



A-level
History

7042/C

Report on the Examination

7042
June 2024

Version: 1.0

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Overall Observations

The range of questions set and quality of response to the NEA remains impressive. This component plainly provided an opportunity for a good number of students to demonstrate the full range of skills that they had acquired over their course of study for the Award as a whole. It also provided a means for many students to explore an area of history that was a personal interest. At the higher levels, the NEA showcased the very best of A level history. It was most heartening to see the care and diligence not only of students but also of centre staff in relation to the NEA.

Whilst a good number of centres directed all of their students to answer one set question, it has become much more common for centres to offer a range of questions, perhaps all on the same broad topic, from which the student selected one. The minority of centres offered an entirely free choice of question, although some of the responses to these type of questions were very impressive indeed. Some questions, whilst entirely legitimate, were really quite challenging and were clearly suitable only for the more capable students. It is worth remembering that the objective of the NEA is for the student to provide a clear answer to a set question and that this should be manageable within 4500 words. It was often the most straightforward question that offered the best opportunity for students to demonstrate the full range of their skills.

This year, administration from some centres seemed to have declined in standard and consequently a number of moderators spent time chasing forms which should have been included within the original sample.

Assessment Objective One

This carries half of the marks for the NEA and therefore should be the basis of the NEA. Put simply, the ability to argue a balanced, evaluative and analytical response was necessary to ensure access to the higher levels. The other two assessment objectives should feed into and supplement the overall AO1 objective of providing a clear answer to the set question. Unfortunately, a number of centres directed their students to focus instead on AO3 so that the whole response became closer to a book review around which the student offered some evaluation. The student should think of the NEA as a long essay in which specific and focused subject knowledge, the evaluation of source material, and of interpretations, simply supports the driver which is the students answer to the set question. This response should be a continuous piece of prose in which the demands of the three assessment objectives are merged into one piece of work. There is still a tendency for some students to compartmentalise their response so that AO2 and AO3 are responded to in separate sections of the NEA, and in some cases even divided up under subheadings.

Some centres continue to include tick sheets illustrating that each decade had been referred to. This was very common a few years ago and appears to have made a return. Whilst the need to cover the full date range set in the question is absolutely vital to ensure a mark above Level Two, the demand is for a contextual response. The difference between a contextual response and one that seeks to cover c100 years of factual history is notable. It is worth reminding students that simply including one isolated event from each decade is not evidence of a contextual response and can easily become a simple chronological list of unrelated events. Those that remembered to refer to the very start and end of their set date range often developed a good understanding of change and continuity over time.

Assessment Objective Two

This was generally handled well, possibly because of the similarity of this demand with that made on Question 01 of Paper Two. There were some students that decided to evaluate more than three primary sources, however the marks for AO2 are only credited to the evaluation of three primary sources. The very best answers arrived at a judgement for each source related to value rather than accuracy or reliability. This is very similar to the examined papers where students should consider how the source might be valuable in doing something which, in this case, is in helping to advance the students's own answer to the set NEA question. Generally, responses had a very good balance between content and provenance, although students that elected to include pictorial sources did seem to struggle slightly more in arriving at a good conclusion about the value of the provenance.

Assessment Objective Three

There was considerable variation in approach to this AO. Some students elected to evaluate the entire book of an author, while others adopted a more focused approach evaluating a couple of extracted passages. Either approach is acceptable, although the evaluation of a shorter piece of argumentative text seemed to provide a better opportunity for students to hit the higher levels of this AO. That said, the selected text did need to be long enough to offer the ability to extract a couple of clear arguments and to evaluate these in a balanced manner. There was a tendency for some to only choose interpretations of a couple of sentences – these were almost always not nuanced or detailed enough to provide a good opportunity for student evaluation. At the other extreme, any attempt to assess the entire corpus of work of an historian was unsuccessful as it did not allow the student to offer a focused evaluation of just a few expressed opinions. It was pleasing to note that most students used the evaluation of provenance as a support to the arguments already expressed about how convincing a given interpretation might be. There remain some students however that dedicate a dominate part of AO3 to describing the background of a selected historian. Such lengthy biographies rarely offer much beyond narrative and do not help to support judgements already made about content. Separate descriptive sections detailing the academic credentials of a historian are not generally helpful. All comments about time and context should be keenly linked to the evaluation of how convincing the arguments put forward by the historian are.

There were some responses in which AO3 dominated. This took the form of establishing the argument of a historian at the outset and then using contextual knowledge throughout the NEA to evaluate the validity of the historian's argument. Whilst this approach scored highly for AO3, it came at the expense of AO1 which should be the key driver of the NEA.

Centre Marking and Administration

The various forms that should be included within the sample sent to the moderator are clearly detailed in notices to centres. This should include the candidate record forms, the centre declaration form and also all of the approval forms. Most centres were able to provide this material but there was a notable minority who omitted either sheets or signatures. It would be very helpful if all paperwork could be included in the sample sent. There was a larger number of cases of inaccurate copying of marks onto the Marking software. Here, some students' marks had been confused with others or indeed the addition on the original work was flawed. A check before submitting marks would be most helpful.

Annotation was generally very impressive with some very helpful summative comments provided by centres. Some indication of the rationale behind the mark awarded for each level is always very helpful at

moderation simply as it provides an indication of why the centre thought the mark appropriate. A reminder that the annotation is really directed towards the moderator rather than in the style that might be relevant for the student. Some of the annotation seemed more in line with the type of constructive commentary that might be found in an internally marked essay with an indication of potential improvements to be made. Some marking simply read as 'AO3' beside any quoted piece or indeed alongside any given argument even if not related to the chosen historians. Clearly AO3 relates to the evaluation of the views expressed by the two historians selected and is not to be credited simply for quoting material.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.