



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel
In GCE History (8HI0/2F)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2F.1: India, c1914-48: the road to independence

Option 2F.2: South Africa, 1948-94: from apartheid state to 'rainbow nation'

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates once more engaging effectively across the ability range in summer examination series of the AS Level Paper 2 AS Level Paper 8HI02F, which covers the options India c1914-48 (8HI02F.1) and South Africa 1948-94 (8HI02F.2).

The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory two-part question for the option studied, each part based on one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts – cause, consequence, change/continuity, similarity/difference and significance.

Most candidates managed their time effectively and answered all the questions. It is important to realise that Section A and Section B questions may be set from any part of any Key Topic, and, as a result, full coverage of the specification is important. Some candidates struggled with precise and accurate knowledge to support their responses. Handwriting remains a significant issue for examiners – and this year, the impression was that there was an increasing number of scripts that posed issues in this. Credit can only be given for what can be read. Some scripts are very challenging in the demands they make of examiners trying to decipher what the candidate is saying. Abbreviations, e.g. gov instead of government, should be avoided.

Performance was comparative to previous series. Most candidates coped well with Section A. Candidates demonstrated that they are able to comprehend, select and summarise from the source material. It appeared this year that a greater number of candidates than previously did not direct their comments to the focus of the enquiry. Most candidates are able to make relevant comments using the information provided in the provenance. However, there appeared to be more candidates than usual who did not pay much attention to the caption of the sources. Information that was provided in the caption was contradicted by the content of the response, e.g. ascribing an inaccurate role to an individual who had been correctly identified in the caption. This clearly impacts on the ability to produce an effective response. It continues to be the case that some candidates are still not clear on what is meant by ‘value’ and ‘weight’ in the context of source analysis and evaluation. It is important to note that Question 1a/2a focuses on value and no marks are awarded for examining the shortcomings of the source. Some candidates wasted valuable time dealing with this. Performance by some candidates in Section A was once again affected by the absence of the detailed knowledge base required to draw upon contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources. In answering Question 1b/2b, the best responses come from candidates who have concentrated on the focus of the question and draw inferences, explaining and supporting this with appropriate contextual knowledge.

In Section B, in this series, there were very few wholly descriptive essays that were devoid of analysis. The majority of responses were soundly structured. However, candidates should be clear as to which second order concepts are being addressed in the answer that is being tackled. The most common weakness in Section B essays was a lack of knowledge and especially precise knowledge applied to the question. It continues to be the case that some candidates go outside the chronological parameters of the question

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Q1a

It was disappointing to note that a number of candidates did not focus on the specific enquiry targeted in this question. They chose rather to generically discuss the content of the source, making it difficult to achieve in level 3. There were also some answers seen that spent more than half the response commenting on what the issues with the source were. As this is a value question, this is not required and garners no credit. Where candidates focused on the enquiry, supported inferences from the source and developed using contextual knowledge whilst also evaluating the value of the source, it was possible to achieve level 3.

Q1b

A number of candidates lacked secure knowledge of Bose's relationship with the Axis Powers, and this led to inaccurate conclusions about both the reliability and the content of the source, e.g. claiming that Bose had no relationship with Nazi Germany. There were some candidates who appeared to think that Britain and the USA were Axis Powers. A significant minority of candidates appeared not to appreciate that the USA was engaged in fighting a war against the Axis Powers, with some arguing that the source was unreliable because it was intended for entertainment purposes, despite the information provided in the caption. Where candidates had sufficient contextual knowledge, they were able to use this to good effect in responding directly to the question.

Q2a

Strong answers clearly understood the source and focused on value. However, a significant minority showed little awareness of the focus of the enquiry and discussed the Pass Laws in general terms rather than considering their impact on black South Africans. Some candidates simply used contextual knowledge to respond to the question with only limited use being made of what the source was saying.

