

GCE



Revised GCE  
**History**

Student Guidance

AS Unit 2: 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 for GCE History Candidates**

**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 2

**Total time 1 hour 30 minutes**

#### Overview

Answer **2** questions out of **3**.

You must do the **8** mark and the **22** mark questions from the question chosen - you **cannot mix and match** across different questions.

Spend approximately **10** minutes on the 8 mark question.

Spend approximately **35** minutes on the 22 mark question.

QWC will be assessed in **both** questions.

#### 8 mark questions

A typical 8 mark question might read like this:

Explain the consequences of Stalin's policy of industrialisation for the Soviet Union up to 1941.

- Highlight or underline key words in the question to help you to structure your answer
- Make sure that you address the full range of dates mentioned in the question
- In the 8 mark questions remember to include in your answer as many relevant points as you can. There is no time to go into great detail on any one point. While you have only a short time to answer this question, it is necessary to demonstrate your understanding of historical issues in order to obtain higher level marks. It is not enough to present a list
- The 8 mark questions do not require you to argue or reach a judgement. You just have to **explain**, so don't waste time arguing in your response. The question is there to test your knowledge and understanding of historical content not your ability to formulate an argument. Be careful not to write a narrative of what happened rather than answering the specific issue raised by the question such as the aims of a policy or the reasons for a particular historical event
- In the 8 mark questions do **not** write your answer in bullet points
- Neither an introduction nor a conclusion is required in the 8 mark questions
- Try to include specific information in your answer, such as statistics and the names of individuals
- Remember the importance of accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation

- Historians are expected to be able to communicate in clear and accurate English. Examiners understand that you are writing your answers under pressure and occasional mistakes in grammar and spelling will be overlooked. However, frequent grammatical errors and simple spelling mistakes are seen by examiners as a sign of carelessness. You must get into the habit of writing accurately

## 22 mark questions

A typical 22 mark question might read like this:

How far would you agree that Stalin's use of terror was the most important basis of his power in the Soviet Union between 1929 and 1941?

- Highlight or underline key words in the question to help you to structure your answer
- Make sure that you address the full range of dates mentioned in the question
- In the 22 mark questions you will be expected to present arguments and make judgements backed up by relevant supporting evidence
- The 22 mark questions will require you to assess or evaluate a statement or a quotation, covering both sides of the argument. For example, a question may ask 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' a particular factor was responsible for bringing about a key historical event. Your answer should focus on the **factor that appears in the question** and then discuss other relevant factors which were responsible for bringing about the event. A common problem examiners find with essay answers is that they only cover one side of the argument. For example, if the question asks '*How far were economic factors responsible for the collapse of Liberal Italy in 1922?*', candidates would be required to assess not just the importance of economic factors but also the other factors which helped to bring about the fall of Liberal Italy
- Similarly, if a question asks you, for example, 'How successful' a government's economic policy was, you will be expected to discuss **both** the successful and unsuccessful aspects of this policy. You must support your argument with relevant evidence, but also make sure that you cover 'the other side' of the debate. Even if you know what your main argument is going to be, you need to discuss alternative arguments and show why you consider them to be less important
- You must include an introduction and a conclusion in the 22 mark questions
- The **introduction** should be short and to the point. It should set the scene for the essay. It introduces the issues you are going to discuss in the main body of your answer. Refer to the exact wording of the question in your introduction to make sure that you are answering the right question. Do not write a lot of background information or give lengthy descriptions. Avoid writing in the first person or making general statements which tell the examiner nothing. For example, do not write: 'In my essay I will look firstly at religious factors that

were responsible for the outbreak of war. I will then discuss other factors which also contributed to the war and then I will reach my conclusion'

- A good **conclusion** will emphasise the main arguments put forward in the body of your essay and reach a clear, logical judgement. Use the conclusion to state your argument very clearly (although it should be very obvious by this stage) and relate it back to the essay title. New ideas or arguments should not be brought into the conclusion. Keep your conclusion short and to the point. Bear in mind that a coherent, convincing and well written conclusion is bound to make a favourable impression on an examiner who is about to award you a mark for the essay!
- Remember the importance of accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation. Historians are expected to be able to communicate in clear and accurate English. Examiners understand that you are writing your answers under pressure and occasional mistakes in grammar and spelling will be overlooked. However, frequent grammatical errors and simple spelling mistakes are seen by examiners as a sign of carelessness. You must get into the habit of writing accurately

