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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in  
History(WHI04) Paper 1B

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## Introduction

As with previous series, the candidates for the 2024 series were well-prepared and were able to deploy often extensive knowledge of the period and area of historical interpretation being studied. For detailed feedback on some of the general areas of strength and weakness, it is recommended that centres refer back to the Examiner reports for June 2023 and January 2024. Most of the comments made in these series still apply.

For WHI04 units, the assessment model in Section A asks candidates to evaluate a view in relation to two extracts provided from historians/authors of history and to reach a judgement as to how far they agree with the views presented in the extracts (AO3/AO1). AO3 skills focus on the extract content and the AO1 historical context should be used to validate or challenge the views in the extracts. For Section B, candidates are asked to choose one question from two alternatives and to use their AO1 knowledge and understanding to address the focus of the question in relation to the second-order concept(s) being assessed (causation, consequence, similarity, difference, change, continuity and significance). Both require candidates to write a controlled extended response with an organised argument.

Key areas of note for this series are:

- 1) There continues to be a clear increase in the number of candidates who understand how to approach the Section A Interpretation question. Almost all candidates now understand the requirement to discuss the extracts in relation to the view. However, there are some candidates who still use the extracts as evidence for a Section B style response and so fail to discuss the merits of the views in the extracts. The relative value of the AOs for this question are 20 marks for AO3 skills and 5 marks for AO1 skills.
- 2) It is clear that candidates who plan their answers are able to organise their argument and deploy knowledge that is more precisely selected to substantiate their argument. Candidates do not need to write a response for the whole hour available to them. Those that do, often end up producing very long, sometimes contradictory and less coherent answers than those who can select and deploy sufficient knowledge to further their argument and come to an evaluated judgement. There is no need for candidates to write about everything they know about the focus of the question but to select and deploy with precision. Level 5 for both Sections refers to '*sufficient knowledge... precisely selected*' and in Section B to the argument being '*logical and coherent throughout...communicated with clarity and precision*'.
- 3) As noted in the two previous series, there are fewer candidates who are using the indicative content as model scaffolds for answering questions. There are still some candidates, however, who are defining every word in the question and using phrases in the generic mark scheme rather than developing an argument from the outset. However, formulaic introductions to Section A are now few and far between and some excellent discussion of extracts for their own value is being seen.
- 4) Some responses still dismiss the given factor and write about all the other possible factors without evaluating them in relation to the given factor. It is often difficult with these responses to tell what the original question was and leads to conclusions that do not determine relative significance or come to a judgement about the actual wording of the question. Along the same lines, other responses identify an alternative given factor as being more important or more significant but do not develop valid criteria to explain why this is the case. These responses again often ignore the specific wording of the question in the conclusion and it is difficult to determine what the original question was.

5) Centres are to be commended for the amount of content covered with candidates. Some of the best responses are detailed and interesting in the knowledge deployed. However, the deployment of knowledge often has weaknesses. Many candidates spend a great deal of time explaining the context of the period being assessed rather than directly analysing the key issues and features of the time being assessed. Some context is of course valuable but the questions are focused on the content in the specification. Also, there continues to be a significant number of responses that are chronologically and factually confused leading to arguments that lack logic, coherence and precision. Referring to point 2 above, this is often in responses where the candidate is attempting to write about 'everything they know'.

**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

## Section A

See above for general comments but it was very pleasing to see some excellent Interpretation responses. For WHI04 1B, in particular, there are some very interesting responses appearing that it is a pleasure to read and reward.

It is worth reminding centres that although candidates are evaluating the extent to which the author's views in the Extracts are convincing, this is not a source evaluation exercise. There is no requirement in the specification for candidates to know any historiography surrounding the debate and candidates are not expected to know about the views of specific historians. In some responses, candidates evaluate the provenance of the Extracts. This is not required and can lead to time wasting in writing about the speculated

origins of the books and the author's themselves, for example, making assumptions about nationality and bias. It is very helpful if centres clearly distinguish between AO2 source evaluation in Papers 2 and 3 and the AO3 evaluation of interpretations in Paper 4. One way to do this is to always refer to sources as Sources and interpretations as Extracts or referring to the names of the authors of the Extracts.

Also, candidates do have time to read the Extracts carefully and all the way through. Sometimes candidates only read partial phrases or statements and in doing so infer/suggest views that are actually contradictory to the overall view being presented. As mentioned above, it is not necessary to write for the whole hour available for this Section. Careful reading and planning can lead to a more focused and well organised response.

