



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel
In GCE History (9HI0/04)

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Principal Moderator Report

9HI04 Coursework

June 2023

Introduction

This is the second year that centres have entered candidates for the coursework element of the specification since the disruption of the pandemic. It is clear that centres have responded positively to the 2022 report. Many centres continue to use Edexcel's coursework advisory service regarding appropriate topics, interpretations and reading, and while this is not obligatory, it meant the candidates in those centres were completing coursework tasks that fitted the requirements stated in the specification. It should be noted that this does not mean that centres who did not use the service submitted tasks that were not appropriate, though in some cases questions were too broad, and this would have been spotted and raised as an issue via the advisory service. It was also evident that many centres had completed and attended the online training course (modules 1-4), provided by Pearson, regarding task setting and applying the mark scheme. This stood them in good stead when it came to supporting and guiding their students and in the assessment their work.

Team leaders reported some concerns with the application of the agreed moderation standard by moderators, and where there were concerns the centre work was reviewed by the Team Leader, and, if necessary the Principal Moderator, in order to ensure fair moderation.

The purpose of external moderation is two-fold. Firstly, it ensures that all centres have applied the requirements of the specification, completed the required paperwork, supported and guided candidates appropriately and applied the generic mark scheme. Secondly, it ensures that centres are brought into line with the agreed standard of how the mark scheme should be applied, so there is consistency across all centres. The adjustments of centre marks up or down, or marks remaining the same, is a reflection of the application of the agreed standard.

This was also the second time that centres have uploaded electronically the candidate sample and moderators have viewed the candidate work electronically.

Centre administration

- Most coursework samples were uploaded on time for their moderator to access, and there were very few that failed to include work from the highest and lowest scoring candidates if they were not part of the pre-selected sample. However, some centres fail to do this and a request for a further upload was required.
- The Specification requires candidates to include a word count. Best practice was seen by moderators when the word count was included at the end of the piece of work, or as an accumulative word count on each page. Either method is acceptable. It was noted by moderators that some candidates did not include a word count at all. It is important that centres check this and ensure a word count is on candidates' work.
- Most centres adhered to the word recommendations, and the further guidance provided by Edexcel, where a candidate was either over or under, and this was usually commented on by the centre. Centres are advised that in all levels of the mark scheme the statement 'it is not concise' is a reference to those candidates who do not operate within word recommendations, and, therefore, that is the mark range that should be applied when the 'best fit' level has been determined.

The resource records sheet still appears to be problematic for some centres:

- Some were 'signed off' by the teacher concerned on the same day. Such centres had failed to appreciate that regular monitoring of the resource records is a necessary part of the validation process. Furthermore, they had clearly missed the opportunity of utilising the resource records for mentoring their students as their research progressed.
- Some students (and therefore their teachers) clearly failed to appreciate how the resource records should be used. There were instances where only the three selected works appeared on the resource records, but the submission was accompanied by an extensive bibliography.
- Moderators reported that many centres had indicated on the front cover sheet the levels awarded for each of the bullet points, and then arrived at a 'best fit' overall level and mark. However, some centres merely put a total mark and a general summative comment about the piece of work. The former method assists in the moderation process very much, while the latter method makes it difficult to see how the overall mark has been arrived at. Centres are advised that candidates do not always operate completely within one level (particularly candidates at Level 3 and Level 4) and more often display qualities across two levels (and sometimes even three), so a breakdown of bullet points and levels is very helpful in understanding the mark awarded.

Standard of work

The standard of work was generally good, and the majority of candidates were able to engage, with varying degrees of success, with their selected interpretations. Weaker candidates were those who had selected text-books as one or more of their chosen works, had selected factors relating to an event rather than significantly different interpretations or who simply reiterated the interpretations in their own words. The higher scoring candidates demonstrated sound evidence of wider reading and were confident in challenging historians' different interpretations with their own research.

A significant number of candidates followed a set formula: analysis (or attempted analysis) of the views of the three chosen historians, followed by comparison/cross reference with other historians. Some candidates tended to use the chosen works as sources to illustrate rather than interrogate their argument.

Some points, however, still need to be made:

- A sizeable number of candidates engaged with schools of thought, particularly when dealing with 20th century Germany and the Cold War. They selected works that were representative of the different schools and, obviously, presented different interpretations. However, some focused on the schools of thought themselves, rather than the specific interpretations of the three historians, and this weakened their responses. This is not an exercise in simply identifying that a historian is an 'intentionalist', functionalist, or 'revisionist'. That in itself is not sufficient, and often sent candidates down a path of description rather than an analysis and evaluation of interpretations and how they differ.
- Most candidates struggled with bullet 4 in finding and applying 'appropriate criteria'. Some used the criteria on the Edexcel web-site – and used it not very successfully; others invented their own check list, and still more assessed the validity of the interpretations by testing them against their own reading/research. These latter methods were generally the more successful. Centres need to work with their students in relation to thinking about the criteria by which interpretations can be judged. This is not something that can be simply taught, as each coursework task can be different, and it is up to the student to determine valid criteria. For centres where candidates all do the same questions, this raises a challenging teaching issue.
- In many centres, candidates all researched interpretations of the same topic. It is important that centres ensure, nevertheless, that this constitutes independent

research, particularly as many used the same basic reading list, selecting, usually, three from the same five 'works' on which to focus.

Annotation and marking

Marking by most centres was generally accurate and there were relatively few centres where moderation resulted in an adjustment of marks to the whole cohort. Many centres annotated their students' work thoroughly, using the wording of the mark scheme and showing where they had identified specific levels of the different bullets. Their summaries on each candidate's authentication sheet gave a brief outline of performance on each of the five bullet points. This practice is to be commended and encouraged. There were some centres, too, where internal moderation was not required, but it had been undertaken, presumably as a precaution. Again, a practice to be commended.

There are, however, still some problems:

- Where marking was inaccurate, it was usually in the assessment of bullets 3 and 4. There was a tendency to reward work at level 5 where there was no real understanding demonstrated of basis of the difference in the arguments presented, and the nature of the historical debate. The problems with bullet 4 have already been touched upon. These impacted on marking in that teachers had difficulty in identifying where, and in what ways, criteria were established and applied.
- A small number of centres failed to annotate the work of their candidates. It was thus tricky – and hard work – for moderators to establish just why specific levels and marks had been awarded on each of the five bullets. It would be politic to remind centres that moderation is not re-marking, but an assessment of the accuracy of the centre's marking.
- There were several instances where the students' work had clearly been marked by two different people, and where there was no indication that any internal moderation had taken place.

Overall, performance by candidates and their teachers represents continued development of the assessment requirements of this particular component.