

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

HISTORY

MAY 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS' BOARD**

1. Summary of results

Table 1 below summarises the general performance in the examination:

Table 1: Distribution of candidates' grades for the SEC History Exam - May 2012

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Absent	Total
No. of Candidates										156
Option A	9	30	33	25	20	-	-	32	7	156
Option B	-	-	-	4	6	16	9	40	11	86
Total %	3.7	12.4	13.6	12.0	10.7	6.6	3.7	29.8	7.5	100

2. General Remarks

2.1 The number of candidates sitting for History was 242. Of these 156 chose Paper IIA while 86 chose Paper IIB. Candidates taking the Paper IIA option were well prepared and only 32 or 20.5% were unsuccessful. However, many candidates attempting Paper IIB were rather weak and were not really prepared for the examination. Indeed only 10 or 11.6% managed to get a pass at Grade 4 or 5. Overall 127 or 52.5% of all candidates managed to get a pass at Grade 5 or over. 152 candidates or 62.8% of all candidates were awarded Grade 7 or over. There were 18 prospective candidates or 7.4% who did not sit for the examination.

2.2 Candidates' level of expression in English left much to be desired. Though they were not penalised for this, clarity, logic and sentence structure were often weak and this made it difficult at times to interpret and assess answers.

2.3 A number of candidates, especially those choosing the IIB Paper, lacked knowledge of basic terms and historical concepts while others simply beat around the bush and did not show any real depth in their essays.

2.4 Some candidates just reproduced previously prepared notes on the theme under discussion without really trying to deal with the given question. So their answers tended to be partly out of point and thus scored lower marks.

2.5 The handwriting of some candidates left much to be desired making it difficult at times to mark scripts.

2.6 A substantial number of candidates did not write down the number of the question they chose to answer on the front of the answer booklet as they are required to do. Greater care should be taken to ensure that instructions are followed.

2.7 Candidates generally tended to fare better in questions dealing with Maltese history.

3. Paper 1

3.1. A good number of candidates could not indicate the developments which Maltese intellectuals of the early 19th century were clamouring for. Many failed to identify O’Ferrall as the Civil Governor of Malta. Most candidates failed to indicate what the four lawyers of the 1860s wanted to achieve. However, most candidates choosing the Option A Paper indicated correctly the year 1849 as the year when the Constitution was granted. Many candidates failed to explain Cardwell’s instructions in a clear manner. Most candidates had only a slight idea of the key features of the 1849 Constitution with some even mixing it up with later Constitutions. A good number of candidates correctly noted that the sources were secondary and gave good reasons to supplement their answer. Generally speaking, however, candidates opting for the Option B Paper found this question difficult.

3.2. A good number of candidates could not give the names of the two big harbours flanking Valletta, nor could they explain why the Order of St. John sent a Commission to report on the state of the Maltese Islands before the Knights Hospitallers came to Malta. Regarding the importance that Birgu gained when the Knights came in 1530, many candidates just wrote about the importance of the Grand Harbour rather than that Birgu started to be used as the capital city of Malta. Though many candidates identified Valletta, St. Elmo and Mount Sceberras correctly, quite a few failed to identify St. Angelo. Moreover, candidates found it difficult to explain how the building of Valletta came about. Only a few candidates pointed out that the building of the city was a long felt strategic need, that Francesco Laparelli drew the plans of the city following the Great Siege and that further works were undertaken by Girolamo Cassar. Candidates generally just wrote about the grid pattern of its streets.

3.3. Most candidates showed that they do not know what a ‘manifesto’ is and why the Malta Labour Party and the Nationalist Party were described as being in favour of Independence. Only a few gave the exact date when Malta became an independent state and explained the importance the ‘military base’ had for Malta. Instead many wrote about its importance to Britain. Moreover, candidates generally failed to distinguish between the Defence Agreements of 1964 and 1972 or to outline clearly their salient features. On the other hand, a good number of candidates identified Source A as a primary source.

