



GCSE Examiners' Report

History
GCSE
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

| Document | Description | Link |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
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¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Executive Summary

In the Component 1 British Studies in Depth, candidate performance showed overall improvement, with many high-quality responses, reflecting candidates' preparedness in specific questioning techniques. However, some answers still included inaccurate or irrelevant details. The weakest area remains understanding how historical interpretations are formed. Candidates who effectively contextualised their responses with strong AO1 tend to perform better. Although candidates are showing enhanced historical skills, mechanical responses and generic phrasing persists. To facilitate future improvement, it is crucial to implement strategies such as sharing banded mark schemes, regular testing of historical knowledge and offering further guidance on the formation of historical interpretations.

In the Component 1 Non-British Studies in Depth, performance remained consistent with previous series, with many responses demonstrating strong understanding. However, questions 3 and 5, which focus on historical interpretations continued to challenge candidates. While time management was effective, the requirements of question 3 were often inadequately addressed. AO4 remained a weak area despite competent handling of AO2 and AO3. To enhance candidate performance, centres are encouraged to discourage rote-learned phrases and promote detailed analysis of publication context, authorship and the factors influencing historical interpretations.

In Component 2 Period Study, candidates accessed the paper effectively, resulting in strong responses. Well-prepared candidates scored highly, demonstrating improved engagement compared to previous series. While there were some minor misconceptions, overall performance in AO1 showed improvement. Candidates demonstrate a solid grasp of the periods studied, frequently recalling detailed facts and information, which they adeptly use to support their judgments and construct coherent arguments. However, candidates often faced challenges with the AO2, specifically in articulating the importance or significance of events. There are instances where candidates describe events instead of providing in-depth explanations of their significance. To improve candidates need to focus on providing detailed explanations of the significance and relative importance of events and factors within a broader historical context.

In Component 2, Thematic Study candidates demonstrated a strong grasp of historical knowledge, particularly regarding historic environments, even with the introduction of new sites this series. Notable improvements include better use of contextual knowledge in question 2 and enhanced supporting detail in question 4. While question 4 shows improved focus on the set question, responses to questions 3 and 5 occasionally lacked relevance. Candidates need to develop stronger comparative analysis skills for question 1 and focus more on explaining the significance of changes rather than merely describing them in question 6b. Candidates should aim for a balanced approach, integrating detailed factual knowledge in both analytical and evaluative contexts to enhance their performance.

| Areas for improvement | Classroom resources | Brief description of resource |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Historical Knowledge | Eduqas Digital Educational Resources Resource (edugas.co.uk) | Knowledge Organisers Revision resources |
| Understanding of Mark Schemes | GCSE History Eduqas | Mark Schemes and Past Papers |
| Developing GCSE History Skills | Resource (edugas.co.uk) | Teaching and learning resource for use by teachers |

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COMPONENT 1 STUDIES IN DEPTH – BRITISH STUDIES IN DEPTH OPTIONS C100A-D

Overview of the Component

- This component assesses AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4 emphasising substantial and coherent short time scales, assessment is based on the use of a wide range of historical sources and differing historical interpretations.
- Overall, candidate performance continued to see improvement, with many high-quality responses. It was pleasing to see an uptake in option 1C, with good numbers for 1A and D.
- Candidates were well-prepared in terms of the techniques required to answer specific questions, although some inaccurate or irrelevant traits were again evidenced.
- The format of these papers is well-established, and candidates are displaying improved historical skills. Candidates with good subject knowledge were able to gain marks for AO1, so the regular testing of historical knowledge is to be encouraged.
- It was disappointing to see candidates leave questions unanswered, especially since marks can be gained for the skills elements in AOs 2-4, even if the candidate lacks AO1. This needs to be impressed upon all future candidates.
- The issue of how and why historical interpretations are formed, continues to be to be the weakest aspect. Candidates who were able to contextualise their responses with good AO1, tended to be those who performed well.
- 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 and mechanical responses. Sharing the banded mark schemes with candidates for them to better understand how they can gain marks for the specific skills, is also to be encouraged.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** As in previous series, most candidates achieved high Band 1 or low Band 2 by extracting at least two relevant pieces of relevant information from the source material, demonstrating the question's accessibility. However, full marks are not awarded for paraphrasing or describing the source material. Discussions over the authorship are also unnecessary for this question. To achieve the fourth mark, candidates need to make an inference from the source material that is relevant to the question asked. On the Elizabethan paper, for example, candidates paraphrased the source material, but could have inferred that they showed the Puritans wished to remove all vestiges of Catholicism and make faith more accessible to people.

