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History A

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History A

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE J415**

Reports on the Units

June 2010

J415/R/10

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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.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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A951/11-14

The overall performance of candidates was not nearly as good as that usually seen on previous (legacy) version of this specification. Most of the candidates were sitting the examination at the end of Year 10 – one year earlier than has previously been normally the case. The differences were clear. Many of the candidates lacked maturity of understanding and depth of knowledge. They occasionally showed flashes of potential, insight, knowledge and understanding, but were unable to sustain a high level of performance consistently across a number of questions. In the Development Study, candidates lacked an overall grasp of the study and their chronological understanding faltered in places. In the Depth Studies there was a lack of depth of understanding and knowledge. Explanations were often brief, undeveloped and lacked depth of detail. However, the weakest answers were those on the source questions, where many candidates got no further than surface information and very few were able to use their contextual knowledge and understanding to make informed inferences.

A worrying number of candidates also appeared to be unfamiliar with the layout and organisation of the paper, resulting in a high number of rubric errors with candidates attempting to answer every question on the paper including questions on both Medicine and Crime and Punishment.

The overall entry was very small, totalling a few hundred in all. In the Development Study section most candidates answered the questions on Medicine. Germany was the most popular Depth Study and there were very small entries for Elizabethan England and the American West.

Development Studies

Only a few candidates had a good overall grasp of the Development Study they had studied. Some knew small isolated sections well, but few were able to range across the centuries with any certainty. Both individuals and events were sometimes placed in the wrong century and few candidates made meaningful connections across time.

Medicine

In response to 1(a) most candidates were able to make reasonable inferences about Egyptian medicine from Source A but many struggled with Source B and some simply dismissed it as useless. A few candidates wrote good answers to (b). They recognised bloodletting and were able to use the date (and some even used the reference to the Muslim doctor) to write intelligently about the development of medicine and the use of the Four Humours. Other candidates had no idea what the source was about and explanations ranged from the Black Death to Paré. Part (c) was answered reasonably well with most candidates understanding that the cartoon was criticising the use of anaesthetics, although far fewer were able to place it into any meaningful context.

Candidates did rather better on the structured essay questions. None of the questions were more popular than others. Question 2 was generally well answered with some good comparisons made for part (c). Prehistoric medicine and the Black Death were reasonably well known and understood. Some of the answers to all parts of Question 3 lacked specific examples. In factor questions low marks are always awarded to answers that are general and could apply to almost any period. In Question 4, (a) was answered well but in (b) many candidates described the work of Harvey rather than explaining why it was important. For part (c) few candidates could find reasons other than the work of Jenner.

Crime and Punishment

There were few legitimate answers to the questions on Crime and Punishment, although quite a number of candidates answered them by mistake after completing the questions on Medicine. Question 1(a) was answered reasonably well, but candidates struggled with interpreting Sources B and C for part (b). In (c) few reasons were offered for the Rebecca Riots other than those mentioned in the source. Much of the knowledge in the answers to the structured essay questions was vague and precise knowledge was often lacking.

Depth Studies

There was a general lack of knowledge and understanding in depth. Contextual knowledge was rarely used to place sources in context and to interpret them. In the structured essay questions, answers to part (a) were often vague while in (b) many answers failed to get beyond identifying causal factors.

Elizabethan England

There were very few candidates for this option. In response to 5(a) some candidates wrote very general answers and failed to mention vagrancy but there were better answers to (b) with some candidates having knowledge and understanding of a number of reasons. Answers to (c) were generally poor with many candidates failing to use contextual knowledge of the period.

In Question 6 parts (a) and (b) were answered better than (c). Question 7 was more popular although part (a) was not answered well. Answers to 9(b) and 9(c) were better although some candidates ignored the date in (b).

Britain 1815-51

There were no entries for this option.

American West

There were very few candidates for this option. Answers to 5(a) were generally good with candidates demonstrating reasonable knowledge of the function of the items in the photograph. However, few directly addressed the 'how useful' part of the question. Many answers to (b) were vague and lacked precise reasons for being or not being surprised. There was also some failure to make clear which aspects of the source were being addressed. Answers to (c) were better with good knowledge demonstrated of why the Indians disliked reservations.

In the structured essay questions many candidates insisted on writing about the outside of homesteads for 6(a) but answers to (b) and (c) were better. Question 7 was answered reasonably well with some candidates demonstrating good knowledge of issues of law and order.

