



Pearson  
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in  
History(WHI02) Paper 1C

## **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](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://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](http://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](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

Summer 2024

Publications Code WHI02\_1C\_2406

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

## Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in summer examination series of the IAS Level Paper WHIO2 1C which covers the option: Russia, 1917–91: From Lenin to Yeltsin. 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 can 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 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 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 dates set in the question. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and note the parameters 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)

Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about the importance of Yeltsin's election as President of the Russian Federation in June 1991. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the development of democracy and capitalism in Russia. However, some candidates did not pay attention to the focus of the question on 'importance' and instead of drawing inferences, merely describe the content. These responses had limited focus on the task and achievement on the levels of the mark scheme was hampered.

The best answers developed the inferences with well-selected context to establish their validity. Candidates would do well to remember that contextual knowledge does need to be used to explain and develop the inferences drawn from the source and not just to provide free-standing knowledge. Many candidates used their contextual knowledge of the failures of the system under Gorbachev and the resounding support that Yeltsin had acquired, especially after resigning from the Party to explain inferences about the importance of his election. These responses accessed level 3 for both bullet points 1 and 2 of the mark scheme. Contextual knowledge used to confirm or expand on the source material can access level 2. It is important that candidates do consider the relevance of the contextual knowledge that they use and target it appropriately. It was disappointing that some candidates had no context to offer, and this did have a depressing impact on the overall mark awarded.

Most candidates were also able to make good use of the provenance to explain the value of the source, citing the relatively objective viewpoint of the British newspaper and the importance that the reporter was in Moscow to get a observe the reactions to Yeltsin's electoral victory and not to receive them filtered through a Soviet news agency. It is important that candidates go beyond the stereotypical claims of a source being produced by someone who was 'there 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 nature of education in Russia in the 1920s. Many candidates made good use of the source to infer that the education system was developed in a more free and experimental form that had been seen under the tsars or would be introduced under Stalin. Candidates drew out inferences about the lack of respect paid to teachers and the empowerment of students as well as the failure of teachers to embrace progressive methods.

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, for example, by considering the suggestion that education had become more experimental and testing it that with their own knowledge that Lunacharsky favoured progressive teaching methods, including learning through play and activities, compared to rote-learning using traditional textbooks or lecturing. 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. Some candidates did not use any contextual knowledge in their evaluation, and this impacted on their overall achievement.

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 as 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 reliable value because it was written at the time etc. Many candidates made good use of the origin of the source and argued that, while it was written in the form of a story and therefore open to changers of fabrication and exaggeration, the author was an educator who had worked with children in both the tsarist and Bolshevik regimes and would therefore have an insight in to the changes in the system. This was used effectively to consider what weight could be ascribed to the source. 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, it is important that they refer to them specifically in their answer to support their evaluation. In this response, the subjectivity of the tone of the claim that the 'school-workers do nothing' could be used to consider weight.

## Question 2

This was overwhelmingly the most popular essay question on the paper. Performance upon it was variable. Most candidates were aware of the focus of the question the main reason why Stalin was able to maintain control over the Soviet Union, but candidates' ability to maintain this focus throughout the answer was varied. Most candidates were able to make some comments on the removal or opponents in government and party, although many had rather imprecise knowledge of this. Most contrasted this cause with other factors such as the wider use of purges in the population, the development of the cult of personality and controls on the practise of religion. Some candidates selected to explore control via Stalin's economic policy which could be legitimately used if tightly focused on controlling the population, but too many candidates became sidetracked on discussing the successes and failures and did not address the question set. This impacted on overall achievement.

## Question 3

There were a number of well-focused responses to this question. Most candidates were able to address the question of the whether Brezhnev's economic policy had many positive results. Most were able to draw on a good range of precise knowledge and some very fine answers were written with candidates achieving secure level 4 for carefully debated responses that established valid criteria and argued their case effectively. These candidates considered both the positive and negative outcomes from Brezhnev's economic policy and used this as the basis for reaching a considered judgement. In considering the positive results, candidates referred to the success in increasing military spending between 1964 and 1970, which enabled the USSR to achieve nuclear parity with the USA, the significant increase in the production of consumer goods, rising living standards and secure employment. They contrasted these achievements with the drain on the economy caused by developing the military-industrial complex, the shortages of basic goods, the need to import grain and the development of a black market. Many candidates developed well supported judgements. Weaker responses tended to have limited knowledge, confuse Brezhnev's policies with those of Khrushchev and write generally about Brezhnev's regime without focus on economic policy.

## Question 4

This was the least popular question and although there were a number of well-focused responses that achieved level 4, some responses were limited in their achievement because they did not have sufficient knowledge to support their responses and enable them to make secure judgements. The best achieving responses were clearly focused on a comparison of Khrushchev's and Gorbachev's approaches to the arts and were able to draw out similarities in their policies to remove restrictions, such as the 'Thaw' and Glasnost. They explored the differences by reference to Khrushchev's reintroduction of restrictions and by their different attitudes to avant-garde art. Careful planning is the key to success in addressing similarity/difference questions. Some candidates wrote two almost separate responses on each leader which limited their opportunity to develop comparisons.

## Paper Summary

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

### Section A

#### Value of Source Question (1(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))

- 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
- 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 must 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 your answer before you begin to write your 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
- It is a good idea to 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.