### Question 1

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 how far they agreed with the view that general war broke out in Europe in 1914 because the decision-makers of the Great Powers were 'rushed into action by the nature of war plans'. The author of Extract 1, W K Storey, put forward the view that both the military and political leaders of Europe were pushed into action by the existence of war plans with complicated pre-determined requirements for mobilisation. The author of Extract 2, J F V Keiger, suggested that it was determined more by the fact that the decisions being made across Europe were invariably overtaken by events.

This question is, however, a case in point of not reading the question and the extracts carefully. Many candidates just referred to the nature of the war plans and did not discuss the suggestion that the nations were rushed into action; a suggestion that is covered from different viewpoints in both Extracts.

It was clear that most candidates had been well prepared for the Key Topic controversy and there was some excellent knowledge of events of the July Crisis. Lower-level responses often answered the question as a general question about factors leading to the outbreak of war, with many focusing on the role of previous crises. While this could clearly be relevant, particularly in relation to why this crisis led to war but others did not, most of these responses tended to write a narrative description or narrative analysis of events from early the 1900s that was difficult to link to the question or Extracts.

For Extract 1, most candidates were able to discuss the role of war plans, particularly those of Germany and France, in relation to the general arms build-up in the years before 1914 and the complex nature of the plans. There is increasing knowledge shown of the ambitions of Russia to create an effective fighting force by 1917. For Extract 2, there was clear evaluation of the alternative view that the decision-makers were overtaken by events. However, there was less well-defined discussion of the events of the July Crisis than expected. Contextual knowledge of the nature of the European alliances and the situation in Europe in 1914 was integrated into responses well. Some candidates were able to select material from both Extract 1 and 2 to highlight the role of France and Germany.

## Section B

Question 2 was more popular than Question 3.

### Question 2

Candidates were required to determine whether a failure to achieve disarmament in the years 1921-34 was the main reason for increasing international tensions in the years 1934-39. Most candidates were aware of attempts to achieve disarmament and were able to explain how their failure led to increasing tensions. The given factor was often discussed in relation to other reasons such as the impact of the Versailles Treaty, the Great Depression, the failure of the League of Nations, the rise of nationalism and the impact of appeasement.

The best responses in Level 4 and Level 5 often explored the relationship between the reasons for failure/nature of failure and the rise of nationalism and were able to link this to increasing tension. At this Level also, there was some good understanding of how the breakdown of the post-war settlement in general and the disparities of power in the 1920s and early 1930s fuelled increasing tensions. There were a significant number of responses at Level 3, and some at Level 2, which displayed good knowledge of events but tended just to explain what happened or describe the attempts at disarmament. Many responses did not really link causes sufficiently to the increasing international tensions, something that could have been remedied with better planning.

### Question 3

Candidates were required to reach a judgement on the statement that the Allied invasion of Italy made the most significant contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany in the years 1941-45. Although fewer candidates answered this question, there was some excellent knowledge of the invasion of Italy and the impact that it had on the wider war. Other contributions that were discussed to determine relative significance included the war on the Eastern Front, the Allied bombing of Germany, Hitler's mistakes and the invasion of Normandy. Most responses showed secure chronology but sometimes responses spent too long contextually describing the war in North Africa prior to the invasion.

The best responses at Level 4 and Level 5 explored the impact of the invasion of Italy in relation to the difference that it made to Nazi Germany's ability to fight the war in Europe. Some candidates argued that the slow advance into Italy undermined the Allied ability to defeat Nazi Germany while others argued that the invasion was a vital distraction that undermined Nazi campaigns in the East and in France. At Level 3 candidates tended to explain rather than evaluate the significance. Low Level 3 and Level 2 responses tended to describe the events in Italy or ignore Italy and describe other contributions.

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

#### Section A (AO3/AO1)

- Candidates should aim to interpret both extracts by analysing the issues raised and showing an understanding of the arguments presented by both authors. It is important to show awareness that it is historian's points of view that are the basis of a discussion; referring to the author by name helps this understanding (where there is more than one author, candidates can write the first name with et al after it.)
- Interpretations do not need to be evaluated in the same way as Sources. It is the views in the Extracts themselves that create the basis of the discussion. All the Extracts are 'secondary sources' and this does not need to be explained.
- Candidates should use their own knowledge of the specification content to validate and discuss the interpretations being presented.
- 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

- 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. Secure chronological knowledge enables candidates to produce a logical and coherent answer.
- Read the wording of the questions carefully, particularly if the time period of the question is stated; responses that refer to the wrong time period deploy irrelevant and inaccurate knowledge that does not directly address or only implicitly addresses the question.
- Introductions do not need to reflect a large amount of contextual detail; use introductions to establish the foundations of the argument you are about to present and to show that you understand the 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.