- Q.2** Most candidates are now making appropriate judgement in their answers rather than just paraphrasing the source material, which means they immediately access the mark scheme. 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 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 counter-argument to what has been provided in the source. Some of the best responses on the Elizabethan paper provided a strong counter-argument, demonstrating through good AO1, that the Catholic threat was not serious due to the actions of Elizabeth.

- Q.3** The improvement in the quality of responses provided for this question continued. Candidates are continuing to focus upon the issue of 'significance' and are therefore attempting to provide an explanation, which accounts for the 8 marks awarded for AO2, 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.

Similarly, answers need to focus upon the key feature. For example, on the Empire, War and Reform paper, some candidates focused upon life in the trenches and not on the Home Front. On the Elizabethan paper, many candidates focused upon the government of Elizabeth in terms of how the Catholic threat was dealt with, which was not the premise of the question.

- Q.4** Most candidates were able to achieve Band 2 AO1 by demonstrating awareness of their chosen issues, but a continuing issue is the tendency to merely describe the issues chosen and thereby treat them discretely. Good quality responses were ones where candidates regularly used terminology such as 'connected to', 'linked to' or 'led to', thereby accessing the higher Bands for AO2.

There were some very good responses on the Conflict and Upheaval paper, relating to the causes of the Hundred Years' War and although on the Elizabethan paper, candidates displayed very good knowledge of the issues to do with poverty, the connections between them were not always sufficiently developed. Once again, candidates should be encouraged to specifically use the terminology referred to above, as a means of accessing AO2 on the mark scheme.

Q.5 Most 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, there is still a tendency to provide very mechanical and often irrelevant comments when referring to authorship. 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. It was also noticeable that increasing numbers of candidates provided comments along the lines that interpretations on websites were inaccurate because they could be altered and so on. This of course, is inaccurate and has nothing to do the issue of how and why interpretations are formed. It was also disappointing to see candidates continue to question the interpretation because it was written ‘many years after the event’, which again, is irrelevant.

It is also evident that more and more candidates are being encouraged to make 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, these responses are very mechanical and do not address the issue of historical interpretations. For example, on the Elizabethan paper, which was focused on the reasons for the failure of the Armada, some candidates stated that ‘a weather historian would...’, which is clearly contrived and reinforces the mechanical nature of such responses. It should also be remembered that historical interpretations do not necessarily need to be provided by historians and this will continue to be the guiding principle for this question. Candidates should be shown previous papers and mark schemes to guide them in this issue.

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COMPONENT 1 STUDIES IN DEPTH – NON-BRITISH STUDIES IN DEPTH OPTIONS C100E-H

Overview of the Component

- This component assesses AO1, AO3 and AO4
- This component focuses on substantial and coherent short time scales, assessment is based on the use of a wide range of historical sources and differing historical interpretations.
- 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.
- Question 3 and AO4 continue to be an area of weakness, candidates need to move away from meaningless rote-learned and generally irrelevant 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
- 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.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** This question was 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. For example, on the USA paper, many candidates merely described the picture in terms of people queuing to watch the Jazz Singer film. Stronger candidates contextualised the source by briefly explaining how it reflected the popularity of the cinema at the time.

Candidates' responses across the four papers were mixed. On the Voyages of Discovery paper, candidates rarely developed their answers beyond generalised comments on the harshness of Columbus' treatment of native populations. On the Crusades paper, very few candidates displayed knowledge of the Crusader Kingdoms. Overall, however, performance on the Germany and USA papers was solid.

- Q.2** Candidate performance in this question continues to improve, in terms of candidates addressing the issue of purpose. 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, stronger candidates were able to access Band 3 by providing a good discussion of the authorship of the source and the very 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 Germany paper, many candidates provided excellent support by demonstrating good understanding of how the Nazis used propaganda and thereby contextualising the source material.

- Q.3** Of all the questions across the entire Component, this continues to be insufficiently addressed, with the average mark tending to be 3 to 4 out of 10. Once again, the issues raised in previous reports need to be restated in the same form as last year's report. 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, above and 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, not many do.

- Q.4** Most 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 beyond what they have been provided with 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 good examples provided on the USA paper, but not so much so in the other options, where knowledge was patchy.

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 along the lines of '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. Unfortunately, this continues to be widely evidenced and centres should be aware of this deficiency in candidates' responses.

Q.5 Most candidates achieved 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 continues to be disappointing to see references to 'primary' and 'secondary' sources and the 'benefit of hindsight', as well the irrelevant discussions regarding the reliability of websites.

