May 2013 subject reports Group 3 - History Higher and Standard Level Paper one

Prescribed subject 1 – Peacemaking, peacekeeping – international relations 1918-36

**Component grade boundaries**

**Grade:** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Mark range:** 0 – 2 3 - 4 5 - 7 8 - 10 11 - 12 13 - 15 16 -25

General comments

The G2 forms sent to IBCA by the schools indicated that the May 2013 Prescribed Subject One - Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and International Relations 1918-1936 was well received. Of those centres that had responded by the time of Grade Award 89% found the level of difficulty of the paper to be appropriate - 11% found it more difficult than May 2012. Two  concerns  were  expressed  however  which  had  to  do  with  the  length of the sources - particularly for those writing in second or third languages - and the amount of time allowed for the paper - 60 minutes.

**The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates**

* The candidates appeared to understand the content of the topic but often lacked development in their answers, offering only one or two points for questions that were worth several marks.
* The compare and contrast question was often approached superficially with only one or two points identified.
* Candidates also had some difficulties in producing running comparisons/contrasts with explicit linkage. This prevented them from reaching the top bands for the question.
* The third question on evaluation of sources is also one where candidates do not tend to achieve the maximum. Identifying the origin of a source does not automatically result in the awarding of a mark for each source. Candidates are expected to link the origin to the purpose of the source in order to assess the  source’s value and limitations to gain full marks.
* There is still far too much description of the content of the sources without any attempt being made by the candidates to analyze them.
* The final question is often a good discriminator among candidates as the better responses do include mention of both the sources **and** own knowledge which are directed explicitly to answering the question that has been set.

**The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared**

* Most candidates understood how to approach the differing nature of each style of question, and the majority had attempted to answer all four set questions.
* Candidates were more succinct on questions 1(a) and 1(b) and there were fewer excessively long responses. Clear attempts were made to frame the answer in a structure appropriate to the rubrics required for Q2 and Q3.
* Most candidates also attempted to use or refer to sources in their mini-essays, although own knowledge was surprisingly weak.

**Strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions**

**Question 1**: **(a)** Candidates had little difficulty here. Many of them found three points which related to the markscheme and received maximum marks. Responses were also appropriate in length - usually of three sentences each of which had identified a reason. **(b)** Candidates found this question more challenging. While there were many responses which identified two messages – usually French aggression and that Germany was being pushed into the welcoming arms of the Bolsheviks. Fewer responses made any mention of the conditions of Germany as portrayed in the cartoon and there were a number of candidates who believed that Germany was being pushed by Russia to attack France.

**Question 2**: There were a range of responses here with many candidates receiving 3 or 4 marks. Excellent responses were more difficult to find for a number of reasons. Firstly, there was inadequate linkage between the sources and too much description of content. Secondly, candidates were content to find one comparison and one contrast without analyzing the sources in more depth.

**Question 3**: The sources were analysed quite well in the majority of cases. It is important, when identifying the origin of a source, to include the date as a basal point. The main weakness was the inability to explain the purpose of the source and link this to its value and limitations. **Too many candidates** **still write that as the source is an extract it is limited - a comment which receives no credit.**

**Question 4**: What was surprising here was the inability of many candidates to use their own knowledge in their responses. There were two major failings. Firstly, many candidates ignored the word “international in the question and wrote copiously about internal issues without any linkage to international affairs. Secondly, candidates ignored the dates and either wrote about events pre 1923 (Versailles) or post 1929 (Manchuria and Abyssinia). While there were some excellent responses, which **synthesized both the sources and candidates’ own knowledge** - they were generally few and far between.

**Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

* Responses   to   Question   1b   should   start   something   like **“The  message in**

**Source  A...”** This will force candidates to get away from merely cataloguing the symbols/content in the cartoon (or other types of sources - statistics, photographs, posters, etc.) without identifying their message.

* Examiners are not looking for an exact balance between comparisons and contrasts of the two sources in Question Two. However, candidates need to identify several of them for a six mark question. It could be 3-3; 4-2; or 2-4. Many candidates seem to be content to identify two or three points often in an end-on manner. Some candidates spend far too long elaborating at length on the same point of comparison or contrast and often end up repeating themselves.
* Source evaluation: Evaluation of the origins and purpose of the sources will lead to better analysis of their values and limitations. Too many candidates are still focusing on the content of the sources.
* Mini essay must make reference to both the sources and detailed outside knowledge. Candidates must be taught that only material which clearly and explicitly addresses the question that has been set (rather than leaving the examiner to make implicit inferences) should be included.