



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In History (8HI0/1C)

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

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

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PE report 8HI0 1C

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

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 indulged in lengthier contextual descriptions of, say, poverty in the Stuart period (for Question 3), or descriptions of the extracts and events after the Glorious Revolution (Question 5), 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 more 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

Question 1 was the more popular choice with candidates in Section A of the paper. The vast majority of candidates were able to engage with the conceptual demands of the question sufficiently, and apply appropriate knowledge in order to allow them to access levels three and four. What distinguished within these tended to be down to their ability to exemplify the causes of failure – religious issues or otherwise – and their ability to develop this material with a clear focus on the failure of personal rule.

There was reasonably even coverage between religious issues (e.g. how Laud's religious reforms weakened personal rule by offending English Puritans, creating fears of a revival of Catholicism, or how interference in secular affairs undermined the power of the nobility and the gentry) and other factors (e.g. resistance to the levying and extension of Ship Money; resentment generated by the revival of feudal payments and selling monopoly licences; Charles I's problems in funding the military campaign against the Scots; the constitutional issues arising during personal rule and opposition to the legality of this and fears of potential absolutism). There was some balance in arguments for and against, although valid conclusions could be reached either way. More importantly, the focus remained largely on causation with consistent analysis exploring this second order concept. Judgements were well-reasoned and thus considered criteria, and high-scoring responses were clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Less successful responses tended to offer limited knowledge of the reasons for the failure of Charles I's personal rule, or descriptive accounts with limited focus relating this to the failure of personal rule. Some low-scoring answers dealt mainly with one aspect of religious issues, e.g. Henerietta Maria's Catholicism. More secure responses tended to demonstrate more careful selection in deployment of knowledge, a sufficient range of this knowledge, and a secure grasp of how this related to the precise demands of the question. A good number of responses were able to explore the interrelationship between issues, e.g. make distinctions over how the prayer book crisis in Scotland was rooted in Charles' religious policies, but triggered a subsequent crisis which revealed the latent financial and constitutional weaknesses in personal rule.

Question 2

Question 2 was the less popular of the two within Section A. The vast majority of candidates who did attempt this question did seemingly find it sufficiently accessible enough to achieve levels three or four. What distinguished within responses tended to be down to the quality of knowledge, and the ability to relate this to the demands of the question, both in terms of marshalling information around reasons why, and relating these points fully to the issue of the provision of stable government.

Stronger responses targeted how accurate it is to say that the failure of republican government in the years 1649-60 was primarily due to the influence of radical ideas. Responses in the higher levels gave reasonable chronological coverage and covered a sufficient range of factors contributing to the difficulties in providing stable government during the republican period. Typical responses mentioned issues and groups such as the Levellers, Fifth Monarchists, Diggers and Quakers, with some consideration of their radical nature, e.g. how their republican or millenarian nature, and how this challenged the previous political, social and religious order. A number of responses argued that such groups were well entrenched within the New Model Army, relating this to their influence in the course of events in the period 1649-60. Some candidates also explored the idea that, as regicides and republicans, the regime that took power after 1649 was intrinsically 'radical', and thus itself was out of step with the broadly conservative and monarchist leanings of the political nation. In developing other relevant issues, attention was usually drawn to the destabilising impact of the New Model Army, seen in the legacy of the regicide, the dismissal of the Rump, the rule of the Major-Generals and in Cromwell's refusal of the Crown, the royalist threat from Charles, Scotland and Ireland, and in the character and actions of Oliver Cromwell. Stronger responses also tended to demonstrate a more secure grasp of the events in the period, such as the multiple parliaments and attempts at constitutional settlement.

Less successful responses tended to offer limited knowledge or limited analysis of how radical ideas contributed to the failure of republican government, or a descriptive account of aspects of the period, with limited focus. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far, or only offered one narrow aspect related to the demands of the question.

