E/F3 & E/F6.

Despite the weaknesses noted above it is important to note that, in general, candidates produce well organised and knowledgeable answers and that the best responses engage the examiner to create a very pleasant reading experience.

### **Topic B1: Luther, Lutheranism and the German Reformation, 1517-55**

A few candidates shaped their answer to **Question 1** as a simple narrative, from the publication of the 95 Theses in 1517, through the debates with Cajetan and Eck, to Luther's condemnation at the Diet of Worms in 1521. These answers, limited in range and with little explanatory shape, failed to rise above Level 3. Many other candidates, however, appreciated the need to consider the nature and the extent of change over time, even though the timescale in the question was quite short. Some of these began their answer by referring to the content of the 95 theses of 1517, Luther's condemnation in 1521, and then investigated what had changed in the intervening period and why. Most understood that the 95 Theses were not a

Lutheran manifesto, but an invitation to an academic debate on corruption in the church, and especially on the sale of indulgences which were being hawked around Germany at the time by John Tetzel. A number of candidates glossed over Luther's meeting with Cajetan at Augsburg in 1518, but were well aware of the significance of the prolonged debate with Eck at Leipzig the following year. A surprising number failed to investigate the 1520 pamphlets which further refined Luther's teachings, especially on the sacraments and on justification. Some high scoring answers commented that the Address to the German Nobility, which maintained that princes had the power to govern the church within their territory, would lead to princely intervention in the Lutheran Reformation from the early 1520s. A few strayed out of the timescale in the question by describing Luther's visit to Rome and his 'Tower Experience', which could be marginally relevant at best.

There is a small number of candidates each year who consider the German princes (**Question 2**) only as a handful of prominent individuals, and this year was no exception. They exemplified the stated factor of "the support of the German Princes" by simply referring to Frederick of Saxony's protection of Luther in Wartburg Castle after the Diet of Worms in 1521. Some others noted the involvement of Frederick along with the conversion of Albrecht of Hohenzollern in 1525 and Philip of Hesse in 1526. Many others, however, deployed an impressive amount of detail on the political and religious significance of the Schmalkaldic League of 1531, and of the support it gained from France and Denmark. Most referred to the Schmalkaldic war of 1546-47, but also noted the importance of the Augsburg Interim, the Peace of Passau, and the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555. In considering other relevant factors, most answers noted the importance of the printing press and the distribution of Luther's works through the trade routes. The Emperor's conflicting priorities after 1521 were catalogued with varying levels of development, with a few mentioning only the Ottoman Turks. It was encouraging to see that more candidates are examining the reasons for the failure of the Papacy to respond effectively to Lutheranism after 1521. The Italian wars and the sack of Rome were mentioned, along with the

growing tensions between the Papacy and the Emperor, whose demands for a General Council of the church were not answered until 1545.

## **Topic B2: Meeting the Challenge? The Catholic Reformation, c1540-1600**

**Question 3**, like Question 1, required consideration of change over time, but only a few addressed this convincingly. The private lives of Alexander VI and Julius II proved too alluring to some, who described their sexual misdemeanours at some length and to little effect. Others framed a narrow perspective by considering papal authority only with reference to the decrees of the Council of Trent. More convincing answers focused on the work of Paul III, Julius III and Pius IV. They noted that Paul III in particular responded to some of the criticisms of Protestant reformers by creating the Consulta, and by attacking malpractices within the papal court. His reforms were continued by both his successors, so that by 1563 papal authority had been enhanced significantly. Some answers mistakenly claimed that Trent had issued decrees on the role of the papacy. Better answers signed off by noting that papal authority would be increased as future popes took on the task of enforcing the Tridentine decrees.

The small number of candidates who answered **Question 4** were well prepared to consider a suitable range of Catholic rulers. Some made an effective comparison between the Wittelsbachs of Bavaria, who used the Counter-Reformation to promote their dynastic ambitions in southern Germany, and Sigismund of Poland who, under the influence of the Jesuits, enforced the Tridentine decrees for religious reasons. Others noted that Philip II's motivation varied from one territory to another. Religious concerns influenced his support of the Counter-Reformation in Spain, but in the Netherlands religious and political motivations were intertwined in order to confirm his authority in that kingdom. A few went significantly out of period by referring to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and to Charles V.

### **Topic B3: the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1559-1609**

Only a few candidates answered questions on this topic. Most answers to **Question 5** agreed that Alba's rule alienated the Dutch grandees and the people alike, citing in evidence the Council of Troubles and the imposition of the Tenth Penny. The origins of the Sea Beggars were perhaps not well known, but their activities in the northern towns were explained very clearly. More might have been made of the influence of William of Orange. Some referred only to his return to the Netherlands in 1572, without placing his influence into a broader context. Answers to **Question 6** were equally strong. Candidates usually challenged the stated factor of English and French intervention, preferring a detailed analysis of the leadership skills of three key figures: William of Orange, Maurice of Nassau, and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. There was also secure reference to the distractions and failed policies of Philip II and Philip III.

