UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ADVANCED LEVEL

HISTORY

May 2010

EXAMINERS’ REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
Statistics

Table 1: MATSEC Advanced Level History, May 2010
Distribution of Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Remarks

The History Advanced Level examination consists of three papers each carrying 33% of the total marks, namely Paper I Maltese History, Paper II International History, and Paper III Source, Analysis and Interpretation. Candidates who do relatively well are placed in the first three categories (A to C), where leading factors differentiating between performances can be the individual candidate’s ability to formulate their own answers to examination questions through reading and research, as well as the ability to write a well thought out and knowledgeable answer. In the majority of cases, candidates who are classified in the top two categories (A and B) do well in all three Papers, but for candidates who classify in Grade C, it is Paper III which tends to compensate for shortcomings in the two other Papers. While positively indicating that candidates enjoy working with sample documents and passages from longer texts which give them the opportunity to interact with sources, this trend also recalls the difficulties candidates evidently have in writing good historical essays. This is worrying because Papers I and II present the candidate with a choice of questions which are to be answered in essay form, and therefore the shortcomings in candidate performance in those two Papers at the end of the History Advanced Level course, tend to reflect more fundamental problems with essay writing. Together with the lack of proper assimilation of reliable factual information on the individual topics through further reading and research by the candidates, the lack of basic writing skills may be cited as another major difficulty revealed in this examination. These shortcomings become evident more frequently in the lower Grades (D and E). It must be emphasized that the memorization of common class notes should be actively discouraged as a form of study, while students should train to express themselves correctly and to write well structured historical essays.

Paper I Maltese History

Section A question 1, which was compulsory, offered an either/or choice between a question on the issues militating against Maltese elective representation in the period from 1814 to 1849, and a question on the constitutional background of the Maltese political scene in the period from 1887 to 1921. Both questions were attempted by relatively equal numbers of candidates. In the case of 1 (a), the better-performing candidates showed a good understanding of Malta’s role as a fortress colony, and the implications this had for local demands for representative government. In the case of 1 (b), a number of candidates were able to relate the question to the main issues then dominating Maltese politics, including the Language Question, taxation, political representation, and politico-ecclesiastical relations. Few candidates attempted question 2, which was on the significance of any three major reforms undertaken by the British in the 19th century directly affecting the Catholic Church, where answers should have discussed reforms such as the mortmain law, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as well as the marriages question. Question 3 on the economic implications of Malta’s use as a military and naval base up to 1921 was a popular choice, and the better-performing candidates were able to discuss the key role of military expenditure, the part played by the naval establishment in the local economy, the importance of the route to India and the opening of the Suez Canal, as well as the effects of the Crimean War and World War I. Few candidates attempted question 4 on industrialization in Malta before 1921, which required a discussion of different activities in 19th century Malta which could have qualified as industrial activities, including the development of the naval establishment and coal...
bunkering, but also local early manufacturing efforts. Question 5 on the Language Question was answered by a good number of candidates, with the better-performing candidates succeeding in discussing the extent to which this issue was significant for Maltese political development and for everyday life.

In Section B, the compulsory question 6 offered an either/or choice between a question on the Labour and Nationalist demands to the British in the period from 1955 to 1964, and a question on the objectives of the smaller parties in discussions with the British in the same period. Most candidates attempted 6 (a) which was about the positions adopted by the two larger parties on future relations with Britain in the last decade before independence. Few candidates attempted question 7, which asked about any two areas of social and/or economic development in Malta in the inter-war period, which included legislation, migration, the development of trade unions, early industrialization, and so on. Question 8 on the politico-religious disputes in Malta between 1921 and 1984 was very popular with candidates, and the better-performing candidates managed to discuss in a wider context the role played by the leading figures, including archbishops Caruana, Gonzi and Mercieca, as well as the political leaders Strickland and Mintoff. Few candidates attempted question 9, on the social and economic measures undertaken from 1945 onwards and their effect on the demographic profile of Malta and Gozo. The number of candidates attempting question 10, on the question of continuity between political parties of the inter-war period, and those of the post-war period to 1958, was also insignificant.