Germany

In response to 5(a) few candidates placed their answers in the context of the Munich Putsch and most simply wrote that they were surprised because they knew that Hitler was a violent character. Understanding of Source B was better and there were some good answers. Few candidates totally misunderstood the poster. There was some misunderstanding about Source C. Some candidates thought it was about taking women out of work and failed to base their analysis in the context of 1942.

Answers to the structured essay questions were a little better, although knowledge of events in 1933-4 (6b) was no better than vague. In response to Question 7(a) candidates wrote as much about schools as about the Hitler Youth. Answers to parts (b) and (c) were rather better.

A952/21 Developments in British Medicine, 1200-1945

General Comments

This was the first examination of the June paper of the new specification. The paper was accessible to the candidates, posing no particular problems in responding positively to the questions. Candidates displayed a pleasing ability to deal with a range of sources and discuss a central proposition. However, there was a tendency for some candidates to address issues that were not relevant to the particular question. In addition, a significant number of candidates struggled to interpret some of the sources. Moreover, candidates sometimes displayed a lack of conceptual development in trying to provide answers to questions that required a broad overview.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

The question required candidates to use the specific information in Source A to reach general conclusions about quack doctors. This was generally answered well. There were a range of good inferences made by candidates. However, some used this as an opportunity to write down all they knew about quacks, without making specific reference to the source or addressing the question directly. A further weakness was that, occasionally, some candidates did not support the inferences they made by showing how the source could offer support. However, it was pleasing to see that a good number of candidates made inferences, offered source support and further substantiation from their contextual knowledge.

Question 2

Most candidates used the source to make inferences about the work of quack doctors and their relationship with professional doctors. It was pleasing to note that most candidates made direct reference to the source. Higher marks were available to those candidates who also used contextual knowledge and made reference to other sources to put this patient's trust in quack doctors into context.

Question 3

When answering questions about the utility of sources, candidates need to be able to go beyond the detail in the sources and make evaluative comments based on the message and purpose of the source. In this case, the dictionary definitions reflect the 'establishment view' of quack doctors at that time. The message of the source is revealed in the language and tone of the source, which are clearly anti-quack doctors. Even so, the most able candidates ought to be able to recognise the use of a source like this in revealing the commonly held views at that time.

Question 4

Candidates often struggle with answers based on comparison of sources. The most common faults are:

- Concentration on the simple provenance or dates of the sources.
- Misinterpretations of the message of the source (several candidates believed that Source E proved quack doctors could 'cure all ills').
- Description of the detail in one source, followed by description of the detail in the other source with the assumption that this is comparative.

The best answers were those which compared the similarities and differences in the tone, message and/or purpose of both sources. The tone and language of Source D is very harsh, whereas Source E is more light-hearted.

Question 5

In order to explore the notion of 'proof' candidates need to be able to use details from the source in order to put it into its historical context. They need to assess the typicality and limitations of the source. In this case, the picture shows **one** attack on **one** quack doctor in **one** locality. As such, it cannot prove that **all** quack doctors were unpopular in the **whole** of the eighteenth century. Many candidates were able to make good use of the source details to demonstrate the hostility of the crowd towards the quack doctor, and some went on to discuss the purpose of the unknown artist who produced this picture. If, as some speculated, this was designed to represent the views of professional doctors, then contextual knowledge and other sources (like Source D) could be used to back up this point.

Question 6

Although some of the sources offered straightforward material either for or against the given hypothesis, others could only be used by inference. Generally, the balance of the sources was against quack doctors. However, a pleasing number of candidates were able to address both sides of the argument. Several recognised the importance of Source G. Whilst this source did not prove that quack doctors made little contribution to caring for the sick, it at least put the work of quacks in perspective, given that professional doctors were often just as unpopular. The background information confirmed this point. However, there were some weaknesses in answers to this question:

- Some candidates failed to make direct use of sources, either failing to cite them by letter, or by failing to provide supporting detail.
- There was a general unwillingness to address the reliability or sufficiency of the sources in relation to the question.
- Some candidates resorted to 'source trotting'. That is, they simply went through the sources in order, giving a brief description of the content of each source without addressing the question directly.
- Some candidates lumped more than one source together and reached an overall conclusion which was not valid for all of the sources so listed.
- Some candidates had been clearly advised to tackle question 6 first, before answering any other questions on the paper. This is not sound advice. Candidates need to work through the earlier questions first in order to reach a rounded understanding of the sources before tackling the hypothesis in this final question. Only by doing this will they develop an overall perspective of the events covered and the sources used.

