

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y224/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

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. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper Y224/01 series overview

Overall, the responses from this year's cohort generally showed good levels of detailed knowledge of the parts of the periods being examined, particularly those covered by the (b) questions, and there was clear evidence that centres had addressed areas of feedback in previous years' examiners' reports with candidates. There were far fewer answers than in previous years that imparted information rather than used it, and also far fewer responses that deviated away from the issue in the question onto the topic more generally, or defaulted to including less relevant information about their favoured topics. The next step for many candidates is to now look at moving from supported explanation into demonstrating at least some evaluation, analysis and supported judgement. This would help more answers, particularly in the longer essay, to move out of Level 4 and more securely into Level 5.

Balanced coverage of the period did remain an issue for many candidates which created problems in the short essay (a) as they had a lack of knowledge about either one or both of the factors. It remains very important that candidates learn the period and the specification content in a balanced way and avoid over concentrating on some areas at the expense of others. The period 1978-1994 remains a problem area for many candidates, and candidates often seem to have rather patchy or episodic knowledge with a lack of overall understanding of the main developments, and with obvious gaps in their knowledge of specific aspects of the specification content relating to this period. For example, they may know about the collapse of Apartheid by 1989, but then lack knowledge of the transition between 1989 to elections in 1994. They may know about the Soweto uprising of 1976 in a great deal of detail, but then be unable to convincingly discuss developments in opposition in the townships, or in other forms, after that date. It is very important that the period is covered and revised in a balanced way, as any combination of specification content could arise in an examination.


Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Which of the following was a greater political success for Nelson Mandela in the years 1989–1999?
- (i) His role in bringing about the elections of 1994
 - (ii) His leadership of the Government of National Unity

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

This question required candidates to draw on knowledge of the period from 1989 to 1999, specifically Mandela's role in two key developments, the progress towards the elections of 1994 and the Government of National Unity. The period between 1989 and 1994 has, in previous years, been a particular knowledge gap for many candidates, and it was pleasing to see that many centres had taken the comments in previous examiners' reports on board and students were well prepared on the developments in this period, and were able to draw on detailed knowledge. At the upper end of the mark range candidates were able to make use of detailed knowledge of both factors; at the mid-level candidates' comments about one of the factors were relevant and accurate but may have lacked detail or breadth. Some candidates were only able to demonstrate knowledge of one of the two factors which inevitably meant that their answers could only reach the lower levels of the marks scheme, and highlights the need for candidates to make sure that they have evenly spread knowledge of the whole period and all the developments and issues listed on the specification, rather than over concentrating on specific aspects. The very best answers engaged very specifically with *Mandela's* role in the above developments, and also evaluating whether they were a *political success* for *Mandela*, rather than evaluating them more generally.

	OCR support	The specific points that candidates' may have chosen to bring in about each factor are indicated on the marks scheme , although other relevant material was also given.
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Key point call out

There was a significant improvement seen this year in the range and breadth of candidates' knowledge in relation to the specification. It remains important, however, that candidates learn the specified developments in a balanced way, and make sure their knowledge adequately covers the whole date range of the specified period.

Question 1 (b)

(b)* Assess the reasons why the Apartheid system collapsed in 1989.

[20]



This was a broad formulation of question that tackles one of the significant historical issues within the specification, and a range of valid approaches was seen. Right through the range of marks candidates exhibited an understanding of which factors could be relevant to discuss, and most candidates were able to draw on at least some relevant, detailed evidence. There were two main features which distinguished higher level answers from those at the middle to lower range of the spread of marks. First, these answers engaged directly with the issue of why Apartheid collapsed *in 1989*, and, whilst they showed an understanding of the historical background, they particularly focused on the relevant developments from about the late 1970s onwards which destabilised and threatened the system. Weaker responses discussed relevant factors such as international or domestic opposition, but relied too heavily on material from the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when, of course, the consequence of these developments was *not* the collapse of Apartheid. Second, at the upper range of marks candidates were able to provide a *supported* evaluation of the *relative* importance of different factors. It was clear that many centres had prepared candidates well for just this sort of analysis through their own teaching and learning activities, and candidates knew how to apply relevant knowledge to evaluate and reach a judgement on this issue, rather than just using it to support explanation. Some candidates did an exceptional job of synthesising a large amount of relevant knowledge into 3-4 main paragraphs, intro and conclusion. It was not necessary, however, to include *every* relevant factor; the quality of analysis and evaluation was the most important differentiator.

Exemplar 1

The reasons for the end of Apartheid have been hotly debated over the years, and even at the time, in terms of whether it was the international opposition, internal opposition, or the failing economy which ultimately led to the Apartheid system collapsing, and I believe that the most important reason was ultimately the economy which was the final catalyst. While it is true that both internal and international opposition did increase during the 1980s, these threats had existed against the Apartheid regime for a long time, and therefore while they had an impact, the overall clinching reason for the end was when the whites themselves began to feel the effect of Apartheid after the economy crumbled after Botha's Rubicon Speech. Therefore, while international and internal unrest certainly caused problems which culminated in the end of Apartheid, the most significant reason for it ending was the failing economy.

