



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel
In GCE History (8HI0/1B)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1B: England, 1509–1603: authority,
nation and religion

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It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in this, Advanced Subsidiary Level, paper 1B.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause and/or consequence. Section B offers a further choice of essays, targeting any of the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3).

Candidates in the main appeared to organise their time effectively, although there were a few cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated. This was most evident on Section C, as would be expected, although there seemed to be fewer instances of this than has been seen in some previous years. The responses that managed time most effectively planned time accordingly in the first place and offered more direct responses. Where responses lacked focus or included material from outside the parameters of the question, they were both less likely to produce responses at the highest level but also experience time pressure issues. Those who produced responses that focused sharply on arguing and analysing the given issue in the question, and on Question 5 the given views, rather offering extensive explanations and quotes, were more likely to produce an effective response.

In sections A and B, most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question. A minority of candidates offered substantial knowledge but did not effectively direct this towards the conceptual demands of the question. In the main though, candidates were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner suited to the different demands of questions in these two sections: in terms of the greater depth of knowledge required where section A questions targeted a shorter-period, as compared to the more careful selection generally required for the section B questions covering a broader timespan. One of the central features of responses attaining the highest marks was an ability to consider and evaluate in relation to the specific demands of a particular question. For example, some candidates offered detailed explanation of changes, but the strongest responses tended to offer greater consideration of the extent of change.

Candidates do need to formulate their planning so that there is an argument and a counter argument within their answer; some candidates lacked sufficient treatment of these. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels. Candidates also need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that responses sufficiently cover the given period, and do not spend time detailing issues that are outside the timeframe of that particular question.

In Section C, the strongest answers demonstrated a clear focus on the need to discuss different arguments given within the two extracts, clearly recognising these as historical interpretations. Such responses tended to offer comparative analysis of the merits of the different views, exploring the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in the light of the evidence, both from the within the extracts, and candidates' own contextual knowledge. Such responses tended to avoid attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, assertions of the inferiority of an extract on the basis of it offering less factual evidence, or a drift away from the specific demands of the question to the wider taught topic. A small minority did approach the question in a manner which would be more suited to an AO1 (i.e. Section A/B) response, engaging with the issue in the

question and showing understanding, but tending to neglect the extracts, or treat them more as sources of information, rather than interpretations.

Question 1

This was the more popular question within Section A, which produced a range of responses which were usually well-informed, and in the main offered some degree of analysis, and were thus able to reach Levels Three and Four. A key issue determining the performance was the extent to which candidates focused material carefully on the demands of the question. A minority of responses offered relevant material but were less consistent in demonstrating how issues detailed were a consequence of the dissolution. A small minority also drifted into consideration of the motives for the closure, without demonstrating how this was pertinent to the question. More successful responses tended to be clearer in defining and delineating the various effects as, say, economic, social or religious, but were also able to recognise and explore any crossover.

More successfully focused responses tended to cover the issues detailed in the indicative content of the mark scheme. The strongest responses made convincing connections between the closure and the consequences offered, e.g. how far the closures can be attributed as leading to the Pilgrimage of Grace, with a good number demonstrating a precise grasp of the stages of closure. Some stronger responses effectively weighed the extent of individual consequences, e.g. the extent to which educational and cultural loss was offset by the alternatives founded using the proceeds of the dissolution.

Question 2

Question 2 was the less popular of the two within Section A. The majority of candidates attempting this question seemingly found it accessible and straightforward, and thus it was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to offer a reasoned consideration of the given issue, Henry's personal motives, and were largely able to focus this on the demands of the question, and thus avoid lapsing into descriptions of his marital issues. Within this, the focus tended to be more towards dynastic concerns and the need for a male heir, although a good proportion also gave effective consideration to Henry's religious motives, e.g. in halting or reversing the momentum of reform. Stronger responses tended to demonstrate a nuanced understanding of how exactly Henry's concerns shaped religious change, e.g. recognising and exploring how Henry's own dynastic needs brought about a process which facilitated religious reforms which did not necessarily reflect his own personal beliefs.

The fundamental stages of the dissolution of the monasteries featured heavily, as did the role of 'anti-clericalism' in England, or the role played by individuals with reformist inclinations, such as Cromwell, Cranmer and Anne Boleyn, e.g. some candidates were successful in assessing Cromwell's legalistic role, and the extent to which his own religious beliefs were evident in the religious reforms of the 1530s, or exploring the relationship between Henry's needs, and the opportunities this gave to those in favour of reform whose proximity drew nearer to Henry. A further discriminating factor in the success of responses was the extent to which candidates were able to consider the full chronological demands of the question's timeframe.

Question 3

Question 3 was the less popular choice within Section B. The question produced a range of responses, largely in the upper levels. At the higher end, these were often typified by the ability of candidates to draw upon a diverse range of interesting material, clearly relating this to an analysis of

the significance of the monarch's principal ministers versus other relevant issues. Candidates typically offered more in relation to Henry's ministers, although many did make use of relevant material on Cecil, and to a lesser extent the role of other leading figures, such as Bishop Gardiner in the reign of Mary. Other influences considered were issues relating to the monarch themselves, such as the gender of Mary and Elizabeth, their religion, issues such as succession and marriage, as well as other aspects of government, such as parliament and the role played by the nobility.

