

GCE



Revised GCE
History

Student Guidance

AS Unit 1: Planning for Success
Examination Advice for Students

For first teaching from September 2016
For first award of AS Level in Summer 2017
For first award of A Level in Summer 2018



Planning for Success - Examination Advice

Students make the same mistakes each year in GCE History. The advice below will help you to avoid making these common errors giving you the best chance of success in CCEA History examination papers.

General Guidance

Reading the question:

- Read the question carefully;
- Every question has a key instruction, for example, 'Explain', 'Analyse', 'To what extent...?', 'How far...?', 'Assess'. Make sure you follow this instruction in your answer;
- Underline the key issues and key words that appear in the question - this will help you to concentrate on them;
- Pay close attention to any dates specified in the question. Your answer must cover the full range of dates given in the question - it is a common mistake to cover only part of the specified dates or to start later or stop earlier than the date given; and
- If you misinterpret the question, your answer will be irrelevant and lack focus.

Answering the question:

- Write a brief plan. Plans are not marked but they will help you to organise and structure your answer;
- Do not write out the question. This is unnecessary and wastes valuable time;
- Make sure that you clearly write down the correct number of the question you are answering;
- Stay focused on the question. A good way of doing this is to try and use the key words in the question throughout your answer;
- Keep asking yourself if you are answering the question. This will help to ensure that your answer is sharp and relevant and that you do not wander off the topic;
- Answer the question asked, not the one you want to answer or one that you have rehearsed; and
- Be selective with your evidence. Avoid the temptation to put everything you know down on paper.

Communicating your ideas:

- Practise writing accurately before the examination;
- Pay attention to the structure and coherence of your essays;
- Write legibly;
- Use good grammar;
- Watch your spelling and punctuation;
- Do not use text language; and
- Avoid abbreviations such as 'Liz' for Elizabeth I, 'parl' for parliament, 'DOC' for Daniel O'Connell, 'govt' for government. Common abbreviations that appear in textbooks, such as IPP or GAA, are acceptable but they should be written out in full the first time you use them.

Managing your time:

- Look at the marks awarded for each question - this is usually a good guide as to how much time you should spend on your answer;
- If you are half way through planning an answer and realise that you have picked the 'wrong' question, it is not too late to change;
- Don't waste time writing details and facts that do not help to answer the question; and
- Leave a little time at the end of the examination to check your answers.

Examinations can be stressful as you will not have seen the questions before. However, you will have covered the entire course and have had many opportunities to practise similar past paper questions as part of your preparation, so have confidence in yourself.

Planning for Success – Examination Advice for AS Level Candidates

AS Unit 1

Total time 1 hour 30 minutes

Question 1

Short response question

Total marks available: 10.

Spend approximately 15 minutes on this question.

A choice of **2** questions (either 1a or 1b) - you answer **1** of these.

Quality of written communication is assessed in this question.

A typical question for **1(a)** or **1(b)** might read like this:

Analyse why Piedmont played a leading role in the unification of Italy in the period 1848-1860.

- The question will always begin with the word ‘**analyse**’. It may ask you to analyse ‘how’ or ‘why’ something happened; it may ask you to analyse the ‘impact’ or ‘significance’ of a policy, an event or an individual
- Be careful not to tell a story but analyse the specific issue raised by the question, such as the causes or consequences of a particular historical event. It is necessary to show understanding of historical issues in order to obtain higher level marks. It is not sufficient to simply present a list - you must analyse and explain your points to reach the top level marks
- In this question you are not required to argue, so don’t waste time arguing/debating in your response. The question is there to test your knowledge and understanding of historical content, not your ability to formulate an argument
- You cannot afford to spend time analysing or explaining one point at length at the expense of introducing others into your answer
- Stick to the question asked
- Whilst neither an introduction nor a conclusion is required in the 10 mark question, quality of written communication is assessed
- Avoid factual errors – if in doubt, leave it out

Question 2(a)

Source Work

Total marks available: 20.

Approximately 10 minutes reading time.

Approximately 20 minutes writing your answer.

Quality of written communication is not assessed in this question.