A952/22 Developments in Crime and Punishment in Britain, 1200-1945

General Comments

This was the first June examination on the new specification, though it should be emphasised that this brings little change to Paper 2, which continues with the same structure and approach. Given that the legacy specification was also being examined, there was a limited entry for this paper, presumably mainly of Year 10 candidates. Despite this, a full range of responses was seen, and candidates clearly found the topic of the paper – highwaymen – to their liking. There was little or no evidence of candidates experiencing time pressures, and neither the questions nor the sources posed any obvious comprehension problems.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

The first question generally requires no more than the ability to comprehend and make inferences from a source, and this was no exception. Candidates were given a source about a gentleman highwayman living in London in the mid-eighteenth century, and asked what they could tell from this about highwaymen. Answers which merely repeated or paraphrased the source gained few marks. However, most candidates were able to perceive that the source suggested things about highwaymen, without actually saying these things. The most obvious aspect was that they could be gentlemen, as the source indicated that he lived in a fashionable part of London, and mixed with members of the social elite. Other obvious inferences were possible; for example, that highwaymen could be violent, since this highwayman challenged an officer who doubted he was a gentleman to a duel. Making these inferences earned a reasonable level of reward, but the highest marks were given to answers which both made the inferences, and indicated how the source allowed the inferences to be reached.

Question 2

It is hard to fail to score on a question – indeed, all positive responses are given some reward. However, the one way to score zero is to fail to answer the question at all. This question asked candidates whether they were surprised by an account of a female highwayperson carrying out a robbery in Essex. If the answer failed ever to state whether or not the source was surprising, then whatever else was written could not possibly be perceived as a valid response. There were some candidates who did this, as there were similarly on Question 3, in which they failed to mention whether or not the source was useful. This problem can be easily avoided by instructing students to begin their answers with a statement directly responding to the question - *'I do find Source B surprising because ...'* – which then automatically validates everything that follows.

The aspect of the source that candidates usually found surprising was that the robbery was carried out by a woman. This awareness received a modest mark, but on its own ignored much else that the source mentioned. Nonetheless, it was a better answer than those that found nothing at all surprising, on the grounds that highway robbery went on all the time, so what was unusual about this one? Better answers went on to consider other aspects of what happened in this particular robbery, rather than judging whether or not they were surprised against their knowledge of highwaymen in general. Thus one could be surprised by the fact that the robbery was initially carried out by a highwaywoman, since this was undoubtedly a rare occurrence, yet unsurprised that this woman had a male accomplice, ready to intervene if the robbery went wrong – as indeed it did, since the butcher being robbed was so surprised by the behaviour of the woman that he did not understand she was robbing him. Only then did the highwayman ride

up and threaten to shoot him in the head. Unsurprisingly, this concentrated his mind, and he handed his money over. The highest marks went to answers that used cross-reference to other sources, or to specific contextual knowledge of other highwaymen (i.e. rather than to a generalised awareness that this was, or was not, the kind of thing that highwaymen did), to determine whether or not this robbery was surprising. A common comparison was with Source E, which also showed a tradesman being robbed, leading to the conclusion that the events in Source B were not, therefore, surprising.

Question 3

Candidates must surely be aware by now that the highest levels of response to utility questions must address ideas of reliability, and will require them to look beyond the surface of the source to see its true usefulness as evidence. This will never simply be the information it contains. About half of the marks can be earned by treating the source as information – *'It is useful because it shows...'*, *'It is not useful because it does not tell us...'*. The highest level answers adopt a more critical approach, and seek to evaluate the source content. This can mean doubting its reliability, but the problem with this approach is that it culminates in a conclusion that the source cannot be useful because it cannot be believed, which ignores the fact that its lack of reliability as factual information may actually be the key to understanding its true utility. The very best candidates can see how the source may be used as evidence, despite, or even because of, its shortcomings as factual information.

This question gave candidates the words of a popular song about the trial of a highwayman who fitted the stereotype of a 'gentleman of the road' – he fed and clothed the poor, robbing only from the rich. Many candidates were happy to conclude that it was indeed useful to learn that this was how highwaymen behaved. Needless to say, this was not getting very far. There were several types of answer that, while not simply accepting what the source said, still were unable to produce a sound answer. There was much low-level evaluation by source type – *it's not useful because it's a song, and it could have been written by the highwayman who would just want to make himself look good*. As always, there were answers that focused on what the source did not say – that is, on what it did not tell us about highwaymen. Finally, and a little better, were those answers that used what was actually happening in the source as evidence that it must be unreliable. These argued that, since the highwayman was on trial for his life, he would obviously try and make himself sound not guilty, and would therefore exaggerate any good deeds he had done (or, indeed, fabricate them).

