



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

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

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1H: Britain transformed, 1918–97

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## PE report 8H10 1H

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

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 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 a popular choice with candidates in Section A of the paper, and was generally well answered, producing a wide range of response, with the majority reaching the higher two levels. Most candidates were able to offer some analysis and support on the importance of the given factor – the impact of the Second World War – set against other factors. The most commonly examined aspects of the wartime experience included rationing, evacuation, the Blitz and the Beveridge Report; somewhat less frequently found was consideration of issues such as the establishment of the Emergency Medical Service, the role played by Labour politicians in domestic government and the extent to which collectivist notions took hold in those serving their nation, both at home and abroad.

With regards to other factors, consideration was given to the experience of the 'hunger years' of the 1930s, the influence of key individuals such as Beveridge, Bevan and Attlee, and the election of the Labour Government in 1945. One discriminating factor in the quality of responses was an ability to convincingly link material to the conceptual demands of the question, e.g. demonstrate through an analysis how experiences such as evacuation fostered support for a welfare state, or at the highest levels, explore the extent to which the likes of support for the implementation of schemes to tackle the 'five evils' was borne out of both the wartime experience and other contributing factors, such as the events of the 1930s. Some responses demonstrated good understanding of the development of the welfare state, but were less convincing in consistently focusing this on the demands of the question. Stronger responses were able to identify factors, and clearly explore the causal relationship between these and the welfare state.

## Question 2

This was the less popular option in Section A, though the majority of candidates were successful in responding to the demands of the question and offered responses which reached the higher levels. One of the main determinants of success was the extent to which the response engaged with the conceptual focus of the question, particularly the given factor of economic influences less successful responses tended to lack clear focus on this, and/or the issue of social change. A minority were also less clear in focusing on the given timeframe of the 1950s and 1960s, with references to the inter-war period and the 1970s.

When considering the given factor, issues such as rising real wages and increased disposable income, the relative cost of consumer goods, and the economic aspects of “teenage culture”, changing fashions and improvements for women were also discussed, though seldom together. Whilst relevant and accurate contextual knowledge was clearly evident, there was little analysis of how economic influences were linked to social change. The most commonly offered alternatives were the impact of legislation, the growth of liberal attitudes, and the impact of technology and mass media.

Responses in the lower levels tended to produce narrative accounts of describing social changes or economic issues. More secure responses engaged more with the question’s focus and generally provided a broader range of detailed and relevant contextual knowledge. The strongest responses managed to fully understand the demands of the question; specific examples of economic influences were highlighted, which were clearly linked to an exploration of how this impacted on social change, and the relative impact of different factors, over the stated period.

### Question 3

Question 3 was the more popular of the two within Section B, and produced a wide range of responses. The majority of candidates were able to select from a range of issues and focus on the British political landscape. Commonly considered issues included the decline of the Liberal Party, the rise of the Labour Party, the continued significance of the Conservative Party, and the advent of consensus over welfare and economic policy, along with related issues such as the expansion of the franchise, the significance of the Westminster system in effectively producing a two-party system, and the extent to which different economic and political priorities and policies featured at different times. Where candidates kept such material focused on the conceptual demands of the question, they were able to have success.

Less successful responses often had some knowledge and understanding of issues, but lost focus on the question or offered limited chronological range, e.g. cases where responses detailed the decline of the Liberals in the 1920s with limited extension beyond this. In some other cases, candidates tended to describe relevant material, at times in good depth, but with relatively limited linkage to continuity/change.

Stronger responses again reflected good understanding, and whilst they often had detailed contextual knowledge, they were often more selective in their deployment of this towards an assessment of the degree to which there was continuity/change across the wider period. Many responses were successful in reaching the higher levels by organising material around, say, three sections or themes, and within each, examining an issue which covered a broad span of time, exploring arguments for and against, and reaching judgement on the extent to which things remained the same in relation to that particular theme.

#### Question 4

Question 4 was the less popular of the two within Section B. At the higher end, there was an impressive knowledge of the contrasts between affluent areas and those experiencing the decline of the staple industries, and a strong understanding of the variation in living standards across different regions and sectors. The strongest responses were often able to explore regional differences and other features, examining their significance in relation to quality of life. In terms of other issues considered, the impact of both wars, the development of the welfare state, and the impact of broader economic fluctuations were considered. With regards to the latter, a small number did offer accounts that reflected more the US rather than the British experience.

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 significance of regional differences, and other appropriate issues. The main discriminating factors in the success of responses was the range and depth of knowledge, particularly with regards to addressing the question's timeframe, and 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 significance were most successful. Less successful responses, often did not give sufficient attention to the question's chronological demands. There tended to be a more detailed emphasis on the impact of the First World War, and earlier aspects of the inter-war period.

## Question 5

Most candidates were able to access the higher 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, precisely focused on the specific question of reducing the role of the state. Most candidates were able to identify the differences between Extract 1 and Extract 2, recognising and drawing on the arguments of Pugh in Extract 1, which emphasises the Thatcher governments success in privatising various state owned industries, selling council houses and reducing local government, set against Murphy in Extract 2, who emphasises how much of the supposed reduction was replaced by central government or quango, or how the Thatcher government's failed in its aim to engender an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the British public.

The vast majority of candidates were able to demonstrate understanding of the extracts. A common approach being to address each of the extracts individually before a judgement was reached, although many stronger responses adopted an approach which allowed for more direct comparison of the views, highlighting differences and integrating relevant contextual knowledge to examine issues before reaching supported judgements. Candidates were also able to identify and develop a range of relevant factors, reflecting a sound understanding of the key issues and areas of debate. However, as could be expected from such a divisive political figure, some responses were one-sided and, in some cases, scathing of Thatcher and her policies; a small number of candidates had a preconceived idea of Thatcher, and in some cases this limited the analysis of the range of arguments offered in the extracts. There were some instances, though only a limited number of cases, where responses attempted to evaluate the extracts for utility or reliability.

Less success responses tended to either focus solely on the content of the extracts, or in small number of cases, neglect the extracts and offer a response more suited to AO1. In less successful responses, when the extracts were addressed, it tended to be to paraphrase, or treat the content of the extracts superficially. Consequently, there was little evaluative analysis to reach developed judgements. The majority of candidates were able to access the middle and higher 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. Overall, candidates had a sound bank of knowledge to draw on and there was a secure understanding of the conceptual focus of the question. There was generally good integration of knowledge, with this being used more to interrogate the arguments within the extracts and reach judgements. Responses which made consideration of the argument and evidence within the extracts central to their responses, applying their contextual knowledge to consider the validity of the arguments offered, were more successful.

## 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