

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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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R434 Entry Level History

The History Entry Level certificate benefitted this year from having just the one entry option for centres, with no legacy specification running alongside and working from a slightly different template. Consequently, most centres used the award effectively.

Once again, it is humbling to see the number of centres and teachers who work so hard preparing materials and marking with great care the work of students at this level. The best centres appear to realise that the greatest benefit of the course is its flexibility and scope for providing candidates with a range of useful skills. As a result, they had used a mixture of the OCR tasks that are provided alongside some of their own, some aspects being practical, some involving comprehension and some source based. It is pleasing to see work that allows the candidates to write openly rather than restricted to a solid diet of closed questions. With the right scaffolding, candidates managed to produce some very capable ideas. Where teachers follow their own interests, they also often manage to enthuse their candidates and this was evident in the work submitted.

The one issue that holds some candidates back is the time allocated for Task 2 – Study of an Individual. It is worth 50% of the marks for the qualification, and centres need to ensure candidates have the time necessary to develop their knowledge and then produce this piece of work. In most cases the first part – biography – is managed well, but the second part – why the individual was important – is much less assured. The Entry Level exemplar material on the website gives helpful suggestions for candidates to see how this part of the assessment can be approached. Careful selection of four or five simple sources can also provide candidates with some stimulus to make appropriate observations.

Once again, the moderating process for the Entry Award reminded us that the process holds considerable benefits to certain candidates, who for a variety of reasons struggle with all the aspects of the GCSE. The quality and understanding shown by much of the work illustrated that understanding and interest had been generated.

Most centres also used the appropriate labels, mark schemes and front sheets which all helps with the process. The bulk of centres also managed to keep to deadlines. When this is not the case, it would be helpful if OCR were kept informed.

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