All these answers fell short of using the source critically in a proper fashion. The key to the higher levels was not simply realising that the source could not be taken as fact, but being able to demonstrate this, using its content. Those who sought to reject it as unreliable had two possible routes, both equally rewarded. They could show that it presented a romanticised image of highwaymen that was at variance with what they were truly like, or they could show its unreliability using cross-reference (which would generally be to other sources, but could be to knowledge of the behaviour of specific individual highwaymen). This left those candidates who could see through the unreliability and perceive the true utility of the source, which was, of course, as evidence of how people liked to think of highwaymen. People were interested in highwaymen, and the myth of the glamorous 'gentleman of the road' was very appealing, as comparable myths about other bandits and outlaws have been through the centuries.

Question 4

In the end, this turned out to be a very accessible question, on which most candidates were able to score well. However, in one significant way, the answers confounded the expectations of the examiners. Candidates were asked to compare two pictures of highwaymen. One was highly romanticised, the other gloomily realistic. Only a tiny minority of answers detected this difference. Instead, answers focused on comparing details of what the sources showed, whilst ignoring the overall impression of highwaymen they gave. The explanation may lie in what the

romanticised picture actually shows. Its main protagonist – a stereotypical gentleman highwayman, courteously greeting the lady being robbed – is accompanied by a bunch of ruffians who are brutally robbing the other occupants of a coach. This serves to dilute the romanticised impression, and to offer a range of similarities with the more realistic picture. Fortunately, the direction candidates' answers were taking was detected before marking commenced, and although comparison of the overall impressions given by the sources remained the top level, it was possible to score almost full marks by making comparisons of details.

There were a few candidates who showed weakness in the skill of making comparisons. They would write first about one source, then the other, leaving it unclear what actually was being compared. However, most answers could spot some genuine similarities and/or differences. The most basic of these was the similarity of the topic – they both showed highwaymen carrying out a robbery – but there were also plenty of details that could be matched. Similarities included the violence being used, with firearms in both sources, details of the clothing of the highwaymen, wearing hats and spurs, and the location of the robberies, out in the countryside where detection was least likely. Differences included the robbery of the rich in one, the poor in the other; multiple highwaymen in one, a single highwayman in the other; and a mounted highwayman in one, highwaymen on foot in the other. Since the question asked 'How similar', higher marks were given to answers which included both similarities and differences.

Question 5

This proved to be the most demanding question on the paper. The task was to judge whether or not Source G – a highwayman's confession - could be believed. Many answers were dragged into discussion about the credibility of Source F, much of which was often totally irrelevant, since the only sense in which it mattered was the light it cast upon Source G. Source F was a 'Highwayman's Oath', yet in Source G the highwayman denies taking any such oath. It was remarkable how many candidates did not use this apparent contradiction, or when they attempted to, simply asserted that they nonetheless still believed Source G. What was often lacking was any clear reasoning to explain why something was /was not believable, and at the lowest level answers did no more than identify what was/was not believable. Reasons could be quite basic but still make some kind of sense. Some marks were allowed for answers that just used commonsense assertions about highwaymen – why would you believe a highway robber? Better answers could consider individual points made in Source G and discuss their likely plausibility/insincerity, but this almost always worked best if it built on an awareness that the issue of the oaths meant that he was possibly lying. The best answers were able to use aspects of the source to illustrate the likely purpose of the highwayman in saying what he did – that his life is at stake and he knows that he can save his own neck by saying the right things – and therefore concluding that he was probably lying.

Question 6

The requirements of Question 6 – to test a given hypothesis against the set of sources – should be familiar enough by now, but remarkably some candidates still fail to use the sources at all, and focus exclusively on the accuracy or otherwise of the hypothesis. This earns a low mark. Another aspect of the exercise is that candidates can always expect the sources to offer evidence both for and against the hypothesis, yet a significant number of candidates gave one-sided answers on the idea that highwaymen were (or were not) 'gentlemen of the road', again significantly limiting the number of marks that could be scored. The most important point to report, however, is that some candidates have considerable problems in using the content of a source to illustrate how it either does or does not support the hypothesis. It is commonplace to read comments that show awareness that a source can be used in support of one side or other, but fail to show how. For example: *'I think Source F shows that highwaymen were gentleman because it says they were ready to fight at all hours of day or night.'* Another problem was that the hypothesis itself confused a few candidates. This should not have happened since the Background Information clearly defined the meaning of 'gentlemen of the road' for those who did

