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Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
History (WHI04/1C)

Paper 4: International Study with Historical
Interpretations

Option 1C: The World Divided: Superpower
Relations, 1943-90

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Unit 4: International Study with Historical Interpretations

Option 1C: The World Divided: Superpower Relations, 1943–90

Introduction

General Comments

Many of the comments made in the 2023 Summer series Examiner Report are pertinent to the 2024 January series. It would be advisable to read the extended general comments in the 2023 Summer Examiner Report that discuss candidate achievement in the light of the return to 2019 conditions. It would also be useful to refer to the 'Please note' section below.

As might be expected for the WHI04 papers, the January series had a much smaller cohort of candidates than for the previous Summer series. Many of the candidates produced well-written and thoughtful responses that showed good selection and deployment of knowledge, as well good conceptual understanding and application of skills. Most of these responses were rewarded at Level 4 of the mark scheme but there were some responses clearly rewardable within Level 5.

However, there was an indication that some of the progress, in regard to aspects of knowledge, conceptual understanding and application of skills, noted in the Summer series Examiner report was less noticeable for this January series. Of particular concern, were the following: a tendency to write generic answers related to themes within this Unit rather than exploring the specific question asked (Section A and Section B); long pieces of contextual information that gave a background to the focus rather than addressing and/or relating contextual knowledge to the specific focus (Section A and Section B); writing responses that mirrored the layout of the indicative content; not using the Interpretation extracts to answer Question 1. Also, there is a continued concern for Option 1C over the deployment of confused chronology. There were some candidates who had clearly identified the time periods in the question on the question paper or at the top of their responses but then wrote about a completely different time period altogether.

With regard to the concerns, previous Examiner Reports have noted that: good responses usually focus on the specific wording of the question and the second-order concept that is being targeted; contextual information from before the start period of the Unit in 1943 is useful but that good responses often give brief details and develop the material in relation to the focus of the question; the mark scheme clearly states particularly for Section A, where the mark scheme requires integration of elements, that the layout of indicative content is not a model writing

frame; good responses to Question 1 are usually those that build the response around the discussion 'set up' by the two Interpretation extracts.

Very few candidates failed to attempt both Sections. Although, in a few cases candidates merely copied or heavily paraphrased the Interpretation extracts.

Please note: that it is recommended that centres look at a selection of Principal Examiner Reports from across the different options within WHI04 1A-1D and previous series to get an overall sense of examiner feedback, centre approaches and candidate achievement. It is also highly recommended that centres read the general Introduction and Section A and B introductions in the Principal Examiner Reports for June 2017.

These generic introductions outline the assessment requirements for WHI04 and give an indication of the skills required.

Centres may wish to refer to the *Getting Started* guide that is to be found on the IAL History Pearson Edexcel website. It is also useful to take note of the indicative content in the mark schemes.

Further resources that may be of use are the *Applying Criteria* and *Developing Student's Understanding of Historical Interpretations* documents to be found on the Pearson Edexcel History GCE website along with the Principal Examiner Reports for Paper 1 of the Pearson Edexcel History GCE. The *Applying Criteria* document gives guidance with regard to the application of criteria for the different AOs tested at A level. The GCE Paper 1 Reports will be particularly useful for exemplification of AO3 interpretations skills (but please be aware that there are slight differences within the general Level descriptors and that AO1 is assessed for IAL). Exemplification documents are also available on the Pearson Edexcel History IAL website.

General candidate performance on each Section and specific performance on individual questions for Paper 1C are considered below.

Section A

As with the general comments, it would be advisable to read the introductory section to Section A of the Summer 2023 series. There were a fair number of candidates who heavily paraphrased the Extracts or wrote in such a way that it was difficult to determine whether points were being developed or just being copied out with some connecting phrases. Those candidates who are aware of the need to develop a discussion of the views of the authors/Extracts tend to be rewarded from mid-Level 3 onwards. The best responses refer to the views of the authors within the Extracts or the views within the Extracts.

Q1. Question 1 required candidates to analyse and evaluate the two Extracts provided while deploying knowledge related to the issues raised in the Extracts

to determine whether Stalin was to blame for 'the post-Second World War breakdown in co-operation between the Big Three wartime allies'. The author of Extract 1, C Quigley, put forward Stalin's intransigent reaction to Allied post-war policies as essentially to blame for the breakdown. The author of Extract 2, W A Williams, suggested that Stalin was not clearly against post-war co-operation and that the views and actions of Truman were more readily to blame. Most candidates who used the Extracts were able to develop the views in the Extracts and to use their knowledge to discuss Stalin's responsibility in relation to his own aims and objectives and those of Truman.

