



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel in
GCE History (8HI0/1C)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1C: Britain, 1625-1701: conflict,
revolution and settlement

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Principal's Report 1C 2023

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range on AS Level Paper 1 Option 1C: Britain, 1625-1701: conflict, revolution and settlement.

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 some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated. Examiners did note a number of scripts that posed some problems with the legibility of handwriting. Examiners can only give credit for what they can read.

Of the three sections of Paper 1, candidates are generally more familiar with the essay sections, and 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. Candidates in the main 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. 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 do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

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 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.

Q1: This was by far the most popular question in Section A, and was often done very well. Stronger answers paid detailed attention to how financial problems posed problems for the monarchy in the first 15 years of Charles I's reign, often touching on the debt he inherited from his father, the burden of war, and/or the unpopular ways in which Charles sought to

raise money, for example during the Personal Rule. Such answers often balanced this with a consideration of other reasons for Charles' problems, notably his religious policy. Weaker answers often lacked range beyond the late 1620s, and/or precise and detailed knowledge of key events. A few went beyond 1640 even as far as the opening of the civil war.

Q2: There were relatively few responses to this question but a number that knew the relationship between Charles II and James II with parliament in impressive detail. These answers frequently went beyond the fear of absolutism suggested by the close relationship with absolutist France enjoyed by these two kings, to consider the relative importance of financial and religious issues in particular, before coming to sound and convincing judgements. There were, however, a number of weaker responses that lacked knowledge of the period involved and/or understanding of the conceptual focus of the question.

Q3: The key problem that faced many candidates attempting this question was a weak understanding of what was meant of the 'structure of society'. This was interpreted widely, sometimes as meaning an essay on population growth or general social and economic change. Despite displaying some impressive knowledge, therefore, such answers did not access upper mark ranges. On the other hand, a good number of responses did address the question asked by considering the degree to which the structure of society changed, with reference to the growth of the gentry and the merchant classes, in contrast to the continuing power and influence of the landed nobility and/or the position of the poor majority.

Q4: Weaker candidates answering this question lacked any developed knowledge of the role of the East India Company and/or a focus on the issue of overseas trade. Quite a number chose to write instead about general economic developments during the seventeenth century, in the cloth industry perhaps or in agriculture. In contrast, there were some very impressive answers that judged the significance to the growth of overseas trade of a number of factors as well as the Company, including the growth of the Triangular Trade or of insurance and other financial apparatus.

Q5: The key difference between the weaker and stronger answers to this question was the degree to which candidates read carefully and understood the issues contained in the two Extracts. Most identified that they contrasted with each other and were able to identify from them material that related to the question. To this, most were able to add some relevant knowledge of their own to expand upon this, with regard to the Triennial Act notably, before attempting a judgement. The better answers, however, were able to focus in on the issues over which the two Extracts differed, for example, the monarch's ability to choose ministers and act independently of parliament, and to use precise and detailed knowledge of the arguments in combination before coming to a reasoned judgement.

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 were:

- 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
- Explanation of a judgement fully – this need not be in an artificial or abstract way, but demonstrate reasoning in relation to the concepts and topic being written about in order to justify judgements
- A careful focus on the second-order concept targeted in the question
- Consideration given to timing, to enable candidates to complete all three question 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 included:

- Little heed to the precise demands of the question, e.g. writing about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempting to give an answer to a question that hasn't been asked
- 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.
- A judgement not reached, or not explained
- A lack of detail.

Section C responses:

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

- 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.