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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**HISTORY  
GCSE**

**SUMMER 2023**

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# HISTORY

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### COMPONENT 1 – BRITISH STUDIES IN DEPTH

#### General Comments

Overall, candidate performance was pleasing, with the responses provided by many candidates being of a particularly good quality. It was also pleasing to see an uptake in Options 1C and 1D. Candidates are now generally well-prepared in terms of the techniques required to answer specific questions, although some inaccurate or irrelevant traits were evidenced. Once again, the issue of how and why historical interpretations are formed, proved to be the weakest aspect. Candidates who were able to contextualise their responses with good AO1, tended to be those who performed well.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Question One

As in previous series, the majority of candidates were able to achieve high Band 1 or low Band 2 for extracting at least two pieces of relevant information from the source material, demonstrating the accessibility of the question. However, candidates are to be reminded that full marks are not awarded for merely paraphrasing or describing the source material. Discussions over the authorship are also unnecessary for this question. In order to achieve the fourth mark, candidates need to make an inference from the source material that is relevant to the question asked. For example, in the *Elizabethan Age* paper candidates could have referred to the Queen's control over the Council, or how it appeared to reward those in her favour.

##### Question Two

It was once again pleasing to see many candidates making an appropriate judgement in their answers, as opposed to merely paraphrasing the source material. The question therefore proved accessible to most candidates across the four papers. However, there is still a tendency for candidates to make a judgement, but not back it up with reference to the source material, which is an important requirement of the question.

Candidates generally addressed the authorship of the sources across the four options, which is key to understanding its 'strengths' or more probably, its 'weaknesses'. Candidates also need to consider the prospective audience and contextualise the response by providing a counterargument to what has been provided in the source. However, it was noticeable on the *Elizabethan Age* paper that many candidates had insufficient knowledge of the Puritan threat and tended to incorrectly focus upon the Catholic threat.

##### Question Three

The recent improvement in the quality of responses provided for this question continued. Candidates are increasingly focusing upon the issue of 'significance' and are therefore attempting to provide an explanation as opposed to merely providing a narrative. However, there is still a tendency to 'top and tail' responses, with candidates referring to the

significance of the issue at the start and end of the answer, as opposed to providing a consistent explanation. Answers of this kind will, in general, only be able to access low Band 2 for AO2. This was evident in the *Empire, Reform and War* paper, where insufficient focus was placed on the significance of the tactics used on Western Front.

In addition to this, candidates need to ensure they correctly identify the time period the question is referring to. For example, in the *Austerity, Affluence and Discontent* paper, the question was specifically focused on the 1970s, yet the majority of responses revolved around the 1950s and 1960s, which was disappointing.

#### **Question Four**

The majority of candidates were able to achieve Band 2 AO1 by demonstrating awareness of their chosen issues, but once again, there is a tendency to merely describe the issues chosen and thereby treat them discretely. Good quality responses were ones where candidates extensively used terminology such as 'connected to', 'linked to' or 'led to', thereby accessing the higher Bands for AO2.

There were some exceptionally good responses to the *Empire, Reform and War* paper and although in the *Elizabethan Age* paper, candidates displayed detailed knowledge of their chosen issues, the connections between them were not always sufficiently developed.

#### **Question Five**

The majority of candidates were able to achieve at least Band 2 for both AOs by demonstrating understanding of the key feature for AO1 and by referring in general terms to the authorship for AO4. It was again pleasing to see candidates attempt to provide a two-sided response, which is a key requirement of this question.

However, as stated in the 2019 and 2022 reports, there is still a tendency to provide very mechanical and often irrelevant comments when referring to authorship. It was very disappointing to see candidates use terms such as the 'benefit of hindsight', which demonstrates a lack of understanding of how and why historical interpretations are formed and are irrelevant. Candidates need to address the authorship, the title and date of the publication, its medium and, more importantly, the prospective audience. There were also inaccurate comments on the validity of interpretations published on a website, which is of course not the case.

It was also evident that increasing numbers of candidates had been versed in making references to the views of 'economic', 'social' or 'military' historians, but these were only successfully developed when candidates backed up their response with contextual support. Otherwise, the responses are very mechanical and do not address the issue of historical interpretations. It should also be remembered that historical interpretations do not necessarily need to be provided by historians. Candidates should be shown previous papers and mark schemes to guide them in this issue.

