



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel

In GCE History (8HI0/2G)

Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2G.1: The rise and fall of fascism in Italy, c1911–46

Option 2G.2: Spain, 1930–78:
republicanism, Francoism and the re-
establishment of democracy

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2025

Publications Code 8HI0_2G_2506_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2025

Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in summer examination series of the AS Level Paper 2- which covers the options The rise and fall of fascism in Italy, c1911-46 (2G.1), and Spain, 1930-78: republicanism, Francoism and the re-establishment of democracy (2G.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.

Performance compared favourably to previous series with most coping well with Section A. Candidates demonstrated that they could comprehend, select and summarise from the source material. Most could make relevant comments using the provenance. However, 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. Candidates are well advised to avoid wasting time on this. In this series, performance by some candidates in Section A was 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, some candidates concentrated their use of contextual knowledge on what was missing from the source. This is a legitimate approach where there is reason to judge that there is a deliberate omission or an omission through ignorance, but it is not legitimate where a candidate refers to the omission of events that had not happened at the time of the production of the source. The best responses come from candidates who have concentrated on the focus of the question, for example 'significance', 'reasons', 'seriousness' etc. and draw inferences, explain and support this with contextual knowledge. A significant proportion of candidates evaluate the sources in a vacuum and draw inferences and support with context that is not related to the focus of the enquiry. Sharper focus will help candidates to make the most of their time and produce effective answers. Most candidates did use their time effectively and, although a few responses were quite brief, there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions both sections. The ability range was diverse, but the design of the paper catered for all abilities.

In Section B, in this series, most responses had an analytical focus and there were very few that were wholly descriptive essays which were devoid of analysis and, for the most part, responses were soundly structured. The most common weakness in Section B essays was a lack of knowledge and especially precise knowledge applied to the question. Some candidates did not focus on the date range set in the question. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and note the specified dates before planning and writing their answers. This avoids mistakes that undermine performance. It is also 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 enormously important.

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

Question 1(a)

The vast majority of candidates were entered for 2G.1 and answered this question. Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about the nature of the Corporate State. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about control of the workers and its capitalist nature. The best answers developed the inferences with well-selected context to establish their validity. Candidates would do well to remember that to achieve level 3 contextual knowledge does need to be used to explain and develop the inferences drawn from the source and not just to provide knowledge that expands upon detail in the source. Many candidates used their contextual knowledge of the Corporate State to explain Mussolini's intention to develop a third way that had all the advantages and none of the problems of capitalism and communism and applied this to the inferences that could be drawn from the source about favouring business as opposed to workers and hence were able to draw judgements about the value of the source.

Most candidates were also able to make good use of the provenance to explain the value of the source, citing the significance of the official nature of the Palazzo Vidoni Pact, which had been negotiated with the Confederation of Industry. It is important that candidates go beyond the stereotypical claims of a source being produced 'at the time' and therefore a 'primary source'. These comments do not in themselves provide any explanation of value and do not achieve out of level 1. In addition, those candidates who discussed the limitations could not be rewarded for that part of their answer as it is not the focus of part a) responses.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates understood the source material and were able to select from it to develop some inferences about the impact of the Libyan War on Italy. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that success in the war came at huge economic and human cost. Many candidates analysed the longer-term impact on the economy and on Italy's international reputation. It is important that candidates do address the question set. Some candidate wandered from the focus of the question and discussed the outbreak of the First World War or Mussolini's foreign policy.

There were some effective answers that weighed up the strengths and limitations of the source and used this as a basis to reach a judgement about the weight that should be attached to the source for the enquiry. Although some candidates attached free-standing knowledge to the response, many did use secure knowledge, particularly to challenge the claims in the source and in some cases to carry out a thorough interrogation of the evidence. With this source, candidates were able to construct successful interrogations of the content, e.g. the war was caused by 'Italian money-bags', and challenge that with their own knowledge of Giolitti's political motivations to go to war. The establishment of weight is very dependent upon candidates using their contextual knowledge to test the claims in the source. Candidates who only use knowledge to expand on the content of the source remain in level 2 for that bullet point.

In the most effective answers, candidates were able to use the provenance of the source in conjunction with the content of the source to develop criteria to judge the weight of the source and test this with claims in the source. A minority of candidates made some questionable assumptions about the source and presented them in a very stereotypical way, e.g., source is valuable because he was there etc. Many candidates correctly identified the ideological issue arising in a source authored by a leading Russian Bolshevik and published in the Bolshevik's own newspaper, giving an opinion that was most decidedly hostile to liberalism, imperialism and capitalism and used this to discuss how objective the source could be. However, many candidates simply fell back on claims of bias. In level 4, bullet point 3 requires candidates to use criteria that are 'justified and applied' to evaluate the source. Where candidates identify bias or subjective views within the source, it is important that they refer to them specifically in their answer to support their evaluation. The very best responses were able to consider strengths and limitations and then use their conclusions to explain weight in terms of the ways in which an historian could use the source.

