

## Candidates' Performance

### General comments and recommendations

On the whole, candidates seem to have been well prepared for the examination. Most answers displayed knowledge relevant to the issues and topics covered by the curriculum. However, the performance was not always commensurate with the effort made. To achieve good results in History examinations, candidates need the following skills: identifying the key term(s)/phrase(s) in a question in order to grasp the gist of that question; using relevant historical information to support any arguments made; and presenting logical, coherent and clear answers.

It is imperative that candidates read the questions carefully if they want to produce relevant answers. Candidates too often jumped into answering a question without paying close attention to what it required. This explains why some candidates produced irrelevant answers when dealing with data-based questions: when the question required the use of sources only, they drew on their own knowledge; when the question required the use of both sources and their own knowledge, they used one but not both. Similarly for essay-type questions, candidates should make sure that they grasp the gist of a question before producing the answer. Candidates are advised to read *A Manual of Question Words Used in History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2007; online version 2011 [http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Subject\\_Information/hist/HIST-QuWords-E.pdf](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Subject_Information/hist/HIST-QuWords-E.pdf)), in order to familiarise themselves with various command words and other commonly used words that appear in HKDSE History questions.

It is also important that candidates choose relevant historical information to substantiate their arguments. Some scripts were marred by irrelevancies resulting from indiscriminate use of historical information. Writing down 'model answers' prepared in advance should be avoided.

Last but not least, candidates should pay special attention to logic, coherence and clarity of presentation. They should organise answers and use facts appropriately in their answers, and make clear arguments. Language and presentation skills are also areas in need of improvement.

### Question Choice Pattern

Question Number	Popularity
Paper 1	
1	Compulsory
2	
3	
4	
Paper 2	
1	
2	36%
3	18%
4	37%
5	81%
6	22%
7	1%
	5%

## Paper 1 (Data-based questions)

- Q.1 (a) Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to infer from Source A two characteristics of Hong Kong's political system in 1951. Many candidates were able to answer the question as required, with due explanation. Some weak candidates misread the Source, such as regarding 'official members' as senior and 'unofficial members' junior; this reflected their lack of understanding of the basics of Hong Kong history.
- (b) Performance was fair. The question required candidates to identify and explain one administrative problem that the Hong Kong government faced in the early 1950s, with reference to the first paragraph of Source B. Many candidates were able to identify one administrative problem with due explanation. The weak answers made some good attempts, but the problem identified were not 'administrative' in nature; some copied indiscriminately from the Source without answering the question.
- (c) Performance was fair. The question required candidates to discuss whether Hong Kong had become better with respect to democracy and racial equality from 1951 until the end of the colonial rule in 1997. The best answers were able to answer the question in a straightforward manner, discussing whether democracy and racial equality showed improvement, reasonably covering the period in question. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: producing narrations about democracy and racial equality without handling the keyword 'better'; confusing the two key concepts as being one and the same; merely comparing the situation before 1951 and that in 1951 and ignoring the rest of the period required.
- Q.2 (a) Performance was poor. The question required candidates to conclude from Source C one problem that might have hindered modernisation efforts in China. Only the best candidates were able to answer the question as required. In some answers, what was written was neither a 'problem' nor related to modernisation efforts in China. The weak answers failed to produce substantiation based on Source C. The weakest answers failed to differentiate which part in Source C represented the view of the head of Hosei University and which that of Fan.
- (b) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss how successful the revolutionaries were in overthrowing the Qing government by January 1912, and it was designed to test candidates' understanding of the uncertainty of China's revolution before the abdication of the child Emperor Puyi in February 1912. Only the best candidates were able to infer logically from the Source. Many candidates adopted an 'to what extent' approach to the question as required, but failed to point out that in some parts of China revolution was 'successful' whereas the Qing Court was still there. Some weak candidates misread the Source that the revolutionaries had overthrown the Qing government and were then faced by economic problems. Candidates should be able to observe that Source C described a historical moment when revolution was still going on and the Qing government had not been overthrown.
- Q.3 (a) Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to discuss how the cartoon in Source E provoked fear towards Germany. The cartoon made use of Nazi symbols to reflect fear among the French of the rise of Germany by exploiting France's resources through economic cooperation between the two countries. Many candidates responded to the question in the right track. However, some answers ignored important clues, such as France's resources being exploited by Germany as seen by the cartoonist. The weakest answers reflected misunderstandings of the cartoon, such as describing France as becoming stronger and threatening Germany, or taking the cartoon as one published during the Nazi rule.