#### **Summary of key points**

- The format of these papers is now well-established and generally speaking, candidates are displaying improved historical skills.
- It was disappointing to see candidates leave questions unanswered, especially since marks can be gained for the skills elements in AO2, AO3 and AO4, even if the candidate lacks AO1. This needs to be impressed upon future candidates.
- Candidates with good subject knowledge were able to gain marks for AO1, so the regular testing of historical knowledge is to be encouraged. Work on guiding candidates as to how they should approach the issue of how and why historical interpretations are formed continues to be a priority, as is moving away from generic phrases such as “benefit of hindsight”, which are irrelevant.
- Please share the generic mark schemes with candidates in order for them to better understand how they can gain marks for the specific skills.

# HISTORY

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### COMPONENT 1 – NON-BRITISH STUDIES IN DEPTH

#### General Comments

The papers for the Non-British Studies in Depth performed at a comparable level to previous series. Whilst many excellent responses were in evidence, work on how to answer Questions 3 and 5 continues to be necessary, both of which consider the issue of historical interpretations. This is especially the case for Question 3.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Question One

This question was generally accessible to the vast majority of candidates across the four papers. However, it is once again to be stated that merely copying or paraphrasing the information provided with comments such ‘Source A says/shows’ will not enable candidates to achieve two marks for AO3. For the second mark, candidates need to make an inference from the material.

Candidates’ responses across the four papers were rather mixed. On the *Voyages of Discovery* paper, candidates tended to narrowly focus on disease as the sole impact of the Spanish Conquest. On the *Germany in Transition* paper, some candidates confused the Night of the Long Knives with Kristallnacht, but overall, performance was solid.

##### Question Two

Candidate performance in this question continues to see an improvement, which is a pleasing feature. The majority were able to achieve at least Band 2 for AO3 by providing a judgement as to the purpose of the source. Once again, those candidates who accessed Band 3 did so by providing a good discussion of the authorship of the source, and the best ones, its prospective audience, which is the key to answering this question effectively.

However, as stated in previous reports, candidates are to be reminded that half the overall marks are awarded for AO1 and therefore they need to provide knowledge and understanding of the issue beyond what is provided in the source material. For example, on the *US* paper, many candidates provided excellent contextual support by linking the Ford Model T advertisement to the economic boom of the period and mass production.

##### Question Three

Of all the questions across the entire Component, this is still the one that is not done satisfactorily, with the average mark tending to be 3 to 4 out of 10. As such, the main points from previous reports need to be restated. Whilst candidates easily make an appropriate judgement, they also need to develop the AO1 aspect of the question by providing

understanding of the key feature, beyond what they have already been provided with in the two interpretations.

Candidates are also not addressing the issue of how and why interpretations are formed. Answers still tend to be limited to merely stating which one supports the view, with token references to the authorship and why the author may have that view. This question should be treated in a similar fashion to Question 5, where candidates need to discuss the attribution in detail, considering the authorship, title and date of the interpretation, its medium and most pertinently, the audience. By doing this, they will support their judgement and be able to access the higher bands for AO4, which at present, few do.

#### **Question Four**

The majority of candidates were again able to access the question by demonstrating understanding of the source material and by providing a relative judgement as to which of the sources is more useful to an historian studying whatever the key feature is. Candidates need to provide AO1 material beyond what they have been provided in the source material. They should be encouraged to provide a brief overview of the key feature so that they can be rewarded for AO1. There were particularly good examples provided on both the *Germany* and *US* papers.

In assessing the usefulness of the sources, candidates should be encouraged to consider the issue in terms of the content, authorship and audience. The sources will provide certain perspectives on the key feature, and these should be developed in candidates' discussion. In terms of providing a relative judgement, comments such as 'Source...is more useful because it provides more information', are not sufficiently developed enough to achieve Band 4 for AO3. Once again it must be impressed upon candidates that utility and reliability are not the same thing, so candidates who focus on reliability are not accessing the mark scheme.

#### **Question Five**

The majority of candidates were again able to achieve at least Band 2 for both AOs by demonstrating some understanding of the key feature for AO1 and by referring to the authorship for AO4. However, once again candidates in general failed to fully engage with the authorship, medium and audience and therefore failed to access Bands 3 to 4 for AO4. The same generalised comments were provided as were for the British papers and it was again disappointing to see references to 'primary' and 'secondary' sources and the 'benefit of hindsight'.

It should be noted however, that there were some exceptional responses, both in terms of AO1 and AO4, where candidates displayed excellent subject knowledge and attempted to engage with the process of how and why the interpretation was formed. The most successful discussion of other types of historians/writers were evidenced on the *Voyages of Discovery* paper, where many candidates countered the interpretation, provided by religious writers stating that Cortés's faith was responsible for the defeat of the Aztecs, by referring to how military historians, for example, would focus on the weapons, tactics and alliances utilised by the Spanish.