Q2b

It is very important that candidates do read the question, the caption and the source carefully. Some candidates thought the question was about the early 1960s rather than early 1960. Some candidates read 'autobiography' rather than 'biography' and then commented as if this were an autobiography. Some very effective answers were seen to this question, but a minority of candidates moved away from a secure focus to over-emphasis on issues of more limited relevance, e.g. the divisions between the ANC and PAC or an over-detailed view of the events of Sharpeville with limited linkage to the content of the source.

Q3

This was the most popular question in this section of the paper. Stronger candidates discussed the stated factor effectively and went on to offer some valid counter arguments, such as the impact of Amritsar and the 1919 Government of India Act. Weaker answers often lacked sufficient substantive knowledge to develop an effective analysis. Some responses strayed well beyond 1919, for which no credit could be awarded.

Q4

This was the least popular question in this section of the paper. Candidates who tackled this question often wanted to use it as an opportunity to provide a description of the events at Amritsar, which is outside the chronological parameters of the question. There was some tendency to engage in a descriptive approach and, somewhat surprisingly in light of the fact that this is a mainstream issue, not all those attempting this question had a secure knowledge base on which to draw.

Q5

This question was slightly more popular than question 4. Where candidates were able to draw upon sufficient relevant knowledge, they were able to use it to good effect to address the question. However, it was disappointing to note that some candidates were not able to draw on relevant and accurate knowledge, either making generalised statements which lacked sufficient depth or confusing the events of this period with those of another period or simply not knowing what happened at the Conferences and who the attendees were.

Q6

This was the most popular question in this section of the paper. There were some impressive answers where candidates were able to deploy an outstanding knowledge base to address the focus of the question fully, using developed and sophisticated analysis. However, there were also candidates who did not understand the focus of the

question and who directed their response to a description of events that happened in the 1950s and 1960s, with some even going on to describe events at Soweto. There were also some who used this as an opportunity to describe events from the mid-19th century onwards, with only limited linkage to the question focus.

Q7

This was the least popular question in this section of the paper. Most candidates were able to identify a number of the domestic challenges that the National Party faced in the year 1968-83, e.g. the Soweto Uprising, opposition, economic problems. There was a variety of approaches in dealing with the question, but most commonly domestic challenges were set against non-domestic challenges, e.g. international pressure. Some effective responses were seen that took this approach. Weaker responses tended to go beyond the chronological parameters of the question.

Q8

This question was slightly more popular than Q7. Most candidates were able to identify the ways in which international pressure or isolation of South Africa was an important reason in Botha's decision to negotiate. Stronger candidates developed their analysis further, often offering internal pressures on Botha as a counter factor.

Paper Summary

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

Section A

Value of Source Question (1(a)/2(a))

- Candidates must make valid inferences rather than simply paraphrase the source
- Candidates should focus inferences, contextual support and explanations on the focus of the enquiry
- Candidates should be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source. It is not sufficient to repeat the knowledge that is contained in the source
- Candidates should move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source, e.g. look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Candidates should avoid writing about the limitations of the source when assessing its value to the enquiry.

Weight of Source Question (1(b)/2(b))

- Candidates should be prepared to assess the weight of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience and be aware of the values and concerns of that audience
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to use contextual knowledge to support/challenge statements and claims made in the source
- Candidates should consider omissions from the source material only where it is apparent that there is a deliberate decision to exclude something, or the ignorance of the author has led to omission
- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, candidates should take account of the weight that can be given to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose.

Section B

Essay questions

- Candidates should take a few minutes to plan the answer before beginning to write the response
- Candidates must revise thoroughly and ensure that they have good knowledge to draw upon in addressing the essay question. Candidates must provide more precise factual details in support of their arguments. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Candidates are advised to pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (for e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Candidates should pay more careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing and use them throughout the essay to prevent deviation from the central issues and concepts. Equally, candidates should be aware that simply restating the words of the Q does not amount to an analysis
- It is a good idea to address the factor in the question where given. This makes it easier to consider relative significance. It is also important to ensure, where appropriate, that a counter argument is provided
- Candidates should try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.