

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

HISTORY A

**OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in History A**

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y251/01 Summer 2025 series

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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. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. 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.

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Paper Y251/01 series overview

Y251 is one of five non-British Period Study units for Paper 2 for the AS Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests a period of study of about 50 years through a traditional essay and an essay based on evaluating an interpretation.

The paper is divided into two sections. The first two questions, in Section A, are traditional essay questions and the candidate is required to answer one of them. The third question, in Section B, is the compulsory interpretation question.

To do well on Section A, candidates needed to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. To reach the higher Levels candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement at least in the conclusion.

To do well in Section B, candidates needed to focus on evaluating the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- discussed at least two issues in depth in answering the essay question - used supporting detail which was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic - reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question - avoided listing factors in essays and instead evaluated their comparative importance to the given question - made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question - in answering the interpretation question demonstrated knowledge of the historical context and the wider historical debate and used this to analyse the interpretation and evaluated its strengths and weaknesses.	- were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question - showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay - were unable to support their answer with relevant or accurate material - did not focus on the precise wording of the question - made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions - considered only strengths or limitations on the interpretation question - considered the interpretation loosely or wrote a general essay question on the topic.

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Section A overview

Two essays are set, each from a different key topic. Here the candidates were asked whether the religious policies of the Nazis achieved their aims or whether the DDR was more successful in bringing about social rather than economic change. The questions set require candidates to analyse causes and consequences of major historical issues.

Question 1*

1* 'The religious policies of the Nazi government achieved their aims in the period from 1933 to 1939.'

How far do you agree?

[30]

This was the more popular of the two essay questions and it elicited a full range of responses. For some candidates there was a tendency to examine Nazi aims in general, rather than focusing on their religious policies and this meant that responses were not sufficiently focused on the key aspects of the question. Several candidates confused the Catholic and Protestant Churches as well as policies towards them. Several candidates wrote about the anti-Semitic actions of the Nazis but did not focus on the religious aspects of these policies and strayed into description. The German Faith movement's success was also over-estimated by some candidates. Better responses were able to differentiate between areas where their aims were achieved, including the initial successes of the Concordat and the formation of the Reich Church and areas where they failed to achieve their aims, with many pointing to the growth of the Confessional Church and the influence of individual dissenters such as Bonhoeffer and Galen.

Question 2*

2* 'The DDR (East Germany) was more successful in bringing about social change than economic change during the period from 1949 to 1963.'

How far do you agree?

[30]

This question was less popular and elicited far fewer responses. The question expected candidates to compare the successes of social and economic change within the DDR, examining such aspects as educational opportunities, social welfare schemes, the growth of managerial opportunities for workers and improvements for women and compare these to economic changes such as land redistribution, nationalisation of industry, improvements to standard of living and the stabilisation of the workforce following the building of the Berlin Wall.

Exemplar 1

2.		The DDR was established of five months after the Stalin lifted the blockade in 1949. It was led by Ulbricht (SED), he made implemented social changes to to improve people's lives like women had had more involvement in the society and education system ^{was} completely changed and deNazified. The The economic policies that he implemented were collectivisation and nationalisation. Both faced difficulty as people did not like Ulbricht's 'building of the Socialist' and did not conform. Many left East for West due to the unpopular ^{economic} policies. Therefore, DDR was more successful in bringing about social changes than economic change.
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Exemplar 1 demonstrates a strong opening paragraph which sets out the parameters of the candidate's argument, with such introductions generally being a feature of strong responses. The following response was given a mark in L4.

Assessment for learning



Strong introductions will set out the parameters of a candidate's argument and establish an initial view that will then form a line of argument throughout the rest of the essay.

Section B overview

In this section candidates were asked to consider a short interpretation that stated that it was the army's involvement in politics from an early stage that was the most important factor in weakening the new German government 1919-23.

To do well candidates needed to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation while making references to other interpretations. Other interpretations that are considered as part of evaluation and analysis do not need to be attributed to specific named historians, but they must be recognisable historical interpretations, rather than the candidate's own viewpoint.

Question 3

- 3 Read the interpretation and answer the question that follows.

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Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation for the period from 1919 to 1923, making reference to other interpretations you have studied.

[20]

This question elicited a wide range of responses, with strong responses analysing different interpretations and assessing the strengths and limitations of this interpretation with strong contextual knowledge. Good answers were balanced, analytical and well supported when justifying their response to the interpretation. Strengths of the interpretation were supported by examining the Ebert-Groener Pact as well as the propagation of the stab in the back theory and the labelling of Weimar politicians as the November Criminals, which were popular within military circles. Other strengths focused on the relationship between the army and the Freikorps as well as involvement in the Kapp Putsch. Limitations of the interpretation tended to examine the unpopularity of the Versailles Treaty, constitutional weaknesses, paramilitary violence and economic weaknesses including the post-war depression and the 1923 hyperinflation crisis.

Exemplar 2

		On the one hand, it would be a strength of the interpretation to argue that the army's involvement created instability in the new German government as it was the decision of General Ludendorff in the previous year to its formation who had advocated for a civilian-led government but more pertinently to the topic at hand, led to the violence seen in 1919-23, as it had been he who had promoted the 'stab-in-the-back myth' which caused so much dissent in these years and resulted in the assassination of high-profile figures such as Dr Walter Rathenau Alten, who had signed the armistice, and Matthias Erzberger was with them and those in government subsequently branded as 'November criminals' from 1919 to 1923. Furthermore, the interpretation is also right to argue that the involvement of figures such as the aforementioned Ludendorff in the Munich Putsch of November 1923 did much to weaken the government with the result of the Putsch itself and the perceived deficiency of the current ^{then} chancellor Gustav Stresemann, causing Stresemann to have to resign from his post, creating further instability in the German government. Therefore, due to the involvement of high-profile army leaders in actual uprisings and the fact that they had refused to deal with those such as Wolfgang Kapp, who they were aligned with, means the interpretation certainly has some strengths in arguing the army were the most important factor for the government's weakening.
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This excerpt shows a good response that examines strengths, while maintaining a close focus on the interpretation. Stronger responses maintain this focus rather than drift into long passages of contextual knowledge.

Assessment for learning



In responding to the interpretation question candidates must stick closely to the wording of the text and focus on this when examining strengths and limitations.

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