SPaG – Candidates generally achieved 2 out of 3.

#### **Summary of key points**

- As with the British Studies in Depth, most candidates were able to complete the questions in the time provided. The advice given relating to candidates failing to attempt questions remains the same, particularly since the preponderance of marks on these papers are for the skills elements.
- Overall, the progress evidenced on Questions 2 and 4, now needs to be replicated for Questions 3 and 5. Candidates need to move away from meaningless rote-learned comments, such as 'benefit of hindsight', 'peer reviewed' and so on, and specifically focus on who the author is, the title of the publication, its medium and audience.



# HISTORY

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### COMPONENT 2 – PERIOD STUDIES

#### General Comments

Overall, candidates were well prepared for this paper, they displayed detailed knowledge on many questions and were able to recall significant levels of detail scoring highly on AO1. However, some candidates failed to read the questions properly, or instead answered the question they wanted to answer, rather than the one posed: this often meant that knowledgeable candidates achieved only Band 1 marks for their responses. Generally, candidates were able to describe well, but found it difficult to explain or make judgements on significance. Exam technique in Question 3 was generally strong, however, this was not so frequently the case with Question 5 responses, with the technique deployed often poorer here.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Question One

In the *US* paper, candidates were able to answer this question well and many were able to achieve Band 2 or higher. However, some candidates did not focus on the dates given in the question and erroneously discussed the Berlin Wall. In the *Germany* paper, candidates who had prepared for this question were able to score highly, many achieving Band 2 or higher. However, many other seemed confused and discussed the wrong time period, either discussing Stresemann directly, or referencing his actions instead of those of Adenauer. In the *UK* paper, where candidates had prepared for this question, it was well answered and, generally, they were able to achieve Band 2 or above. In the *USSR* option, however, a significant proportion of candidates struggled: many confused Stalingrad with Leningrad or chose to talk about Operation Barbarossa. Where candidates wrote about Stalingrad, they were able to recall relevant knowledge and generally reach Band 2 or higher. Finally,

##### Question Two

Generally, candidates were confident in answering this question and did so strongly. In terms of the individual options, it was evident in the *US* paper, that many candidates were able to consider different groups in society that did or did not benefit from the affluent society, and a substantial number accessed Band 3 of AO2 for their efforts. In the *Germany* paper, many candidates responded to this question with a significant amount of context for hyperinflation, and this reduced the amount of time or space they had left to discuss how such problems were dealt with. The best answers focused on the actions of Stresemann, including their long- and short-term effects. Such answers were able to achieve band 3. In the *USSR* paper, most candidates wrote about perestroika and glasnost with some confidence, though very few candidates went further than that. Candidates' assessment of how far life was improved was generally limited, though some candidates were able to present a sophisticated argument, considering the long-term effects of the policies, or the effect of the policies on different groups of people within the USSR, and those candidates were able to reach Band 3. Finally, for the *UK* paper, while many candidates were able to achieve Band 2 or higher, a number of them wrote extensively about the events of the First

World War rather than its impact and aftermath, thus limiting the marks they were able to achieve.

### Question Three

There was something of a mixed response to this question. For the US paper, many candidates answered the question confidently and had clearly spent time preparing the exam technique. Where candidates had considered the relative significance of factors, they were able to score highly; however, most of them struggled with this aspect leading to very few responses in Band 3 for AO2. An issue for a number of candidates was sticking to the decades named in the question. Many responses included artists from recent years, and candidates were very often discussing modern attitudes to media, rather than historical. For example, literature was very often considered the least significant factor due to the fact that candidates considered that teenagers could not read or did not like reading. However, in general, students displayed detailed knowledge of music and film, especially artists such as Elvis and James Dean and this enabled them to achieve Band 2 or above for AO1.

In the *Germany* paper, candidates' efforts tended to imply that they had spent much time preparing a structure for answering this question. However, such rote-learned structures frequently lead to superficial responses, and this was the case for AO2 here: candidates merely stated the order they had chosen without providing any real judgements outside of their framing sentences. They were often able to show good knowledge of this topic and score highly on AO1, nevertheless, an area of weakness was many candidates' (lack of) knowledge and understanding of Nazi control of industrial workers.

For the *USSR* and *UK* papers, candidates appeared to spend more time and effort on this question than any other, and the majority of them had been well prepared to consider all three factors provided in the question. The highest-achieving responses were able to consider the relative significance of the factors and made judgements on significance based on long- or short-term changes, and such responses accessed Band 3. Less convincing responses, however, made little attempt to actually explain the significance of the factors, often asserting some basic and/or generalised comments. Further, in the *UK* paper, some candidates did not fully understand the development of new industries, and this sometimes limited their answers.