3.4. Some candidates explained that the Renaissance was a revival of learning and identified some fields in which man made progress. Many wrote well about Leonardo da Vinci and could mention two of his paintings. They could also mention two other Renaissance painters though there were some who listed artists of the Baroque period or later. Candidates indicated lack of knowledge when attempting to write about humanism and explaining why Italy was the centre of the Renaissance.

3.5. Most candidates correctly answered the first questions about the Versailles Treaty. However, almost all candidates failed to explain that Source D differed from the others in that it tries to justify the harsh terms of the treaty and that it paid no attention to the feelings of the defeated. A few candidates outlined, even though superficially, some of the most important provisions that were imposed on Germany after the First World War. Many candidates failed to define ‘armistice’

correctly. Almost all candidates failed to indicate that the term ‘militarism’ referred to the prevailing idea that Germany was synonymous with military power. Furthermore, candidates generally failed to explain that Germany was considered to be the cause of the First World War and that the quote ‘unbridled lust of conquest’ referred to its craving for colonies and other possessions. A few candidates mixed up this question with events related to the Second World War.

3.6. Candidates generally found this question difficult. They showed that their knowledge of contemporary history of Russia is very superficial. They could not explain the economic and social conditions that existed in the USSR when Gorbachev came to power and did not indicate what he did to change the situation. However, a few candidates indicated correctly the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of communism and the ensuing results. Some candidates even assumed that this question was about Germany and presented Gorbachev as a German politician. Candidates generally failed to explain the terms ‘perestroika’ and ‘glasnost’ and indicate the effects his reforms had on Communism and the Cold War.

4. Paper II A

Questions 1 and 7 were very popular choices with candidates. Other questions mostly attempted were numbers 2, 5, 9 and 10 though there was a rather good spread in choice. The quality of the candidates’ answers was generally good though at times it lacked analysis and depth.

Table 2: P.IIA choice of questions

Question	No. of candidates choosing question	Percentage of candidates actually sitting for examination
1	108	72.5
2	60	40.3
3	44	29.5
4	14	9.4
5	61	40.9
6	10	6.7
7	111	74.5
8	24	16.1
9	49	32.9
10	51	34.2
11	31	20.8
12	28	18.8

4.1. This was a very popular question among candidates. In most instances the question was not fully understood. Many candidates focused almost exclusively on the first part of the question, that is, why the Turks attacked Malta. They supplied very good reasons why the Turks attacked Malta. On the other hand, they failed to properly answer the latter part of the question, that is, ‘with what results’. In general, a systematic treatment of long and short term causes and consequences was missing.

4.2. In the first part of the question, candidates presented some good information which, however, lacked analysis and criticism. Indeed most of the answers were just a list of facts. Some candidates were able to show an awareness of the wider intricacies of the European situation and how this impinged on the faith of the Order of St John and on Malta. Most, however, restricted themselves to a narrative of the decline of the Order. In the second part of the answer the focus of many candidates was not so much on the reforms introduced, as it was on the negative reaction by the Maltese. A few candidates chose to conclude their answer with a patriotic 'pat on the back'.

4.3. Candidates' answers often failed to show a proper comprehension of the question. They were meant to look into the long and short term causes leading to the riots of 1919. Most candidates, however, limited themselves to a description of the events themselves. In some instances, however, there was an awareness of key players and episodes.

4.4. This was one of the less popular questions. Few candidates actually defined what an 'island fortress' meant. Key episodes like the Crimean War and the opening of the Suez Canal were generally acknowledged and their importance to the development of the harbour and fortifications explained. The wider significance of such developments i.e. the complete dependence of the Maltese economy on British military-naval spending, was often hinted at, but not always really engaged with.

4.5. Candidates generally fared well in this question. Some were not always able to make a distinction between the two parts of the question, with many inevitably focusing more on one or the other part of the question. Overall students' knowledge of the topic under review was good.

