



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

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

## **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)

June 2024

Publication Code: WHI04\_1C\_2406\_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

## Introduction

As with previous series, the candidates for the 2025 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 2024 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 an 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 may of course be 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'. This does seem to be particularly the case for many WHI04 1C candidates, who continue to confuse the different eras of the Cold War and particularly the different leaders involved at different times.

**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.

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 whether the Cold War began as a result of a propaganda war that developed between the United States and the Soviet Union after the Second World War. The author of Extract 1, R B Levering, put forward the view that in the aftermath of the Second World War, relations between the US and the USSR were harmed by developments in propaganda, with both blaming each other for escalating hostilities. The author suggests many Americans became convinced that Stalin was not to be trusted and was as much as a threat as Hitler had been, and both Americans and Russians promoted the view that only they could secure a better future for the world, with the propagation of Russian views and the aggressive means to further their policies created tensions. The author of Extract 2, A J P Taylor, suggested that the Cold War was deliberately begun by President Truman as part of a planned policy to knock the Soviet Union out of the international political arena. The Extract suggests that Truman had an anti-Soviet stance and he intended the US use of the atom bomb would frighten the Soviets into withdrawal from international affairs, however this was a miscalculation on the part of Truman, which led to an ongoing escalation of tensions between the superpowers. There were fewer candidates this series developing a third strand of the argument and so were able to focus clearly on the two different points of view being developed in the extracts. However, as in previous series taking time to read Extract 2 might have resulted in a more direct discussion of the points of view put forward by Taylor.

Candidates were well prepared for discussion of major themes raised by the Key Topic controversy. There was some excellent knowledge of the political situation in post-war Europe and how this affected US and Soviet policies post-1945. This knowledge was used to validate the context of the propaganda from both sides and the fears which arose from the period. Most candidates were able to explain the historical context of the viewpoints in the interpretations, and some were able to show clear understanding

of the basis of the views being outlined in the Extracts. For Extract 1, responses referred to the actions of Stalin in Eastern Europe being akin to that of Hitler and Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, as ways in which the Soviets were presented in public sphere to Americans, causing fear and increased tension. For Extract 2, responses referred to Truman's attitude towards Stalin and the Soviet Union overall, as one of mistrust, particularly at the Posdam conference. Many candidates were able to contrast the viewpoints in the Extracts well in coming to a judgement as to whether it was the propaganda war or Truman's attitudes that fuelled the development of the Cold War. There is now very little evidence of time wasted by writing long explanations of the developments of the Cold War since 1917 or events after 1953.

## **Section B**

Please note that, as indicated in previous Reports, it is of concern how many WHI04 1C candidates continue to deploy a confused chronology either in regard to specific time periods of the Cold War or to US and Soviet leadership. Clearly, where there this happens once or perhaps twice in a response it is possible to allow that the candidate is writing in stressful conditions but in too many responses, particularly in Section B, this is seen throughout the response. Common examples of this are Kennedy and Khrushchev as leaders in the 1970s, Gorbachev becoming leader of the USSR before 1985 and the period of détente happening in the 1950s.

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

## **Question 2**

Candidates were required to determine whether there was a significant change in US-Soviet relations from under President Kennedy (1961-63) compared to under President Eisenhower (1953-60). Most candidates had a very good grasp of the knowledge required to answer this question effectively and mainly used developments outlined in the specification, including Kennedy's more hostile stance towards the expansion of Soviet influence and the change in relations between leaders due to the attitude of Khrushchev. Candidates had a very good understanding of Kennedy's actions, particularly in relation to Cuba, but they sometimes failed to properly examine the relations under Eisenhower, thus not providing the groundwork for a proper comparison.

The best responses focused on the changes in relations based on the level threat of the Cold War, such as tensions in Berlin and the significance of the threat of the nuclear war. There was some interesting exploration of the changes within Kennedy's presidency, demonstrating changes from his inaugural address, the Bay of Pigs incident and the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This was compared to changes under Eisenhower, from the period of 'the thaw', through to the U2 incident and the Summits, particularly the Paris Summit. Some candidates recognized the role of Khrushchev in terms of the relations and his general commitment to a policy of peaceful coexistence under both

At low-mid Level 4 and Level 3, candidates tended to use the changes of the major incidents which occurred under the Presidents as explanation of any change, rather than examine if there was any change while at Level 2 key policies of Kennedy were described.

## **Question 3**

Candidates were required to determine whether the impact of economic problems within the USSR were the most significant factor in bringing an end to the Cold War. Some candidates considered other factors, such as the role of individuals, primarily Reagan and Gorbachev, more positive diplomatic relations and the growth of nationalism in the Eastern Bloc. There was however an unfortunate number of candidates who wrote more about the reasons for the collapse of the USSR rather than how this was responsible for the end of the Cold War, thus making their arguments implicit. There was also more detail about Gorbachev's domestic policies, rather than his foreign policy.

The best responses explored the impact of the economic problems in the USSR on the ability of the Soviets to continue the Cold War. They considered the inability of the Soviets to continue financing the technological developments required to maintain its Cold War position. They also linked Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union to increased discontent, thus forcing a greater focus on domestic issues rather than the Cold War. The role Reagan was often discussed, with recognition of his ability to negotiate from a position of strength. There is some excellent knowledge of this period of time but many responses remained in Level 2 and 3 because they just explained or described the economic conditions in the USSR, without always linking to how this led to the end of the Cold War. Some candidates confused the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, with some writing far too much information about the actual details of Gorbachev's policies rather than discussing their impact.

## Paper Summary

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 (AO1)

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

