UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ADVANCED LEVEL

HISTORY

May 2009

EXAMINERS’ REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1: Distribution of grades awarded in May 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Abs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>30.43</td>
<td>12.17</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part 2: Comments regarding performance

General Remarks

The board of examiners notes that this year’s general performance of the candidates sitting for this advanced level examination was adequate and satisfactory in general, with some cases of very good quality. There are, however, some issues which must be raised in order to improve the general level.

Language Skills

By and large, the level has remained the same as previous years, with grammar and vocabulary leaving much to be desired. Several candidates made basic mistakes e.g. incorrect spelling of names of leading personalities and terms linked to basic concepts. While, it must be emphasised that grammatical and lexical mistakes are not penalised by the examiners, not infrequently this ended up in candidates unable to express themselves clearly. Quite a substantial number of candidates have also shown lack of essay writing skills, with a few producing fragmented pieces, rendering whole parts of their answers meaningless. Handwriting was also an issue with some scripts being hardly legible or not legible at all.

Subject Matter

Most of the answers reveal a pattern which has been observed in the previous years. Many candidates memorise class notes giving very little personal input, showing the lack of thorough reading in various sections of the syllabus: this is particularly the case in economic and social history. Actually, throughout the exam, candidates demonstrated limited knowledge of the social and economic topics included in the syllabus. This primarily reflects the lack of an adequate text book on Malta’s economic and social history.

Memorisation of class notes or essays has brought many a candidate to answer questions by reproducing very similar ‘model answers’ not really focusing on the question. One has to note that the trend to study factual information pertaining to specific periods/issues by heart, and then fitting it in answers which are sometimes only partially related to the question is ever more evident.

One other problem is that analysis and interrelating of issues remains the exception rather than the rule and this is being reflected in the marks awarded. Lack of reading around the topics is also observed, as factual knowledge is limited in some of the answers. At this advanced level examiners expect more discussion, as the majority of essays tend to remain largely descriptive. One other issue is the restricted thematic range chosen by the candidates. Choice of essays was focused on two or three themes, reflecting the severely limited knowledge of the subject.
Comments regarding Paper 1

Paper I: Maltese History

Section A

The majority of candidates opted to answer question 1(a). Answers for both 1(a) and (b) were of average/above average quality.

1(a): While the majority of candidates did answer this question in a reasonably correct and detailed level, a large number of responses limited themselves to describing the pre-1887 period and the structure of the 1887 constitution itself. What was expected from their answer was to discuss the problems that resulted in the eventual withdrawal of the constitution in 1903.

1(b): A number of answers here were exhaustive and to the point. This was probably a more challenging question since it required candidates to identify common political traits in the Maltese scene over a forty-year period.

2: Among the best responses were those given to question 2. Candidates have discussed the issue in more articulated terms than elsewhere, giving various examples of Church-State issues/collaboration during the 19th century.

3: Candidates answering this question often ended up giving a description of Malta’s involvement in British military/naval affairs rather than discussing the changing military/naval role that Malta played. Reference to European and Mediterranean developments during the period was necessary here, but often this connection was overlooked.

4: Responses to this question were mostly adequate, particularly where the Language Question and Educational development were concerned. The contribution or otherwise of the Maltese Church to the local educational scene was by and large treated in less depth and in some instances ignored altogether.

5: This proved to be another popular question with the majority of those who opted for this question answering it in a competent way, relating the local situation with European developments.

Section B

6(a): A minority of candidates (ca 1/4) chose to answer this question relating to the projects for future Anglo-Maltese relations to 1979 and the way they were affected by Maltese political parties. Most answers showed good factual knowledge of the subject. The main discussion revolved around integration vs independence. Few candidates extended the discussion to the London agreements of 1972 and the lease of the military base which expired in 1979.

6(b): The majority of candidates (ca 3/4) chose this question related to the main objectives of the Maltese political leaders in the sphere of Anglo-Maltese relations from 1945 to 1964. Most answers showed good factual knowledge and focused on Mintoff and Borg Olivier. The better answers also considered the lesser parties. However, the common perspective remained a Maltese one with little effort to look at the question from the British side.

7: Few candidates attempted this question on the period 1921 to 1933. The answers generally showed good factual knowledge on the political side. In comparison to the constitutional and political situation they revealed limited awareness of the social and economic aspects of the inter-war period.