It is worth noting that the Key Topic 1 interpretation covers explanations for the outbreak and development of the Cold War over a 10-year period. Not all enquiries will be focused on the outbreak of the Cold War but may look at specific developments. Here the enquiry was specifically focused on the breakdown in co-operation of the wartime allies and not generically on the outbreak of the Cold War. Many responses read more as 'stand alone' essays on the origins of the Cold War from 1917 to 1947 and these were often the responses that barely referred to the Extracts. Candidates need to be aware of the long-term context but do not need to know in detail. Knowledge should mainly be deployed in relation explaining and validating or challenging the views and information in the Extracts; this then enables candidates to integrate their knowledge successfully. If candidates identify other factors or information that are vital to the discussion that are not really highlighted by the authors then good responses use the knowledge to support the discussion of the views in the sources rather just asserting that there are missing elements and describing them (see Level 2 descriptor).

Many responses some able to show clear understanding of the basis of the views being outlined in the Extracts. For Extract 1, responses referred to American willingness to continue to co-operate, Stalin 'closing the door' (line 7) after the Marshall Plan, Soviet refusal to accept international nuclear negotiations and Soviet expansionism. For Extract 2, responses referred to Stalin's acceptance of the need to reach post-war agreement, Stalin's lack of desire for a Cold War, Truman's attitude on becoming President and the policy decisions he went on to take.

Candidates were able to deploy contextual knowledge to underpin the discussion of the interpretations in the Extract but there was often too much 'stand alone' knowledge about the pre-1943 context. For Extract 1, candidates were able to use their knowledge of Stalin's fears for the security of Soviet Union, the circumstances in Europe in the immediate aftermath of the war and the divisive atmosphere over the development of nuclear weapons. For Extract 2, candidates referred to the economic difficulties faced by the Soviet Union after the war, the impact of the transition from Roosevelt to Truman and the relationship with the British. It is important, however, for candidates clearly to be

aware that, at the time of his 'Iron Curtain' speech, Churchill was no longer the British Prime Minister.

Section B

Please see the comments on chronological awareness that were made in the Summer 2023 series. In this series, there was some clear confusion between the events of 1953-62 and the 1970s and early 1980s.

In section B, Q3 was slightly more popular than Q2.

Q2. Candidates were required to determine the accuracy of the statement that in the years 1953-62, summit meetings and official visit did more to hinder than to help US-Soviet relation. Some candidates attempt to structure the question as an 'other factors question' when the focus was on whether diplomacy was more harmful than helpful to US-Soviet relations. Some responses were also focused almost wholly on diplomacy in the 1970s or related US-Soviet relations in the 1950s with an emphasis on the Cuban Missile Crisis. There were some responses at Level 4 that were able to explore the influence of diplomacy on the relations under Eisenhower and Kennedy. These responses referred to 'summit diplomacy' between 1955 and 1961 and were able to discuss the impact of the Gary Powers incident and the relations between Kennedy and Khrushchev at Vienna.

Q3. Candidates were required to determine whether Mao Zedong had only a limited influence on the shaping of superpower relations in the years 1953-76. The focus of the question was on the role of Mao Zedong and candidates approached the response through a yes/no structure or an 'other factors' structure. It was possible to organise a relevant argument using 'other factors' but responses that just rejected the premise and wrote an explanation of superpower relations in general were unlikely to be rewards more than Level 3. There was some good knowledge shown about the extent of Mao's influence in relation to the Soviet relations and most responses understood how US-Chinese diplomacy in the early 1970s affected the relationship between the three superpowers.

Paper Summary

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

Section A (AO3/AO1)

- Candidates should use the Extracts as the basis of the discussion of the view presented in the enquiry; it is a requirement in relation to AO3. They should understand that focus of the enquiry may refer to a variety of different perspectives related to the outbreak and development of the Cold War.
- Candidates should use the time available to plan their response in relation to the key points of view being outlined in the Extracts in relation to the enquiry focus.
- Candidates should use their own knowledge of the specification content to validate and discuss the interpretations being presented; contextual knowledge should be integrated into the discussion of the Extracts rather than Extracts used to exemplify contextual knowledge.
- Candidates should come to an overall judgement with regard to the view stated in the question; it is not sufficient just to summarise the views presented in the extracts.

Section B (AO1)

- Candidates should organise their argument in relation to the specific focus of the question; they should understand that this may be related to a variety of different second-order concepts and question stems and that not all questions are best served by using an 'other factors' approach.
- Read the wording of the time period of the question very carefully; responses that refer to the wrong time period deploy irrelevant and inaccurate knowledge that does not directly address or only implicitly addresses the question. Secure chronological knowledge enables candidates to produce a logical and coherent answer.
- Candidates should provide more precise contextual knowledge as supporting evidence. Use knowledge to provide evidence to support a sustained evaluation in relation to the conceptual focus of the question.
- Use conclusions to state the judgement reached clearly and to show the relative significance of or the inter-relationship between key issues discussed in the main body of the essay; leave the examiner in no doubt as to what your judgement is and why.