**Paper II International History**

Section A compulsory question 1 offered candidates an either/or choice between a question on the role of the French Revolution and Napoleon in spreading liberalism and nationalism, and a question on the failure of German liberalism in 1848-49 and its link to the rise of militaristic nationalism. The popular choice by far was 1 (a) on the French Revolution, where the better-performing candidates managed to discuss in context the effects of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic expansion in spreading these new movements across Europe, linking them to other factors such as the cultural influence of the Enlightenment, and considering how far these movements were reactions to French expansion. Few candidates attempted question 2, on factors favouring British and German industrialization. A good number of candidates attempted question 3, on the role played by Britain in supporting the Ottoman empire, which however sided with the Central Powers during World War I. Good answers to this question included a discussion of the Balkan question and the Bosnian war, and conflicting European interests in a region termed the powder keg of Europe, underlining Russian ambitions in the Balkans while France was a main ally of Russia, making it virtually impossible for the Ottomans to join the Allied Powers. Question 4 required an understanding of the Triple Alliance and Italy’s membership in it up to 1914. Few candidates who answered this question linked their answer to the guarantees given by Italy to Britain and France. The number of answers to question 5, which tested knowledge of the events and conditions leading to Mussolini’s rise to power in Italy, and Hitler’s rise in Germany, was insignificant. In Section B, the compulsory question 6 offered an either/or choice between a question of the role of a divided Germany in the development of the Cold War, and a question on the role played by the Third World in the Cold War. The popular choice here was 6 (a), attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Nevertheless, some glaring mistakes were noted, included the mistaken assumption in some scripts that the Berlin wall was erected at the start of the Cold War. The better-performing candidates made a conscious effort to show an amount of personal reading into the subject. A number of candidates attempted question 7, which tested knowledge regarding the end of colonization in the Mediterranean. The popular choice for many in this section was question 8, which regarded the Arab-Israeli question and tested knowledge of the conflict up to 1973. Several essays seemed to reproduce class notes on this topic in a mechanical manner, without sign of an individual effort made to answer the question. A number of candidates answered question 9 on European integration from 1952 to date. Again, the reproduction of set class notes on the subject was noted. The number of answers to question 10 on the Arms Race was insignificant.
The questions in this paper are designed to test the candidate’s ability to read a passage critically, answer questions about it and place the information in its historical context/s. In Section A, questions 1 and 2 were attempted by relatively equal numbers of candidates. Question 1, based on an extract from a public speech by Fortunato Mizzi in 1901, explaining the main demands made by Nationalist politicians in Malta at the time, tested knowledge of events in Malta in this period. With reference to the political background, the passage may be understood in the light of Maltese constitutional development. References to the Colonial Secretary, as well as Mizzi’s objections to new taxation to finance the breakwater and other expenditures, were correctly explained by the better-performing candidates. A number of candidates found it difficult to relate the passage to the demand for wider political representation for elected members, and failed to connect the event to the withdrawal of the constitution in 1903. Question 2 was based on an extract from a speech by Mabel Strickland in 1963. Candidates attempting this question were requested to demonstrate familiarity with the development of this political party and to discuss the position it adopted regarding Malta’s future ties with Britain. A number of candidates found it difficult to relate the passage to the issue of the defence agreements with Britain, and the way the British and NATO military presence were to be defined. A number of candidates were positively able to discuss the results of the Independence referendum.

In Section B, question 4 was the popular choice. Only a small number of candidates attempted question 3, which was based on a passage from Giuseppe Mazzini’s writings. Candidates were expected to discuss the text by Mazzini, relating it to his work, stated beliefs and activities, and to explain select statements including one on European unity. The criticism of the restoration of 1815, which dispensed with the principle of national self-determination to strengthen large empires, was generally not sufficiently explained. Similarly, the reference to the social question in France was not explained in its historical context. Question 4 was based on an extract from a speech by US President Truman in 1947. Several candidates lacked basic factual knowledge concerning this development, including the reference to the Truman doctrine. Some candidates also found it difficult to explain how this policy was applied to Europe, especially with regard to the division between rival blocs. Most candidates found (iii), which tested knowledge of the end of Britain’s world power status, difficult to answer. Similarly, (v), which enquired about applications of this American policy outside Europe, proved to be a stumbling block.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, on the whole it must be noted that candidates who did relatively poorly in the first two Papers, where essay writing skills placed particular demands, seemed to find a better scope to demonstrate basic skills and knowledge in Paper III.