General Remarks

Candidates graded in the A and B categories were able to give ample evidence of solid factual knowledge, demonstrating good training in essay writing skills and textual interpretation and analysis. Candidates in grades C and D demonstrated limited essay writing skills. The Board feels the need to remark on a worrying pattern where factual knowledge possessed by the candidate is not necessarily absent, but poorly exploited to answer the questions. In the lower categories the shortcomings remarked in previous sessions were again noted in study and writing skills. Among the lower grades, candidates generally demonstrated very limited or no knowledge of the historical context of the subjects concerned, and factual inaccuracy was frequently encountered at that level.

The Board would like to remark on the importance of developing the right study skills for a subject like Intermediate Level History. The recycling of class notes should always be discouraged. At Intermediate Level, the importance of solid factual knowledge backed by the candidate's further reading is very important. Conceptual clarity and critical thinking are to be regarded as key aims in the discussion provided on the topics listed in the syllabus. More generally, attaining the skills of correct grammatical construction and idiomatic expression makes a big difference in the candidate's ability to answer both the essay questions, as well as the text-based ones.

Statistics

Table 1: Distribution of the candidates’ grades for INT History May 2013.

<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>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed Remarks

Candidates were required to answer four questions, two in Section A and two in Section B. Section A comprises two either/or/or questions which should be answered in essay form. Section B comprises two either/or comprehension questions based on unseen extracts from primary sources. Candidates are required to read carefully the selected passages and to answer a number of questions on each. In Section A, question 1 offered a choice between a question on Malta’s constitutional development from 1800 to 1921, a question on the impact of conflict on Malta’s fortress economy, and a question on the reforms proposed by commissioners Austin and Lewis. Question 2 offered a choice between a question on France in the period 1789 to 1799, a question on the ‘Concert of Europe’, and a question on German responsibility for World War I.

There was considerable variation in the performance by candidates in Section A. Further reading on individual topics by the candidates is evidently a key good practice in developing familiarity with the factual framework, and careful consideration of the right historical context. As in past sessions, the better-performing candidates answered their choice of questions in an intelligent and knowledgeable way. As noted above, the possession of good essay writing skills made an important difference for the clear expression of ideas especially beyond the level of basic description.

In Section B question 3, candidates were offered two passages on Maltese history, namely an extract from a speech by Sigismondo Savona in the Maltese Council of Government in 1895, and an extract from a debate in the House of Commons concerning Malta, in 1879. In Section B question 4, candidates were offered a choice between an extract from a Proclamation by the French Government which was established in February 1848, and an extract from a statement
made by the commander of Greek forces in 1821. As in previous sessions, the political and constitutional elements in Maltese history attracted more solid factual answers. In European history, candidates demonstrated considerably more familiarity with revolutions in France than with the subject of the Greek war of independence, which attracted a limited response from candidates.

In all four cases, the passages were chosen according to the general topics specified in the syllabus. As in previous sessions, the Board again noted the difficulty of candidates graded in the lower brackets (C to D) in explaining in context some of the phrases selected for definition or further explanation. Besides conceptual confusion, basic factual mistakes (like confusion between Napoleon I and Napoleon III, and between different revolutions, to mention leading examples) were noted.

**Concluding remarks**

The Board feels the need to reiterate that critical reading and thinking skills should be regarded as an essential outcome of Intermediate Level History. The preparation of 'model answers' for the topics in the syllabus is to be discouraged, encouraging instead further reading and training in essay writing by individual candidates who are preparing for this exam.

**Chairperson**  
**Examiners’ Panel 2013**