### Question Four

In the *US* paper, candidates demonstrated generally good knowledge of Kennedy's presidency and some reasons why he was popular. Many candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge of the New Frontier, while others were able to discuss the Cuban missile crisis and how it made Kennedy popular. Many candidates were able to achieve strong marks in both assessment objectives. However, some responses discussed Roosevelt or Reagan rather than Kennedy and were unable to score. Some high-calibre knowledge was also evident in the responses to this question in the *Germany* paper, with many of them confidently discussed the Berlin blockade and Berlin Wall. This enabled them to achieve Band 2 or higher for AO1. However, understanding of **how** those events led to tension was less secure, leading to lower AO2 scores. There were also several candidates who struggled with chronology and/or accuracy.

In the *USSR* paper, candidates appeared well prepared for this question and were able to recall considerable knowledge of the events of de-Stalinization. Ergo, many of them were able to achieve Band 2 or 3 in AO1. Candidates apparently found it more challenging to explain the reasons behind de-Stalinization, and therefore generally achieved Band 2 or below on AO2.

In the *UK* paper, Question 4 was very well answered, and candidates displayed a good amount of knowledge, often able to discuss a range of reasons for the creation of the NHS. Consequently, many were able to achieve Band 2 or 3 depending on the sophistication of their argument.

### **Question Five**

Across all options, candidate responses to this question were not as strong as the other questions. Most treated it as a two-sided discussion or a significance question in the same style as Question 3. Candidates must remember to focus on the issue named in the question and the majority of their response should be focused on that. It is relevant to briefly discuss other factors, but this should not take over the argument. This was especially the case in the *US* paper, where it appeared that candidate knowledge of the Second World War was not strong. Many of them tried to discuss the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, instead in an effort to focus examiners' attention there rather than on the named issue.

All of these types of responses, regardless of the option undertaken, cannot score well and will struggle to exceed the lower mark bands.

### **Summary of key points**

- More emphasis needs to be placed on AO2 skills. Candidates seemed to find it exceedingly difficult to explain things or make supported judgements.
- For Question 5, candidates must remember to focus on the named issue in the question, with other factors brought in as a reference point or comparison.
- For Question 3, candidates could be taught to make comparisons in order to discuss the relative significance of factors, and to consider, for example, the long- or short-term impact, the impact on numbers of people, or the impact on different groups in society.
- Please encourage candidates to carefully read the question. Too many are not addressing the question asked, instead preferred to talk about what they had revised.
- Please also remember that the examination is structured around the specification and not the textbooks. A breadth of resources, evidence and viewpoints is strongly encouraged to ensure candidates have a detailed understanding, and that they continue to develop their skills of critical analysis and evaluation, and the ability to form substantiated judgements.

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GCSE

Summer 2023

## COMPONENT 2 – THEMATIC STUDIES

### General Comments

Overall, there was an impressive level of detailed knowledge in responses to the questions about the historic environments across all of the options. There were also clear improvements from last year in the use of authorship in responses to Question 2 and supporting detail in Question 4. However, the trend of candidates writing answers to Questions 4 and 5 that address neither the issue nor the correct time period in the question persists from the 2022 series.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Question One

Candidates must consider one similarity and one difference between the three sources provided. Across all of the options there are three – plainly identifiable – candidate responses:

1. Clearly identifying relevant similarities and differences
2. Identifying similarities and differences based on misunderstanding of the sources or of the focus of the question.
3. Writing out descriptions of what can be seen in the sources, but without relating this to similarities or differences as the question asks.

Many candidates would score more highly here if their responses were succinct and more obviously focused on the demands of the question. Overall, candidates who clearly identify relevant similarities and differences and link them to the sources score highly on this question.

#### Question Two

Candidates must analyse and evaluate the content and authorship of two sources from different eras and make a judgement about their relative reliability. References to the authorship of the sources as explanations for their reliability were much more in evidence across all of the options this year. This is a significant improvement, although candidates are mostly still not providing any supporting knowledge of their own to the analysis of the sources. There were, however, some exceptions, which should be commended, foremost, those who referenced Chadwick's link to the debate over public health in the *Health and Medicine* paper. There are also still some candidates who still argue that one source is more reliable than the other because one is from the right time and one is afterwards, although this was seen less frequently than in previous series, the complete eradication of this trend would be welcomed. Some responses do not achieve their full potential because they consider utility rather than reliability, whereas others, while focusing on reliability, inhibit their marks by failing to develop this into a judgement about their relative reliability.