Question 2 (a)

A small minority of candidates were entered for 2G.2. Most were able to select and summarise points from the source. Candidates who offered relevant contextual knowledge that was added to the source material and typically scored in level 2. In level 3, candidates demonstrated an ability to draw inferences from the source, e.g. by controlling its access to information, Franco's regime was able to control Spanish society. Most candidates were able to make some use of the provenance in their assessment of value. Typically, candidates referred to its official nature as well as Franco's authorisation as strengths.

Question2 (b)

Most candidates understood the source and could select some relevant points that they supported by adding some contextual knowledge. but did not use it to interrogate the source. At level 3, candidates were able to draw out inferences, e.g. Republican women had loose morals, and support them by material selected from the source, as well as make valid comments about the reliability of the source based on its provenance. A minority of candidates achieved level 4. This was done by interrogating the source evidence using selected knowledge and considering how far claims could be accepted.

Question 3

About a third of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to consider Italy's wartime performance and demonstrate good command of their knowledge, with references to improvements in military command, industrial output and performance on the battlefield. Some candidates were able to refer to continuing weaknesses, such as limited access to fuel and raw materials, low morale and dependence on allies for military victory. Some candidates strayed from the focus of the question and examined the post-war crisis that was not relevant to the question.

The best answers were able to establish criteria for assessing how successful the performance was overall, e.g. considering the impact of changes and how far it was sustained.

Question 4

This question was the least popular on 2G.1 but it did draw some very effective answers. The best responses were tightly focused on the extent to which Mussolini controlled the fascist organisations and were able to reach judgement on whether his control was limited. These responses focused on a range of fascist organisations and groups, including the ras, the Grand Council of Fascism, the squads and the MSVN. However, some candidates did not read the question carefully and focused instead on non-fascist organisations such as the Church or industrialists, and this could not be credited in the higher levels of the mark scheme. It is important when selecting an essay that candidates make sure they know what the question is asking them to address. Careful planning is the key to success here.

Question 5

This was the most popular question on the paper, focusing on Italy's international standing from 1935-40 and requiring candidates to assess whether it declined. The best responses considered the evidence of decline in the collapse of the Stresa Front, the limited success in Abyssinia – especially the length of time it took to defeat a much weaker opponent and the cost of maintaining the captured territory – Italy's withdrawal from the League, its relatively poor performance in Spain and the cost of intervening in the Spanish Civil War, and finally Italy's decision to stay neutral in 1939 as a result of its economic and military weakness. This evidence was counteracted with the Rome-Berlin Axis, the conquest of Abyssinia, the Mussolini's role in the Munich Agreement, the conquest of Albania and Italy's entry to the Second World War and its gains in 1940. At level 4, candidates showed they were able to weigh up the evidence and reach a judgement. Some candidates did not look carefully enough at the parameters of the question and wrote extensively about Italy's performance in the Second World War. Material extending beyond 1940, could not be credited.

Question 6

There were no answers to this question.

Question 7

Three candidates entered for 2G.2 answered this question. Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the use of terror in the Spanish civil war. The best responses were tightly focused on the concept of similarity/difference and were able to make judgements about how similar they were. Most candidates referred to similarities in the cruelty and the targeting of perceived political enemies. In contrast, candidates referred to the differences in scale and time and then used the comparison to draw judgements.

Question 8

This was the most popular essay question in 2G.2. Most candidates were able to address the question of the role of tourism in the development of social tensions in Spain in 1956-75 and to consider a range of factors, including the impact on Spanish culture, the employment opportunities for young people especially, the impact on rural communities and on housing in coastal towns and cities. The best answers were able to establish criteria for assessing significance and then assess the role of tourism in the light of these criteria and consider the relative significance of the threat of the rise of socialism. Some candidates had good knowledge that they used effectively to support their response. However, there were also candidates whose knowledge was limited and imprecise.

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 be more prepared to

- Make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Focus inferences, contextual support and explanations on the focus of the enquiry
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- 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
- 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. 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
- 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 (avoid criticising sources for not mentioning events that had not happened at the time the source was produced)
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose.

Section B

Essay questions

Candidates should

- Revise thoroughly and ensure that they have good knowledge to draw upon in addressing the essay question. Candidates must provide more factual details in support of their arguments. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Take a few minutes to plan answers before they begin to write their response
- 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
- 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
- Address the factor in the question where given. This makes it easier to consider relative significance.
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.