Question 3

Question 3 was the less popular of the two within Section B, and produced a wide range of responses. Most candidates recognised that population growth, in combination with endemic unemployment and/or under-employment, led to poverty. Most showed some understanding of how enclosures and other such rural innovations led to unemployment in the countryside, and that this then led to urban migration at a time when there was no guarantee of work, thus compounding a growing problem of urban unemployment and wage depreciation. A small minority of candidates demonstrated a more developed understanding of the distinctions between the causes, consequences and relative changes in urban and rural poverty. Attempts to control migration, such as the Settlement Acts, and their relationship to the issue of the growth of poverty, received less treatment. Some did argue that the response of authorities to poverty was evidence of a growing problem, and consider how the changing urban and transitory nature of poverty magnified concerns amongst the propertied elites. A minority did reference servitude, and the extent to which this was a feature of growing poverty, although only a very small number saw the continuity with rural customs, such as live-in employment and the traditional sense of noblesse oblige that softened the impact of poverty in rural communities.

Where candidates were more securely focused on addressing the second-order concept of significance, in they tended to be more successful. In a number of instances, the significance of poverty was contrasted with issues such as the growing prosperity of the gentry and professional classes. Whilst some responses were successful in qualifying the extent of the significance in such a manner, a number of responses tended to lose focus, e.g. with descriptions of which classes prospered, with limited relation to the demands of the question.

Question 4

This was the more popular choice of question in Section B, and produced a range of answers, the bulk of which were within levels three and four. Whilst one perennial discriminating factor in the success of responses was the range and depth of knowledge, the key factor in determining the quality of response was the degree to which responses were focused on the conceptual demands of the question. Those candidates marshalled the material they had to offer towards an analysis of change and continuity were most successful.

Most responses offered some degree of assessment of the extent of change, typically by writing distinct paragraphs on changes to agriculture, the cloth industry, banking and finance, the growth of London and the expansion of colonial trade. The tendency was towards change, and a significant number didn't give sufficient attention to areas of continuity, e.g. essentially explaining in each section how, say, agriculture, or the cloth industry changed. More successful responses were able to explore the extent to which there was change; within these, recognition of the essential continuity was offered, e.g. arguments that agriculture and not industry was the dominant employer, that some of the perceived changes such as enclosure were not new, and that in areas remote from population centres there was limited change. There were also some very precise explorations of change backed up by a good range and depth of knowledge, particularly in the case of banking and insurance. Other issues that were frequently cited included water meadows, crop rotation, new draperies, the impact of French and Dutch migration (although the frame knitting machine was sometimes mis-cited as a Dutch invention, rather than an English one which found its way to France after the patent for its use was rejected in England), the triangular trade and the trade of the East India Company. Where candidates were clearly able to focus the material they had towards consideration of change across the period they were successful, and a good number critically explored this with consideration of how widespread changes were across sectors or geographically, across the time period, or with quantitative considerations, such as the value to the economy or numbers employed.

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. Extract 1's arguments concerning William's resistance to limitations on the monarch's authority and the limited nature of religious toleration, whereas Extract 2 emphasises the growing significance of parliament and the implications of financial developments.

Where candidates were less successful, this tended to be (i) limited use of contextual knowledge, or offering valid contextual knowledge, but with limited linkage to the discussion of the views, or (ii) a tendency to describe and explain the extracts and see them more as sources of information, rather than attempt to discuss and assess the arguments they offered. Thankfully very few responses became side-tracked in an attempted analysis of the provenance of the extracts.

Candidates' knowledge and understanding of issues was generally sound and varied. The vast majority were able to identify the conflicting arguments of Coward and Vallance, and a good number built their success on establishing the essential differences at the outset of the response, giving a sense of early structure and coherence to their responses. A good number also made use of select phrases in and quotations from the extracts that could be developed by candidates. The vast majority avoided previously seen problems of neglecting the extracts at the expense of own knowledge, e.g. producing a response where contextual knowledge leads and where a phrase from the extract is then added on by way of support. Rather, the majority were extract led, identifying and attempting discussion of these views. 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 end, 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.

Paper Summary

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 in order to justify their judgements
- Focus carefully on the second-order concept targeted in the question
- Give consideration to 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 where when responses:

- 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