Most candidates were still only scoring 1 mark for AO1 but, in an improvement on last year, many more are now scoring a Band 3 mark for AO2.

### Question Three

This question requires several historical details about a feature of a particular historical era. Most candidates scored high Band 2 marks or one of the Band 3 marks for this question, and responses were, overall, much more focused on the set question than last year. There were some candidates who spent a lot of time writing a preamble that was not necessarily relevant to the question, such as on the *Crime and Punishment* paper, when they would describe the causes and nature of vagrancy before getting to the nub of the question, which was how vagrants were treated. There was also a noticeable number of responses that consisted of a list of features with no attempt to develop or explain any of the points made. By and large, however, responses were much better focused on the demands of the question set across all of the options this year and, as with the historic environment questions, substantial specific subject knowledge was demonstrated.

### Question Four

Candidates need to give a reasoned explanation of a specific issue set in an historical context, supported by specific factual knowledge. In all of the options, apart from *Development of Warfare*, there were a large proportion of responses that did not address what was being asked in the question. In the *Crime and Punishment* paper, a number of candidates wrote about the reasons for abolishing the Bloody Code rather than the death penalty entirely; in the Health and Medicine paper, many candidates wrote about treatment not prevention, or the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, or both; in the *Entertainment and Leisure* paper, many responses explained the growth of seaside holidays in the twentieth century, rather than in the nineteenth. Where responses were correctly focused, there was much better use of detailed supporting knowledge, and a range of relevant reasons was considered.

Where candidates had correctly understood the question there was much more evidence of detailed knowledge being deployed in support of the reasons suggested, so many more candidates than last year were scoring 2 marks for AO2.

### Question Five

The question requires candidates to provide a structured narrative about an issue of change across all three historical eras, but there were varying degrees of engagement with it across the options, unlike in the 2022 examination series, when many candidates for the *Crime and Punishment* and *Health and Medicine* options answered using a different topic than the one in the question. This time there was clear focus on the question in *Crime and Punishment*, *Development of Warfare* and *Entertainment and Leisure*, but those answers tended more to be patchy or inconsistent in their coverage of the period. It was more in the *Health and Medicine* paper where the confusion continued, with several responses here indicating a lack of clarity with regards to the difference between prevention and treatment.

As per last year, candidates who scored well on both Assessment Objectives had tried to give roughly equal levels of detail to all of the eras and to make the changes between them clear.

### Question Six (part a)

Detailed and specific knowledge was much more likely to be seen in responses to this question than to any of the other questions on these papers. Sometimes responses read more like a list without developing points in relation to the question. At other times it was not clear which two features the candidate was focusing on. The highest-scoring candidates had

clearly identified two distinct features, often as two separate paragraphs, which they had supported with specific detail from the historic environment.

### Question Six (part b)

As with question 6a, there was a lot of specific detail deployed across all of the options in answer to this question. However, in *Crime and Punishment* and *Health and Medicine* there was a tendency to write a narrative rather than link what was being described to the issue in the question, for example the impact of parliamentary legislation on Pentonville Prison or the impact of Florence Nightingale on patient care after Scutari. This was much less of a problem in responses to this question in the *Development of Warfare* and *Entertainment and Leisure* papers.

Nonetheless, most responses to this question – across the thematic papers – could be improved. Few candidates scored above Band 2 as their authors did not directly address the issue in the question, did not offer much more than a brief window of time, and relied upon narrative accounts rather than providing an explanation. All of which factors that have been witnessed repeatedly over the past few examination series.

### Summary of key points

- Continue to ensure that responses are focused on the topic and time period in the question set.
- When answering Question 2, candidates should try to add in at least one piece of their own relevant knowledge to support their analysis of the sources.
- Question 5 responses should clearly cover all three of the historical eras and students should ensure that they are clear which of the relevant events they are addressing happened in which era.
- For responses to Question 6b, ensure that there is an attempt to explain the issue as laid out in the question.

Centres are reminded of the change to the historical environment for the 2024 and 2025 series:

<b>Crime and Punishment</b>	Lincoln Castle gaol and prison, 1787–1878
<b>Health and Medicine</b>	Living conditions in the Ancoats district of Manchester c.1790 to the present day
<b>Development of Warfare</b>	The significance of RAF Biggin Hill, 1916–1959
<b>Entertainment and Leisure</b>	The development of Alexandra Palace, 1859 to the present day

The Eduqas History team are beginning to develop a further set of historic environment studies for the 2026 and 2027 series. These will be published as soon as possible during the forthcoming academic year.



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