not already recognise the term (which arguably they should anyway have done as a result of studying the course). Some candidates would therefore conclude that *'Source E shows they were gentlemen of the road because the robbery is taking place on a road.'* Nonetheless, the sources so clearly gave opportunities on both sides of the hypothesis – indeed most sources could be used to support both 'Yes' and 'No' – that most candidates were able to achieve a good mark. Finally, it should be mentioned that few candidates achieve the bonus marks available (1+1) for use of a source that does not simply take it at face value. These marks are not awarded for 'stock' comments about source types – *'this picture is reliable because it was painted at the time'* etc – even when these comments actually make some sense. Rather there needs to be an evaluation of source content that reveals how face-value treatment is not enough. For example, at face value Source C suggests that highwaymen were indeed gentlemen of the road, but this is misleading since we know that the poem offers a romanticised view of what people wanted highwaymen to be like, rather than an accurate account of what they did.

A953 Controlled Assessment Report

The experience of moderating SHP History in 2010 has been interesting. The centres who took the brave decision to dive into controlled assessment in the first year, to run alongside the final coursework of the legacy specifications, deserve praise for their decision. In many respects, it will pay long term dividends if they learn fully from the experiences of this year. For this reason, no apology is made for attempting to pass on some of these experiences to the majority of centres who waited, so that good systems and methods can be followed and problems can be avoided.

Clearly some centres had taken a great deal of trouble to prepare materials, or at the very least, to adapt one of their original assignments. Whether this actually worked in the controlled assessment depended on how closely they had observed what had changed, rather than what had stayed the same. Even though the two main options of History Around Us and Modern World Study have been retained to preserve the distinctive character and ethos of SHP History, much has changed.

The timed aspect may appear the most striking, but actually the focus of the assessment objectives played a greater part in deciding which centres prospered and which had difficulties. The very clear emphasis on answering the question and using the evidence which has been selected and deployed constitutes a significant move away from the way in which the two previous assignments were done. It was very clear in the assignments that were sent for moderation whether centres had fully grasped this change.

The work also reflected the skills and materials that groups had looked at in preparation for the assignment. Carefully considered packages of evidence were helpful for students to work from, whilst others seemed to have had little help in terms of overlong and poorly directed materials.

At the start of the eight hours, most centres seemed to heed the instruction that candidates were to select and deploy evidence for themselves. The minority that did not clearly showed this through the rigid format and source use of their students. There was also plenty of evidence that such structuring did little to help the average to lower ability students, whilst clearly restraining the most able. Centres are strongly advised to avoid employing such structuring methods. The results are clearly visible and do not assist the vast majority of candidates.

Feedback from teachers involved in this year's controlled assessment suggests anxiety over the changes that have had to be made and concerns over the ability of candidates to perform at their best. However, there has also been praise for controlled assessment for introducing supervision and security into the work, which coursework was struggling to retain. Very few students seemed to struggle to show the quality of their understanding because of time constraints.

There were also concerns about the new marking criteria, but there were many instances of good methods being applied. Most centres highlighted the parts of the work where they felt bands were being hit, whilst others used a copy of the bands to tick the overall position of a candidate. The use of a short summary for each candidate also helped. With the onus on the teacher to point out the strengths of the work, this represents another benefit of controlled assessment. There is now acknowledgement of a teacher's professional judgment in the application of the marking criteria.

Overall it has been pleasing to see how many centres and candidates have adapted successfully to the change. Obviously this was often easier for candidates as they knew nothing different and their concerns may only have been a reflection of the overall mood. Based on the

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evidence, always a good place for historians to look, most students coped remarkably well. The key lessons from this year's controlled assessment would be to:

- Apply the rules accurately.
- Prepare the class fully with good links between skills, evidence and the final task without teaching specifically to the task.
- Have faith in your students to choose appropriate pieces of taught course and evidence together to answer the question. By choosing materials with care in the first instance and providing practice in the use of necessary skills in the taught course, teachers can play a far more positive role in the process than by trying to impart a structure into the students' work.

Centres are reminded that OCR consultants are available to comment on centres' questions and programmes of study and to offer advice on all matters related to controlled assessment. Centres are also directed to the Guide to Controlled Assessment which contains detailed advice and support. Both can be accessed through the OCR website.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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