- (b) Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to discuss whether Source F was meant to support or oppose Britain's entry into the EEC. Many candidates were able to respond to the question in the right track. Some weak answers simply cited two clues from the Source without any explanation. The weakest answers reflected misunderstandings of the Source, such as believing that Britain was trying to persuade the EEC members to let it join the organisation.
- (c) Performance was poor. This question required candidates to discuss whether European economic integration was irresistible in the period 1945-2000. Only the best candidates were able to answer the question in a straightforward manner, focusing on whether European economic integration was 'irresistible' in the period. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: producing over-general accounts with few historical examples; failing to cover the period adequately; failing to handle the keyword 'irresistible' appropriately. Some candidates twisted the question as one asking for the obstacles to European economic integration, hence missing the gist of the question.
- Q.4 (a) Performance was good. This question required candidates to conclude from Source G two types of peacekeeping efforts which were carried out in the period 1901-13. Many candidates were able to conclude two types of peacekeeping efforts, substantiated by relevant examples.
- (b) Performance was poor. This question required candidates to identify the cartoonist's view in Source H towards the prospect of peace. Only a handful of candidates were able to make good use of the Source and identify the cartoonist's view. Many candidates only managed to discuss the historical circumstances of the cartoon and failed to correctly identify the cartoonist's view towards the prospect of peace.
- (c) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss whether peacekeeping was a stronger trend than military rivalry in the period 1900-14, with reference to Europe's historical development in the period. Only the best candidates succeeded to answer the question in a straightforward manner, making good use of the Sources and their own knowledge to explain whether peacekeeping or military rivalry was a stronger trend in the period. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: producing separate accounts of peacekeeping and military rivalry but failing to draw any comparisons between them; failing to make good use of the Sources and/or their own knowledge; ignoring the period in question and writing on a longer time span.

#### **Paper 2 (Essay-type questions)**

- Q.1 Performance was fair. This question required candidates to explain how Hong Kong's economic development during British rule up to 1997 was affected by the China factor. The more able candidates clearly explained how China-related political, economic, and social factors affected Hong Kong's economic development in the period. The weak answers tended to be lacking in balance and/or weak in focusing on the causal relationship between such factors and Hong Kong's economic development. Quite a number of candidates misread the question and treated it as a 'relative importance' type of question, unnecessarily comparing the China factor and other factors.
- Q.2 Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which the methods of economic development adopted in the Maoist period were different from those in the post-Mao period. Only the best answers produced a straightforward answer to the question, substantiated by solid historical evidence. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: confusing historical facts about the two periods; misunderstanding the

keyword 'methods' as 'effectiveness', in turn producing irrelevant answers; ignoring the key phrase 'how far', in turn failing to make comparisons as required by the question; committing factual mistakes, such as claiming that 'there were no more state-owned industries in the post-Mao period'.

- Q.3 Performance was satisfactory. The question required candidates to discuss whether the USA facilitated more than hindered Japan's development after the Second World War, with reference to Japan's development in the period 1945-2000. Most candidates were familiar with the topic and substantiated their answers with relevant facts. However, the weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: producing answers being lopsided to the USA's contributions or hindrance; limiting the discussion to historical events such as SCAP, Korean War and Vietnam War; limiting the discussion only up to the 1950s; committing factual mistakes, such as claiming that 'Japan was a permanent member of the UN Security Council' and 'the USA was the first country to introduce Western culture to Japan'. The weakest answers merely gave an account of Japanese history after the Second World War without focusing on the USA's contributions and hindrance. Only the best candidates grasped the gist of the question and gave a straightforward answer about the extent of the contribution and hindrance the USA brought to Japan's development after the Second World War, supported by solid historical evidence that stretches over a considerable period of the time required.
- Q.4 Performance was satisfactory. The question required candidates to discuss the extent to which the Second World War was a consequence of the Paris Peace Settlement (1919-23), by referring to Europe's historical development in the period 1919-39. This was a popular question, and candidates were generally well prepared for it. Most candidates were able to explain how the Paris Peace Settlement led to the outbreak of the Second World War, but only the best candidates proceeded to examine the relative importance of the Settlement and other factors in causing the Second World War. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: examining the causes without explaining the causal relationship between such causes and the outbreak of the Second World War; paying no heed to the key phrase 'Europe's historical development' and in turn including in their answers Japan's militarism, which was irrelevant to the question; conceptual inaccuracies such as misunderstanding 'Paris Peace Settlement' as 'Treaty of Versailles'.
- Q.5 Performance was fair. The question required candidates to assess the relative importance of ideological difference and national interest with respect to the development of the Cold War in the period 1946-91. The required task was to compare the two factors with regard to their relative importance in the development of the Cold War. Many candidates focused on the numerous Cold War crises with an attempt to draw some inference about the two factors, but by so doing the subject of the answer would be the Cold War crises rather than the two factors, resulting in weak arguments. Other weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: discussing one factor only; covering merely part of the Cold War history, usually the early phases. The weakest answers only gave an account of the Cold War history without discussing the two factors. Only the best answers grasped the gist of the question and gave a straightforward answer by comparing the two factors with regard to their relative importance in the development of the Cold War.
- Q.7 Performance was poor. The question required candidates to discuss whether the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterised more by international cooperation than conflict, using historical examples from Themes A and B within their history curriculum. Only the best answers grasped the gist of the question and explained their views using examples from Themes A and B in a balanced manner. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: providing historical examples from Themes A or B rather than both; covering merely a half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century rather than the whole of it; listing examples of internal conflicts and international cooperation rather than comparing 'conflict' and 'cooperation' as historical phenomena in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The weakest candidates merely produced general accounts without factual substantiation, reflecting their unfamiliarity with this topic.