### **Topic B4: the European Witchcraze, c1580-c1640**

Answers to the questions on this topic varied widely in their quality. The most significant discriminator between answers was the extent to which the supporting material was developed. It is important to emphasise that the mark scheme's indicative content notes, for both Questions 7 and 8, that "examiners should note that a study of this nature, with a broad spatial as well as temporal focus, relies on the study of particular cases in the context of wider trends". A significant number of answers failed to support the points made with developed material taken from their course of study.

Most answers to **Question 7** showed some understanding of the demands of the question and were able to focus on key issues. Several referred only briefly to the stated factor of religious disputes before moving on to other points with which they seemed more comfortable. Some noted the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century, but failed to consider the tensions which religious change developed in various states and border regions. Only a few referred to changing views on the nature of the Devil as a figure who was free to move in the world and to influence

events. Some believe that the only point of a sabbath was to allow women to have intercourse with Satan. Other factors addressed include economic and climate change. Many referred to a mini ice age without going on to assess what its impact might have been. Some noted that the disruptions to the patterns of everyday life occurred frequently in times of war and harvest failure, but links between these points and the development of the witchcraze were often not clearly established. Some candidates made very general points, such as how to identify a witch, women's roles in their communities, and the growing number of spinsters and widows, but had little or no specific evidence to back up the points made. More successful answers came from candidates who were able to use examples from their course of study to illuminate their answer. Many understood the importance of Lutheranism and Calvinism in the origins of the witchcraze, and the role played by the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. Some had obviously made detailed investigations into the contribution to the witchcraze of printed works. The *Malleus Maleficarum* was frequently referred to, but only a handful noted that this text was condemned by the Catholic Church just three years after its first publication, though it went through a substantial number of editions from 1560.

Answers to **Question 8** were generally more secure than Question 7. Candidates were aware of the activities of several prominent individuals. James VI of Scotland and Matthew Hopkins appeared in most answers, with candidates citing in evidence the North Berwick and East Anglian witch persecutions respectively. The notorious activities of Balthazar Nuss were well known, and some also referred to Christian IV of Denmark and Ferdinand of Bavaria. A few made effective reference to Queen Christina of Sweden, and to Alonso Salazar of Spain: his Instructions of 1614 became increasingly influential in other parts of Europe. Many answers noted that regional variations in the intensity of the witchcraze often depended on the strength of central government and its control over local magistrates. Answers were perhaps a little less secure when discussing legal systems, the Carolina, and variations in the use of torture from one state to another.

### **Topic B5: Conflict and Conquest in Ireland, 1598-1692**

There was a small number of candidates entered for this topic, and almost all answered **Question 9**. Most considered Tyrone's rebellion and the threat it posed to Elizabeth I's control in Ireland. The suppression of the rebellion was largely attributed to Mountjoy's leadership: few recognised that by 1600 Tyrone's depleted forces, coupled with growing famine, virtually guaranteed his defeat. Many noted that Royal power was extended systematically by the Stuart Kings through the twin policies of settlement and plantation, though some failed to note the problems which these schemes encountered in the late 1630s. A small number of answers concluded that, while Royal power in Ireland appeared secure, it would be virtually destroyed during the long and bitter Confederate War.

### **Topic B6: The Thirty Years War and its Impact on Continental Europe, 1618-60**

Most of the small number of answers to the topic were on **Question 11**, and many of these displayed an impressively high level of attainment. Some took a chronological approach, from the battle of White Mountain in 1620, through the Habsburg victories at Dessau in 1626 and Silesia in 1627, to the final defeat of Christian IV in 1629. Those who shaped their answer thematically were often more successful. Candidates contrasted the leadership skills displayed by Tilly and Wallenstein with the less secure generalship of Mansfeld. They also note that the forces mustered by the Protestant Union were much smaller and less well-equipped than those available to the Habsburgs and their Catholic allies.

### **Topic B7: Crown Conflict and Revolution in England, 1660-89.**

A few answers to **Question 13** were able to assess the changing relationship between Crown and Parliament over the course of the wars. The initial enthusiasm for each war was demonstrated by the granting of generous parliamentary subsidies. Answers noted that support for the war naturally depended on rapid victories, which were not forthcoming. Some answers simply concluded that relations between Charles and Parliament

had therefore deteriorated, while more secure responses indicated the nature of this change: attacks on Clarendon in 1667 and on the Cabal in 1674.

At lower levels of attainment in answers to **Question 14** were those which focused exclusively on religious matters. The quality of support here was very variable, often relying only on the Declarations of Indulgence. Those who developed a broader perspective noted the strength of James's position in 1685, and how he dissipated his political capital very rapidly thereafter. His pro-Catholic policies were assessed, along with his interference in legal cases and attempts to influence political affairs in towns and boroughs. Most noted that the birth of a son in 1688 was the key turning point in the King's reign, persuading "the immortal seven" to issue their appeal to William of Orange in the hope of averting the establishment of a Catholic dynasty in the country.

## **Summary**

Centres might consider the following areas of weakness in many responses:

- a) Candidates must focus more clearly on the question set, noting its specific wording and the timescale to be covered.
- b) Chronological awareness is sometimes weak. Candidates should know key dates, and should be able to explain and expand on points made with accurate reference to the order in which events happened.
- c) The range and depth of supporting material is often the key to success. This support should be relevant, focused, accurate, and in sufficient depth to allow the points made to stand up.

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