It should be noted however, that there were some very good responses, both in terms of AO1 and AO4, where candidates displayed excellent subject knowledge, particularly on the Germany and USA papers, and attempted to engage with the process of how and why the interpretation was formed. As a general guide, candidates should agree with the interpretation, explaining what it says and back their response up with AO1. A counter-argument should then be provided, followed by a full discussion of how and why the author arrived at the interpretation and why other interpretations may differ, depending upon the predilections of the author, the focus of the interpretation, the medium and the prospective audience. Many candidates provided irrelevant comments on reliability, which is not the focus of the question.

SPaG – Candidates achieved 2 out of 3.

HISTORY

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COMPONENT 2: STUDIES IN BREADTH – PERIOD STUDY OPTIONS C1001-4

Overview of the Component

- This component assesses AO1 and AO2 over broad periods of history, therefore there is an emphasis on explaining changes and impact over time. Candidates are required to make judgements and to evaluate events/people/policies etc.
- In general, candidates have good knowledge of the periods studied. They are often able to recall quite detailed facts and information, and some candidates use this knowledge to support their judgements and construct coherent arguments.
- Candidates struggle more with the AO2 element of the examination, particularly explaining the importance or significance of events. Candidates occasionally describe when they should explain.
- Candidates were able to access the paper well, and as a result there were many good responses. Candidates who had prepared well for the exam were able to score highly. There were some simple misconceptions, but overall candidates engaged with the questions more consistently than the last series.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** This question examines AO1 and requires candidates to describe a key feature of the time period. Candidates were confident and in general scored quite highly on this question often reaching band 3. This was the case across all the papers set. The best responses described a range of features and gave accurate, detailed responses written in full sentences.
- Q.2** This question examines AOs 1 and 2 and requires candidates to judge the extent of change. It should be remembered that there are only 2 marks available for AO1 on this question, so the majority of the response should focus on analysing the nature and extent of change within the context of the question. Responses that focus on describing the detail of the feature in the question rather than analysing the change rarely scored more than half marks. The best responses were able to show what changed and how far. Responses which reached band 3 for AO2 were able to make reasoned judgements which were well supported.
- Q.3** This question examines AOs 1 and 2 and requires candidates to explain the significance of three factors and place them in order. In general candidates gained many marks on this question as they appeared well prepared. The most effective responses were able to provide justification of the relative significance of the factors, i.e. their significance relative to each other. Candidates tended to write extensively on this question, and often able to show good knowledge, providing pages of factual detail on the factors provided. However similarly to previous years this did not always result in high marks as candidates were often unable to explain why factors were significant, limiting themselves on AO2. It should be remembered that this component is a breadth study and therefore there is a greater focus on the broad strokes of history than on the specific forensic detail.

- Q.4** This question examines AOs 1 and 2 and requires candidates to explain a key issue. Candidates performed well on this question and were usually able to reach band 2 or higher. Candidates had been well prepared with detailed knowledge across all four of the papers. The most effective responses recalled a range of points about the key issue and explained each one in context. Candidates were often able to show detailed knowledge and understanding. Some candidates were unable to explain and instead listed events or recounted a narrative, in those cases, candidates were unable to access band2 for AO2.
- Q.5** This question examines AOs 1 and 2 and requires candidates to evaluate the importance of a named issue within the appropriate historical context. This question caused candidates some difficulty. Many candidates attempt to give a two-sided response to the question along the lines of “X was important, but Y and Z were more important because”. This approach led many candidates to focus more on other things than the named factor in the question and therefore limited their performance. The most effective responses focused on explaining why the named factor was important and discussed the importance of the named factor relative to other relevant factors. (Rather than taking a focus on the other factors and explaining their importance instead) Candidates often had a good knowledge of the period but were held back by their approach to the question.

HISTORY

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Summer 2024

COMPONENT 2: STUDIES IN BREADTH – THEMATIC STUDY OPTIONS C1005-8.

Overview of the Component

- This component assesses AO1, AO2, AO3 over broad periods of history, therefore there is an emphasis on explaining changes and impact over time. There is a need for candidates to examine the relationship between a key historic site and historical events and developments.
- There continues to be an impressive level of detailed knowledge in responses to the questions about the historic environments across all the options, even though there are new sites for this series.
- There has been a noticeable improvement in the use of contextual knowledge in answer to Question 2 as well as supporting detail in Question 4, which now shows improved focus on the set question.
- In Question 1 candidates need to succinctly identify a similarity and difference and not just describe the sources
- Responses to Questions 3 and 5 can sometimes not be relevant to the question set. When answering Question 3, candidates should try to make sure they are focusing on the correct time period as well as the correct topic in their responses. Question 5 responses could be more balanced their coverage of the different historical eras, making change and continuity between eras clearer.
- For responses to Question 6b, there needs to be more emphasis on explain the significance of change than describing it.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Candidates must consider one similarity and one difference between the three sources provided.