8: The majority of candidates (almost 3/4) attempted this question on the politico-religious crises in twentieth century Malta. The majority of answers focused on the personalities of the politicians, especially Lord Strickland and Dom Mintoff, and the Bishops (especially Mgr. M. Gonzi). The comparisons drawn out by the better candidates reveal good familiarity with the facts, but several candidates stopped short of comparing the crises and instead remained at a descriptive level.
9: Few candidates attempted this question on migration. Those who did showed relatively good factual knowledge of the subject.

10: Surprisingly few candidates answered this question on the Maltese political parties, despite the emphasis in the syllabus on political history.

Comments regarding Paper 2

Paper II: International History

Section A

1(a): Many responses demonstrated a good grasp of French political issues during the 19th century, even if a number of candidates limited their answers to a purely factual description (not always correct) of the varying forms of French governments during the period.

1(b): While some responses for this question provided well-reasoned analyses and comparisons between the situation in Russia and in Western Europe vis-a-vis Communism, many others discussed Russia but stopped there. Others simply provided a description of Communism as a political philosophy, with little to no application to its success in Russia and failure elsewhere.

2: Not a very popular question with candidates, yet many of the answers were quite exhaustive. A number of them dealt with both economic and political European divides which resulted in the economic divisions referred to in the question.

3: This was a popular question with candidates, as they are generally prepared for a question in any way related to the Eastern Question. Responses were good on the whole and both Britain’s and Russia’s interests in the Eastern Question were discussed in some depth.

4: Many candidates answering this question ended up discussing the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance, rather than the British and Italian positions regarding the First World War. This, once again, is evidence that rather than gaining an overall understanding of situations and issues, often students learn factual matters regarding specific issues, without however being able to relate and analyse the context that goes beyond those bare facts.

5: Not many opted for this question, yet most of the answers here were adequate in that they did examine the foreign and local policy of Nazi Germany and in quite some depth at times.

Section B

6(a): The majority of candidates (ca 3/5) answered this question which treated the division of Germany in Cold War Europe. Most of the better essays showed a good factual knowledge. A tendency towards repetition of class notes was noted. Several answers stayed on the descriptive level some without answering the question.

6(b): A minority of candidates (ca 2/5) answered this question on the rival alliances of the two blocs in the Cold War. Relatively good factual knowledge was shown. A number of answers missed the question on the contribution by the alliances to stability during the period.

7: Few candidates attempted this question on decolonisation in the Mediterranean after 1945

8: This question on the Arab-Israeli conflict up to 1987 was one of the more popular choices (ca 2/5). Answers generally showed good familiarity with the facts. The tendency to repeat class notes was however noticed in several scripts.

9: Few candidates answered this question on the economic interests in European integration.
10: This was a popular question (ca 3/5) on military rivalry in East-West relations up to 1989. Many candidates feel confident in tackling this topic as they also study it to answer the compulsory question 6. Most essays showed a good factual knowledge of the subject. There was a tendency to limit the discussion to the arms race. The repetition of class notes was noted in several answers.

Comments regarding Paper 3

Paper III: Sources, Analysis and Interpretation

Section A

1: About a third opted to answer this question. Responses were of an average quality. Questions (iii) and (v) which required greater understanding of the local political context proved the hardest of all.

2: This proved the more popular of the two questions. Responses were of a good quality overall, probably because the passage dealt with the Integration proposal which students are generally well prepared for. Question (v), which required candidates to explain Mintoff’s reference to Eastern Europe in the passage, presented some difficulty.

3: A minority of candidates (ca 1/4) attempted this question about Socialism, Liberalism, Nationalism. This is a worrying feature, perhaps linked to the fact that the subject of European history from 1789 to 1917 is being taught only in relation to ideological movements, without historical contextualisation. Candidates generally showed a good factual knowledge. Some candidates made erroneous statements in (i), while difficulty was noticed in the way some candidates handled (iii). The better answers confidently explained the phrase in (i) in context. Surprisingly a few candidates found very little to say on the events in Russia in 1905.

4: The majority of candidates (ca 3/4) answered question 4 on the Cold War. A good understanding of the passage was shown by the majority of candidates. Some candidates obtained notably excellent grades. In question (i) several candidates described events in the 1960s but failed to link to the question and extend the discussion down to 1987. A few candidates found it difficult to explain the phrases in context especially (ii) and (iv). A number of answers to (v) repeated what had been written before.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners
July 2009