4.6. This was the least popular question. Many candidates did not seem to have a clear grasp of what the Council of Europe is and its distinction from the European Union. Emphasis in answers was on developments during the 1990s, with less attention given to post-1964 developments. There was, however, an awareness of how policies shifted with different governments and some candidates recalled important elements such as the association agreements.

4.7. This was the most popular question with students. Many managed to explain how the industrial revolution was a change by which hand craftsmanship in the home gave way to machine-work in the factories. Most candidates were also able to identify various factors why it started in Britain such as Britain being a commercial power, possessing a ready market in its colonies, its big merchant marine and its richness of resources in coal and iron. However, when it came to dealing with the results of industrialisation, a good number of candidates just focused on the social conditions prevailing in factories and villages such as crowding of people, long hours of work, prevailing smoke, no proper sanitation and disease. Few candidates dealt with other important results such as the expansion of the communications system, urbanisation, the growth of population and the development of the socialist movements.

4.8 Candidates tended to give a narrative of events dealing with Napoleon's foreign policy with little attempt to analyse it and explain that after the initial successes, he had ultimately to face failure. Most candidates concentrated on the Italian and Egyptian campaigns as successes and the Continental System and the Moscow Campaign as failures. Few mentioned his various victories up

to the Treaty of Tilsit or the unsuccessful Peninsular war in Spain. Generally attainment by most candidates choosing this question was below average.

4.9. Generally candidates gave a good account of the events leading to Bismarck's unification of Germany. They dealt with the three important phases leading to this unification namely the war against Denmark, the war against Austria and the war against France. However, some candidates failed to point out the preparedness of Prussia for these wars and the diplomatic isolation of the enemy before the wars. Overall, however, attainment by candidates in this question was good.

4.10. Most candidates explained how the League of Nations was set up to avoid war and offer a chance for peaceful discussions. However only a few candidates were able to supply examples of the initial successes of the League such as the prevention of war between Finland and Sweden, Poland and Lithuania, Italy and Greece and Greece and Bulgaria. Candidates were more successful in mentioning its failures such as the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, the Abyssinian crisis and the withdrawal of Japan, Germany and Italy from League. Few, however, mentioned the failure of Disarmament Conference of 1932-4.

4.11. In the first part of the question many candidates explained that the Warsaw Pact was a Treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance among communist states formed in response to West Germany's integration to the NATO Pact. However many candidates did not know that NATO was the result of the Brussels Treaty (1948) originated by several West European countries and forming a defensive alliance against any form of aggression. Most candidates explained how NATO was seen as an essential defensive organisation against Communist aggression and was strong enough to counterbalance USSR's might. They also explained why it was important for Europe during the Cold War and how it served as its shield.

4.12. Many candidates explained how European industries, trade and transport had been almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, how Europeans wanted to avoid another war and how they wanted to resist threats from the powerful USSR and the USA. However, when dealing with the development of this organisation, candidates tended to leave out some very important milestones. Overall, despite the fact that there were some good answers, the attainment of candidates left much to be desired.

5. Paper II B

The questions mostly chosen by candidates were numbers 1, 5, 11 and 12. Questions 6, 8 and 10 were only chosen by a handful of candidates. Candidates tended to answer questions very shortly.

Table 3: PIIB choice of questions

Question	Chosen by	Percentage of candidates actually sitting for examination
1	52	76.5
2	16	23.5
3	10	14.7
4	14	20.6
5	44	64.7
6	4	5.9
7	29	42.6
8	7	10.3
9	18	26.5
10	2	2.9
11	38	55.9
12	36	52.9

5.1. This was a very popular question with candidates. In the first part of the question few candidates managed to explain well how Dragut was a constant threat to Malta. However, they generally explained well how St. Elmo endured ferocious attacks by the Turks during the Siege and was won over at the expense of a great loss of men, armaments and time. In the last part of the question dealing with why the Turks were defeated, candidates were rather superficial in their answers.