The most successful responses clearly explain a similarity and a difference between named sources in relation to the topic in the question. Most responses to this question fall into the category. There are still many responses which just describe what the sources show without reference to similarities or differences. Others identify vague or superficial similarities and differences that do not refer to the topic in the question. Clearer statements of similarity and difference, correctly linked to the sources, would improve most of the responses that do not gain full marks on this question. Succinct answers are more likely to score highly.

Q.2 Candidates must analyse and evaluate the content and authorship of two sources from different eras and make a judgement about their relative reliability. Continuing the trend from last year there was much more focus on the authorship of responses this year and far fewer responses that were just paraphrases of the sources and their attributions. There is also more contextual knowledge being provided to support the judgements being made, for example the reasons for the growth of tourism in the nineteenth century given in support of points made about source D on the Entertainment and Leisure paper. There is still some confusion about the difference between utility and reliability and some candidates make very good points about the reliability of both sources without choosing the one that they think is more reliable.

Candidates could score more highly on AO3 if they made their judgements about reliability using a combination of content and authorship rather than just content. AO1 marks could also be further improved if more students could add in some relevant knowledge to support their points.

Q.3 This question requires several historical details about a feature of a particular historical era. Candidates continue to score highly on the question if they focus their response on the topic in the question set. There were fewer preambles and most candidates got straight into their answer. Focusing on the question set was still an issue for some candidates. This meant that candidates wrote about the right topic but in the wrong period. In Crime and Punishment some wrote about medieval law enforcement rather than sixteenth and seventeenth century. In Development of Warfare some wrote about medieval or Tudor armies not professionalisation in the seventeenth century. More rarely, candidates wrote about the wrong focus. In Entertainment and Leisure some wrote about changing musical styles rather than the ways that people listened to music had changed.

The quality of responses to this question continue to improve, but candidates need to make sure they are answering the question that has been asked.

Q.4 Candidates need to give a reasoned explanation of a specific issue set in an historical context, supported by specific factual knowledge. Across most of the options there was evidence of improved levels of factual support for the points being made. The most successful candidates were able to give two or three well developed reasons supported by specific contextual knowledge. There were many more explanations rather than descriptions, especially on the Health and Medicine and Development of Warfare papers. However, in Crime and Punishment there were a significant minority of responses that focused on the effects of transportation in Australia than on the reasons why people were transported. In Entertainment and Leisure there were a number of responses which described the developments in cinema in the twentieth century rather than explaining why cinema was popular. Where candidates write focused explanations supported by contextual knowledge they score well on this question.

- Q.5** The question requires candidates to provide a structured narrative about an issue of change across all three historical eras. Levels of engagement with the focus of the question set were much greater this year. As in 2023 there was clear focus on the question in Crime and Punishment, Development of Warfare and Entertainment and Leisure. In Health and Medicine there was much better focus than the previous year but there were a significant number of responses that spent more time on what people believed caused disease than what was actually causing disease. Patchy period coverage is becoming less on an issue, but there continues to be an imbalance in coverage of the different historical eras sometimes emphasising the first or last eras more. A few responses seem to be confused about the different eras, particularly confusing medieval and early modern. The best responses stayed focused on the question throughout and gave roughly equal time to each of the historical eras, supporting points with specific contextual knowledge, highlighting both continuity and change.
- Q.6 (a)** This question requires students to use their knowledge to describe two features of the historic environment. 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. The quality of these responses has improved this series as they are becoming more of a coherent description rather than a list of features. At the other end of the scale there continue to be responses that are so vague they could be about anywhere. It is important to make sure that responses are focused on the question set. For example, in Entertainment and Leisure there were a number of candidates for whom some of their answer was about the twentieth century when the question was asking about the nineteenth century. The candidates who do the best on this question clearly identify two distinct features, often as two separate paragraphs, which they support with specific detail from the historic environment.
- (b)** This question requires students to make and explain a judgement about the significance of the historic environment. While responses to this question continued to be very detailed a specific there is still a tendency to describe rather than explain which often appear to be an extended version of the response the Question 6a. Many candidates focus on a limited range of time in their response to this question instead of making full use the dates associated with the site. Candidates are good at describing change over time in these historical environments but continue to struggle to offer explanations for why these changes were significant in the context of the issue in the question. The best responses to these questions identify and explain a number of significant changes across a wide period of time and support the points made with specific contextual knowledge.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

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