



Level 1/2 Certificate

Applied History

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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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B951 Medieval History

General Comments

For this examination series there were approximately 360 candidates from 27 centres. This number represents a slight increase on the previous year of approximately 250 candidates but is lower than the 2014 entry of approximately 500.

No centre entered more than 50 candidates with the largest being 46. Eighteen centres entered more than 10 candidates 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 (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and other entry-level qualifications.

Both 'Power & Control' and 'Raiders & Invaders' options were attempted with the latter being the most popular of the two.

Comments on Individual Questions

Questions 1 and 2

"Society and government were fairer in Saxon times than they were in Norman times."

AND

"Both King John and King Henry V were more successful abroad than at home."

One major improvement this year was that for the most part candidates tried to answer the question within the word limit. However, many similar traits of previous years' key features remain due to the nature of the ability of the candidates taking this qualification.

- A few misunderstood completely what the task was about, e.g. producing just a source analysis rather than an answer to a historical question;
- A few omitted sources altogether;
- Often sources were poorly integrated (sometimes separate boxes) and too often the nature of the source was not identified;
- Often too much description at the expense of answering the question, e.g. what the Saxon/Norman society included rather than what made them fair or a description of the key events of both monarchs' reigns;
- Sometimes criteria were produced to answer the question but were then not used;
- Some attempted a valid conclusion – sometimes this was the best bit of the answer;
- Some candidates tended to write an answer to the question they wanted rather than the one given;
- Both 'sides' were not always attempted;
- The best candidates were capable of creating an evidenced-based argument and maintaining the focus on the question.

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

General Comments:

For this examination series there were 589 candidate entries for coursework from 29 centres, and 314 candidate entries from 27 centres for Teacher Assessed Units. However, most centres entered candidates for two or even three units, so the true figure is that 29 centres took part in this year's assessment. Many 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. Many centres 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 International Studies (B953) and Heritage Marketing work, for example (B957 b) showed flair and originality. Candidates presented work showing a level of personal involvement in the issues, as well as a level of analysis, which totally justifies the existence of this course. 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, where the requirements of each Unit are very clearly laid out.

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. This meant that, although candidates usually had good knowledge, they were unable to use it in answer to the requirements of the Unit of the Specification. This is unfortunate for candidates. Specific Units where this problem was most prevalent are noted below.

The OCR website contains useful guidance on setting tasks:
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/178366-guidance-on-task-setting.pdf>

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

Teacher marking was generally accurate. Most work had been annotated by the centres and Moderators found these comments 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 generously than the work actually merited. In quite a few cases the marking of weaker candidates was too severe. Examples of candidates' work, with marks and a commentary, can be found on the OCR website: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/72875-examples-of-candidate-coursework-with-commentary.pdf>

Comments on Individual Units:

B952: Local History Investigation. The Specification requirement to consider the current, as well as the historical significance of the site, is still weak. This need not be of equal weight or coverage, but its omission leads to reductions in the marks which can be awarded.

B953: International History. This was a popular unit. It should be an enquiry into an issue involving at least two states. The Vietnam War was a popular topic and some of the work barely achieved this, although the war involved several states other than the USA and Vietnam. The focus of the enquiry should be on the significance of the events chosen, rather than just a description of what happened.

B954. Whose History? Few centres entered candidates for this Unit. Responses should analyse not just how, but why, the interpretations differ.

B955. Change over time. This Unit, familiar to SHP centres and therefore quite well-resourced, was tackled by few centres, answers were often more descriptive than analytical.

B956. Study in Depth. Work submitted for this Unit should have two parts: a source-based enquiry and the study of the role of an individual (which need not be source-based). This second assignment should not be a biography, but an analysis of the significance of the chosen individual.

For better marks in the first part, candidates need to move beyond trite source analysis. Many used the source only as information, or commented, often in rather facile terms, on its 'reliability'. Better source evaluation would arise from an Enquiry Question requiring candidates to comment on the usefulness of a batch of sources for answering it, which embraces reliability as well. Teachers would give candidates more to get their teeth into by choosing sources which make serious contrasts.

For better marks in the second part candidates need to analyse, as a part of their answer at least, the significance of this person. This section is not a biography, and does not have to be based around sources. The specification is very clear on this, with examples.

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 on a range of topics within the main enquiry, with different tasks tackling a range of objectives. Some Centres only presented two or three pieces of work, covering only one or two objectives. The distinction between these units and the Coursework Units, very clearly explained in the Specification, should be clear.

As in Unit B956 the source evaluation work, when covered, was often facile.

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 process of moderation of the Teacher Assessed Units if these items were removed and a list of the tasks set could be provided.

B957 Heritage Marketing. The link between the History and the marketing was often not very strong. An important document should be the Marketing Plan, making clear the target audience and how their needs were intended to be met. This needs to focus on the History, not on such peripheral issues as entrance facilities, souvenirs etc.

B958 Multi-media. The unit requires candidates to submit their own multi-media presentation. There were some good responses on a range of interesting subjects to the first part. The second part was not always presented.

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B959. Missing pages: the Migrant experience. An interesting range of topics were dealt with and teachers had clearly worked hard to assemble resources. The two questions – what were the reasons for migration and how successfully did migrants settle were both covered well.

B960. Archaeology. Only two centres entered for this unit, with small numbers of candidates, but the objectives of the Unit were well-met in both cases.

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