The strongest responses were often able to critically explore the relative significance of different points offered, with some exploring how the significance of, say, principal ministers, varied across the period. Less successful responses tended to be limited by one or more of the following issues (i) limited range and depth of knowledge, (ii) consistency of focus and (iii), uncertainty over organisation of argument and focus on the second-order concept of significance. What was important as far as reaching the higher levels was concerned, was an ability to shape sufficient knowledge to a reasoned analysis and evaluation of the relative significance of the principal ministers.

Question 4

This was the more popular of the two questions in Section B, and it produced responses covering a broad range of levels and marks, with the vast majority achieving the higher levels. Common arguments in support of the question's contention included the continued significance of the nobility, and much of the work of Justices of the Peace, set against the reformation of the councils, the appointment of the Lord Lieutenants and the expansion of the role of JPs.

Most responses were able to offer a range of knowledge, and the majority were able to largely tie material to a consideration of the degree of change. Stronger responses, as well as offering more depth of material, tended to offer some degree of balance, offering points relating to change and continuity. A good proportion were able to explore the extent of change within individual areas, e.g. the evolution of the role played by the nobility, Justices of the Peace and the councils.

Question 5

Most candidates were able to access the higher two levels, generally by recognising and explaining the arguments in the two extracts, and building on this with own knowledge. The strongest responses tended to offer a comparative analysis of the views, discussing and evaluating these in the light of contextual knowledge. Most candidates were able to identify the differences between Extract 1 and Extract 2, e.g. how Extract 1 that Elizabeth's government was weakened by war and faced challenges from younger courtiers jockeying for influence, whereas Extract 2 recognises these issues, but emphasises that Elizabeth's government was well placed to deal with such issues.

Candidates' knowledge and understanding of issues was varied, with knowledge of faction, the Essex Revolt, relations with parliament, particularly over monopolies, and the issue of succession featuring in a number. A discriminating factor in success was to some extent was the deployment and development of knowledge offered, i.e. the difference between referencing an issue with contextual knowledge linked to the extract, and, at the higher levels, exploring this in relation to the precise focus of the question, and assessing the validity of argument. With regards to judgement, it was pleasing to see a substantial number of candidates offer reasoned and considered assessments of the merits of both arguments, regardless of their ultimate decision. Overall, Question 5 produced a strong response from a good number of candidates.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A/B responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the date ranges in the question
- Sufficient consideration given to the issue in the question (e.g. main factor), as well as some other factors
- Explain their judgement fully – this need not be in an artificial or abstract way, but demonstrate their reasoning in relation to the concepts and topic they are writing about to justify their judgements
- Focus carefully on the second-order concept targeted in the question
- Consider timing, to enable themselves to complete all three questions with approximately the same time given over to each one
- An appropriate level, in terms of depth of detail and analysis, as required by the question – e.g. a realistic amount to enable a balanced and rounded answer on breadth questions

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Answers which pay little heed to the precise demands of the question, e.g. write about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempt to give an answer to a question that hasn't been asked – most frequently, this meant treating questions which targeted other second-order concepts as causation questions
- Where a response does not give sufficient consideration to the given issue/proposition in the question (e.g. looking at other causes, consequences, etc, with only limited reference to that given in the question)
- Answers which only gave a partial response, e.g. a very limited span of the date range, or covered the stated cause/consequence, with no real consideration of other issues
- Assertion of change, causation, sometimes with formulaic repetition of the words of the question, with limited explanation or analysis of how exactly this was a change, cause, of the issue within the question.
- Judgement is not reached, or not explained
- A lack of detail

Section C responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the precise demands of the question, as opposed to seemingly pre-prepared material covering the more general controversy as outlined in the specification
- Thorough use of the extracts; this need not mean using every point they raise, but a strong focus on these as views on the question
- A confident attempt to use the two extracts together, e.g. consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits
- Careful use of own knowledge, e.g. clearly selected to relate to the issues raised within the sources, confidently using this to examine the arguments made, and reason through these in relation to the given question; at times, this meant selection over sheer amount of knowledge
- Careful reading of the extracts, to ensure the meaning of individual statements and evidence within these were used in the context of the broader arguments made by the authors
- Attempts to see beyond the stark differences between sources, e.g. consideration of the extent to which they disagreed, or attempts to reconcile their arguments

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Limited use of the extracts, or an imbalance in this, e.g. extensive use of one, with limited consideration of the other
- Limited comparison or consideration of the differences between the given interpretations
- Using the extracts merely as sources of support
- Arguing one extract is superior to the other on the basis that it offers more factual evidence to back up the claims made, without genuinely analysing the arguments offered
- Heavy use of own knowledge, or even seemingly pre-prepared arguments, without real consideration of these related to the arguments in the sources
- Statements or evidence from the source being used in a manner contrary to that given in the sources, e.g. through misinterpretation of the meaning of the arguments, or lifting of detail without thought to the context of how it was applied within the extract
- A tendency to see the extracts as being polar opposites, again seemingly through expectation of this, without thought to where there may be degrees of difference, or even common ground