Level 1/2 Certificate

Applied History

OCR Level 1/2 Certificate Applied History **J948**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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B951 Medieval History

For this examination series there were 514 candidate entries for the controlled assessment from 21 centres. This number represents an increase on the previous year of approximately 200 candidates.

It is difficult to tell how many of these entries were 'resits' or first-time entries. Four centres entered more than 50 candidates with the largest being 85. Nine centres were between 10 and 50 with the remainder entering fewer than 10 candidates. As with the coursework and teacher assessed units, it is difficult to tell how centres are using this qualification. Some centres are FE establishments raising the possibility that it is being used as a vehicle for progression into Level 3 qualifications. The smaller centres may be using this alongside ASDAN and other entry-level qualifications. With this qualification counting towards 'Progress 8' I think the numbers are set to rise.

There were entries for both questions but by far the most popular was 'Raiders & Invaders'. With new GCSE courses insisting on a Medieval component teachers of these units can be assured that they are ahead of the game.

I agree with the view that, "the course is clearly fulfilling a need in a small number of centres."

Key features of the work seen

Both questions show similar key features therefore I will set them out together:

- The majority of the work seen falls into bands 1, 2 and 3 meaning that only the top end of this will be awarded a 'C' grade.
- Much work is descriptive.
- Work in band 1 and 2 tended to retell everything known about the topic rather than be selective. This lack of ability to select could inhibit a higher band and in some cases candidates would do better by leaving out superfluous 'topic knowledge'.
- Answers in band 3 highlighted an ability to answer the question and the better ones in the band began to provide evidence to support their work.
- Candidates rewarded with marks in band 4 or 5 were more assured in selecting evidence to support their answer.
- Where a centre provided a booklet of sources to support a candidate's answer this seemed to cause confusion as the candidate could not always discriminate between useful and not useful pieces of evidence and resulted in a mechanistic run-through of each source so as not to leave any out.
- Better answers are moving away from phrases like, "this source was written at the time therefore it must be reliable" and are letting the fact that they have selected a piece of evidence be the 'reliability-tester'.

B952, B953, B954, B955, B956 and Teacher Assessed Units B957, B958, B959, B960

For this examination series there were 752 candidate entries for coursework from 19 centres, and 186 candidate entries from 20 centres for Teacher Assessed Units. However, most centres entered candidates for two or even three units, so the true figure is that 19 centres took part in this year's assessment.

It is difficult to tell how centres are using this course. 16 centres presented candidates for all three non-examined units, suggesting that they were doing the course in one year. Half the Centres presented less than 10 candidates, but there were also some quite large entries, suggesting at least two full classes.

There were entries for all of the five Coursework units and the four Teacher Assessed units.

Taking all these statistics together, the course is clearly fulfilling a need in a small number of centres.

Key features of the work seen

This report will focus mainly on problems encountered through moderation, in order to help centres in future years. However, it must be stated at the outset that many centres, mainly those who had taken part in the former 'pilot' course, presented skilfully designed assignments which enabled candidates to do some excellent work on some interesting topics which they had obviously enjoyed doing. Some of the Heritage Management and Heritage Marketing work, for example (B957 a and b) showed flair and originality in putting history at the centre of the management or marketing. Teachers should be congratulated on the amount of work involved in getting it right.

As last year, the main point to be made to centres, both existing and possible new centres, is that **it is absolutely essential to read the Specification carefully.**

Quite a high proportion of centres had their marks reduced because the work presented did not meet the requirements of the Specification for the unit – and had not been well enough designed to do so. Several were seen as 'Topics', or 'Projects', rather than historical enquiries led by a carefully thought out question. A string of low level questions may keep some candidates 'on task' but do not allow them to show higher level skills and understandings.

Particular problems were:

- The Local History investigation, B952. This should consider the significance of the site chosen in the present as well as in the past.
- The International Unit, B953. This should be an enquiry into an issue involving at least two states ('International' does not just mean non-British). The focus of the enquiry should be on the significance of the events chosen, rather than a description of what happened.
- The Study in Depth, B956. This has two parts: a source-based enquiry and the study of the role of an individual (which need not be source-based). This latter assignment should not be a biography, but an analysis of the significance of the chosen individual.
- The Teacher-assessed units (B957-B960) should consist of a portfolio of work from the whole period taken to teach the unit – probably a term. This should consist of at least six items – some centres present up to 12 – on a range of topics within the main enquiry, with different tasks tackling a range of objectives.

It was sometimes difficult for the Moderator to disentangle information provided by the teacher from the candidate's own work. It would considerably assist the moderation of the Teacher Assessed Units if a list of the tasks set could be provided with the portfolio.

- The Multi-media Unit (B958) requires candidates to submit their own multi-media presentation in order to complete the Unit.

All these requirements are laid out in the specification. Moderators' Reports to Centres will make clear how particular centres can improve in the future. The OCR website contains a useful Teacher's Handbook which also develops the requirements for each Unit: http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/other-general-qualifications-applied-history-level-1-2-certificate-j948/

Many candidates presented their work in Powerpoint. These presentations sometimes included far too much text on each slide: if PowerPoint is going to be used, candidates need to be more aware of its strengths and limitations. Powerpoint is good for making strong, brief points, not so good for extended accounts or explanations. This could be dealt with by adding a script, or providing accompanying notes to the slides.

Evaluation of sources was often simplistic and frequently over-rewarded as a result.

Teacher marking was generally accurate. Most work had been annotated by the centre and Moderators found these comments most helpful. It needs to be clear that this course is assessed to GCSE standards; some centres had apparently seen the course as some kind of sub-GCSE and marked more highly than the work actually merited. In a few cases, particularly the marking of weaker candidates, marking was sometimes too severe. Examples of candidates' work, with marks and a commentary, can be found on the OCR website listed above.

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