Overall, while internal unrest and international opposition certainly helped to create an atmosphere in South Africa in which there was no choice other than completely changing the system, these factors were only significant because of their effect on the South African economy, therefore the failing economy was the most important reason. This is because the internal and international opposition had been ongoing for decades, but once the white South Africans started to experience negative effects from Apartheid instead of the previous positive ones including high growth rates of 7% and profits of 25%, this forced the Apartheid system to change. Indeed the internal opposition could somewhat be argued to have delayed the movement to an end to Apartheid, as seen with David Shepherd explaining that it made the whites more afraid of reform. Therefore the most important factor in terms of the final reason for the end of Apartheid, was the economic failure experienced in the 1980s.

In this extract the candidate planned their answer before writing, with the consequence that they had a clear line of argument that was advanced throughout the essay, as can be seen from a comparison of the intro and conclusion. They made use of their knowledge to help an evaluation of the relative importance of different factors. This was consistent throughout the essay, with each paragraph concluding with a couple of sentences evaluating the relative importance of the factor in a supported way. Knowledge was used throughout to evaluate the importance of the factors rather than simply explain them. This was a Level 6 response.

Question 2 (a)

2 (a) Which of the following was a greater threat to the Apartheid state in the years 1978–1989?

- (i) The United Democratic Front
- (ii) Township Unrest

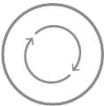
Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

The UDF was a relevant development in opposition to Apartheid in the 1980s, with, among other things, the effect of disrupting Botha’s planned constitutional reforms. It also represented a large, coordinated body of multi-racial opposition. Some candidates struggled with this aspect. This hampered many candidates’ answers, and meant that even where they had relevant knowledge of township unrest, their answer to the question was very partial and was accordingly marked at the lower levels of the marks scheme.

Knowledge of township unrest was generally better, but a fairly large number of candidates fell back on discussion of Soweto which falls outside of the period, rather than talking of more relevant examples like the Vaal Triangle Uprising.

The period 1978-1989 appears to be, an area some candidates feel less confident on, and this may be an area where centres can support candidates with balanced revision activities so that they are able to respond as well to questions on this period as others.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>In preparation for revision, candidates could work through the specification and ‘traffic light’ code all individual sub-bullet points. They could code areas they feel confident on with a green highlighter; areas they feel moderately confident on with an orange highlighter; areas they feel least confident on with a red/pink highlighter. Past paper questions and other teacher-assessed activities could contribute to students’ diagnosis of their strengths/weaknesses. Students could then be encouraged to plan their revision activities to begin with the ‘red’ and then ‘amber’ areas, to devote most time to their weakest areas, and have multiple opportunities to revisit these areas. This avoids them over concentrating on areas they known best. The specification could be re-coded several times over the course of revision to ensure revision remains focused on priority areas.</p>
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Question 2 (b)

(b)* How far was South Africa transformed between 1948 and 1958?

[20]

In previous years when the first decade of Apartheid has been examined there has been a tendency for candidates to impart knowledge about the various legislation and/or developments in opposition, rather than use it to answer the question. It was pleasing this year to see that in all but a small number of cases candidates were able to use their knowledge more effectively to engage with the specific demands of the question and evaluate the issue of *transformation*. In many cases, however, candidates were not able to move beyond the mid-levels of the marks scheme as they explained *how* South Africa was transformed, instead of evaluating *how far* it was transformed. It was necessary, to reach the upper levels of the marks scheme, to provide a two-sided response, with a counterargument also being brought in. Some candidates chose to bring in knowledge they had of the pre-1948 period, to discuss examples of continuity, but it was not necessary to have such knowledge to answer the question. All candidates, without exception, would have significantly benefitted from more knowledge of the limitations to change *within the period in question*, for example, which areas remained unsegregated, or where the government was not able to fully enact their desired policies, examples of which can be found in the marks scheme (although other relevant examples were brought in by some candidates and were credited where present). Candidates would also have benefitted, in many cases, from a more nuanced understanding of change *within* the specified date range, rather than treating it as homogenous. For example, they might have talked about the significance of the move toward 'Grand Apartheid'.

Some candidates chose to answer this question by talking only about the development of a system of Apartheid, others discussed wider ranging economic and political changes alongside. Both approaches were valid.

Key point call out

Call out: When learning the developments in the Apartheid system, it is better if candidates move beyond describing the government's intentions with specific legislation, and are able to discuss what the effects actually were in practice. Similarly, it is important they also understand the limitations to the Apartheid system. Detailed evidence is helpful to support this. For example, candidates may wish to learn some relevant statistics.

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