5.2. Candidates were rather poor in explaining the effects of the French revolution on Malta with only a few referring to the confiscation of the Order's property and the subsequent increased economic problems. Few candidates were able to name some of Napoleon's reforms in Malta. Most candidates were however able to briefly outline the Maltese reaction to the rule of the French. In the last part of the question few candidates managed to give a variety of valid reasons for the French capitulation.

5.3. Only a handful of candidates attempted this question. Candidates' attainment was very weak. Though some of them managed to explain the recommendations of the 1878 Commission they were weak in answering the rest of the question. Candidates betrayed a lack of knowledge about the "Reformists" and the "Anti-Reformists" and about the Language Question in general.

5.4. Again only a few candidates chose to answer this question. Few of them managed to give a satisfactory definition of what 'island fortress' means. Though some candidates managed to name some effects of the opening of the Suez Canal on Malta, they lacked knowledge about the development of the Dockyard by the British. Many of their comments were very generic. Candidates generally managed to name two forts that the British built to strengthen the defences of Malta.

5.5. Though this was a popular question with candidates, answers left something to be desired. Candidates generally did well in the second and third parts of the question. They gave a satisfactory account of the daily life during the war and mentioned the disruption of all activities,

incessant raids, hunger, ill-health and infections. They also explained how by July 1942 rations were very low and how the arrival of the Santa Marija Convoy was a great relief. However they were very weak in the other parts of the question and were not able to explain adequately the political effects and the economic and social consequences of the war.

5.6. Only 4 candidates attempted this question and their attainment was normal. Candidates had to explain how Malta has been seeking closer ties with Europe since Independence. Generally speaking they did well in the last two parts of the question and presented valid arguments regarding the debate over accession in the E.U. and a good account of the events leading to membership. However they lacked knowledge about Malta's admission to the Council of Europe and its formal application to join the European Union.

5.7. Only a few candidates did quite well in this question. Candidates' answers were rather vague and lacking in knowledge. Though they had a general idea of the causes they were not able to substantiate them adequately. They were especially poor when commenting on the absolutist rule of the King, the influence of the philosophers and the harvest failure and related problems. Overall, much more was expected from the candidates in this answer and the general attainment was rather poor.

5.8. Only a few candidates attempted this question. Attainment by candidates in this question was very low with only one candidate scoring an average mark. Candidates failed to give the background to the German unification namely the failure of the 1848 revolutions and the Frankfurt Parliament and the rearming of the Prussian state. Candidates also failed to explain adequately the wars against Denmark, Austria and France and the diplomatic isolation of the enemy before the wars thus ensuring an easy victory for Bismarck and paving the way for the proclamation of German Empire at Versailles.

5.9. Very low marks were scored by candidates choosing this question with only two candidates scoring average marks. Candidates failed to explain that the League of Nations was set up to avoid war, offer a chance for peaceful discussions and renounce secret diplomacy. Practically none of them mentioned instances of the League's initial successes. Though they mentioned some failures candidates betrayed lack of knowledge when dealing with the reasons why the League lost its importance. Nobody referred to the failure of Disarmament Conference of 1932-4.

5.10. Only two candidates attempted this question. The attainment registered was low. They weren't aware of the changes Dubcek tried to carry out in Czechoslovakia and its importance to the Soviet Union. The Brezhnev Doctrine was very poorly defined.

5.11. Most candidates explained that globalization reflects the interdependence at the global level of many economic and political activities. However few candidates referred to such themes as climate change, migration, energy security and shared entertainment. When dealing with the advantages and disadvantages of globalization candidates were very poor in their arguments. Overall, attainment by candidates in this question was poor.

5.12. In answering this question a good number of candidates failed to write a paragraph on five themes as requested in the question. Candidates tended to choose mostly the discovery of the New

World, the Protestant Reformation and industrialisation in Great Britain. Attainment by candidates in this question was normal.

**Chairperson
Examination Panel 2012**