A typical question for **2(a)** might read like this:

Study Source 1. How useful is it as evidence for an historian studying the reasons for the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933? You must use contextual knowledge in your answer (20 marks)

- Remember that Source 1 will always be a primary source
- Read Source 1 with particular care to make sure that you understand what it is saying. This will help you to place in context the information the source provides and/or the opinions it is expressing. Underline important aspects of the source, such as the date and the author. Think of its tone and language. Look out for its strengths **and** weaknesses; jot them down or underline them as you read the source to help you to assess its usefulness
- It is important to read carefully the caption which introduces Source 1 because it has been written to help you to understand the source and answer Question 2(a)
- Remember to comment on all of the **key** areas of the source. Start with the content because this is very important. You should also discuss the author, date, audience, type of source, motive and tone/language
- Look at what is **useful** about the source but also remember to include in your evaluation its **limitations**. Bear in mind that every source is of some use to an historian, but it will always have some limitations. For example, a source might be useful because it gives one opinion on a particular event. However, in giving only one perspective, it is limited in its usefulness to the historian. To gain a full picture of the different opinions about the event, the historian would need to consult other sources. For example, the Prussian King's Declaration of War against Austria on 18 June 1866 provides a Prussian perspective on the causes of the Austro-Prussian War but, in order to gain a fuller and more balanced assessment of the reasons for the outbreak of the conflict, an historian would need to consult the Austrian Emperor's Manifesto of War, published the previous day. Bear in mind that the date of a source is often useful to an historian but it can also be a limitation. For example, the usefulness of Sir Robert Peel's Tamworth Manifesto of December 1834 for an historian studying the creation of the Conservative Party from 1834 to 1841 is limited by its date because it cannot tell us anything about developments between 1835 and 1841
- Try to focus on the **date** of the source as this will set it in context and will allow you to bring in your knowledge related to the context of the source. For example, think of other events which took place before, at the time and/or after the source was written. It is only one source; it can't tell you everything. This is your chance to say what it fails to tell you about the event or issue in the question. A full and comprehensive discussion of the source will include relevant contextual knowledge

- Remember the question – how useful is this one source in telling you about this particular event? Don't discuss the usefulness of a source in general terms; you must be specific
- Avoid using vague statements, such as: 'Source 1 is biased because it was from one man, who represented no one but himself' or 'Source 1 is useful because it is a primary source'

Question 2(b)

Evaluation of two different historical interpretations

Total marks available: 30.

Reading time: 10 minutes

Spend approximately 35 minutes writing your answer.

Quality of written communication is not assessed in this question.

This question will ask you to evaluate which of two different interpretations of a particular historical event or development you find more convincing.

A typical question for **2(b)** might read like this:

Study Interpretation A and Interpretation B. Historians have different views about particular issues. Using both interpretations, and your understanding of the historical context, which of these different interpretations of the reasons for the Nazis' rise to power from 1930 until 30 January 1933 do you find more convincing? (30 marks)

- Read Interpretation A and Interpretation B with particular care to make sure that you understand what they are saying. This will help you to place in context the opinions and views which the authors are expressing. Underline important aspects of the extracts
- When you have understood what the interpretations are saying, think about **other evidence** you can bring in to your answer which is not included in the extracts but is directly related to the arguments they contain
- In your answer you should analyse and evaluate the **two** interpretations contained in the extracts
- Use short extracts from the interpretations to support or reinforce what you are saying. Do not write out the extracts at length
- You are expected to include relevant contextual knowledge in your answer. 'Contextual knowledge' is evidence you bring in to your answer which is not included in the interpretations but is directly related to the arguments they contain. For example, if one interpretation argues that the Great Depression was the most important reason for the Nazis' rise to power in January 1933, you could support this argument by citing the unemployment figures in Germany between 1929 and 1932

- You will not gain any marks for knowledge you include in your answer which is **not** directly related to the arguments contained in the interpretations. For example, if one interpretation is of the view that economic factors were the most important reason for the unification of Germany in 1871, while the other maintains that Bismarck was the key factor, you will not gain any extra marks if you discuss the excellence of Prussia's military leaders since they are not in any way linked to the arguments in either of the interpretations
- You do not need to mention the names or views of any other historians in your response. Simply focus on the interpretations of the two authors
- You must identify which of the two different interpretations you find more convincing and provide evidence to support your judgement. Top level responses will provide a clear and explicit judgement at the end of the answer, supported by evidence from the interpretations and your own contextual knowledge
- Examiners will always reward a candidate whose answer is relevant, clearly structured and coherent. The examiner should not have to search through your answer for the relevant information.