



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report

AM History

First Session 2025

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for Advanced History was **55**, which is **17** candidates less than in 2024.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the First Session of the examination

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
NUMBER	4	9	17	6	6	3	10	55
% OF TOTAL	7.3	16.4	30.9	10.9	10.9	5.5	18.2	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for Advanced History, First Session 2025

B. GENERAL REMARKS

General Remarks on the Written Examination

The History Advanced Level exam consists of three papers of three hours each, namely Paper 1: Maltese History, Paper 2: European and International History, and Paper 3: Mediterranean History. The papers carry an equal weighting. Each paper is made up of two essay questions and one document-based question. All questions are compulsory and carry equal weighting. All questions are set and answered in English.

The Board finds it necessary to reiterate several points raised in previous reports. As in past sessions, it was evident that a number of candidates struggled to express themselves clearly and coherently in English. This remains a significant concern in a subject such as History, where effective communication is essential. Moreover, a general lack of further reading was noted. This personal effort is important in Advanced level History, particularly in order to strengthen factual knowledge and develop analytical skills. It is imperative that candidates develop strong essay writing skills. It must be added that errors involving key facts and dates, as well as the misspelling of important names and places, are not acceptable at this stage of education. Relying solely on rote learning is inappropriate for any level of post-secondary study, and the mere reproduction of class notes should be discouraged. Additionally, the Board must again highlight neatness and clarity, especially where handwriting is concerned. Moreover, correct indication of the question numbers answered is important.

C. DETAILED COMMENTS ON PAPER I, PAPER II AND PAPER III

PAPER I: MALTESE HISTORY

Question 1 offered a choice between three essay questions. Question 1 (a) tested knowledge of the main constitutional developments in Malta between 1849 and 1903. Candidates were also to discuss the factors which brought about these developments. Question 1 (b) addressed the main issues affecting relations between the Maltese Church and the British colonial authorities in the nineteenth century. Question 1 (c) tested knowledge of the strategic advantages enjoyed by Malta up to 1918, and the benefits derived by the Maltese population. The majority of candidates answered 1 (a), showing a good grasp of constitutional history. A number of answers to question 1 (c) stopped short of elaborating the benefits of Malta's strategic role in the nineteenth century. The topic of British colonial—local ecclesiastical relations, the subject of 1 (b), was also managed relatively well by respondents

Question 2 offered a choice between three essay questions. Question 2 (a) invited candidates to discuss the reasons for post-war hesitation or resistance to the idea of Maltese independence from Britain. Question 2 (b) tested knowledge of the main issues shaping politico-religious relations between 1964 and 1992. Question 2 (c) asked candidates to discuss the main developments behind Malta's economic growth from independence to 1979. Both question 2 (a) and 2 (b) were popular choices. Answers to 2 (a) generally focused on the main personalities, while the question asked for a discussion of the reasons, notably the challenges of reconstruction and Malta's economic dependence on Britain. The topic of politico-religious crisis was covered well for the 1960s, but in some answers knowledge of the issues involved in the later flare up of the 1980s was sketchy.

Question 3 offered a choice between two text-based questions, each composed of five sub-questions of equal weighting. Question 3 (a) was based on two extracts from House of Commons debates held in April 1858 concerning dockyard expansion in Malta, for which land purchase was also being considered. The sub-questions tested knowledge of the role of the naval establishment in Malta. Candidates were asked to elaborate on the role of the harbour in the early nineteenth century in sub-question (i), and write about the main developments at the dockyard up to the 1850s (ii). A number of candidates did not connect the sub-question (iii) on the emerging limitations (as reflected in the passage) of the local dockyard to the surge in activities brought about by the war in Crimea (1853-56), which was understood with reference to 'recent events'. The answer to sub-question (iv) sought knowledge of later dockyard expansions. The significance of the dockyard and the harbour economy was reflected in later decades, notably in periods of tension in the Mediterranean culminating in World War I (sub-question v).

Question 3 (b), which was attempted by the majority of candidates, was based on an extract from a Maltese petition of 1903 to the Colonial Office. The petition referred to the constitutional changes which occurred in Malta that year, reversing the situation in the colony to pre-1887 conditions. Candidates were asked to explain the reference to the pre-1887 constitution (i) and describe the significance of the 1887 changes (ii). A number of candidates commented on the withdrawal of the constitution without reference to the context in 1903 which underlined the significant decision made by the British authorities. Sub-question (iv) asked for an explanation of the reference in the petition to the Italian language. Sub-question (v) referred to the eventual granting of Self-Government in 1921.

PAPER II: EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

Question 1 offered a choice between three essay questions. Question 1 (a) tested knowledge of nationalism in the 1848 revolutions around western Europe. Candidates were asked to assess how far nationalist leaders were the principal cause of the revolutions. The majority of candidates chose this question. Question 1 (b) tested knowledge of the causes and events of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Question 1 (c) asked candidates to compare the industrialization of France and Germany to that of Britain.

Question 2 offered a choice between three essay questions. Question 2 (a) addressed the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Italy and Germany. Candidates were asked to discuss the extent to which social and economic conditions were responsible for this development. Question 2 (b) addressed the Vietnam War in the wider context of Cold War tensions between the two Superpowers. Question 2 (c) tested knowledge of European recovery and reconstruction after World War II. Candidates were requested to identify the main factors affecting this development. Both question 2 (a) and 2 (c) were popular choices. In both cases it was noted that candidates tend to write descriptive answers listing events, while limiting their discussion of the factors causing them.

Question 3 offered a choice between two text-based questions. Each question comprised five sub-questions of equal weighting related to the passage. Question 3 (a), which was attempted by the majority of candidates, was based on an extract from the convocation of the Estates General by Louis XVI. Candidates were to explain the significance of the Estates General (sub-question i) and write the context of France in 1789 (ii). Sub-question (iii) addressed the main problems aired by representatives in the Estate General. The events which led to the outbreak of the Revolution (iv) were to be described, while the King's claims were to be contrasted with the failure of the monarchical regime in France between 1789 and 1792 (sub-question v).

Question 3 (b) was based on an extract from the deposition of a cotton manufacturer in 1836. The passage provided an authentic description of working conditions in the early nineteenth-century factory system in Britain. Candidates were asked to write the historical context to the factory system by this date (sub-question i), and to elaborate on the main factors encouraging the Industrial Revolution in Britain (ii). References to the legislation mentioned in the passage were to be explained (iii). Candidates were required to comment on measures to control child labour in the factories (iv). Sub-question (v) tested knowledge of the ways in which working conditions were gradually improved in Britain.

PAPER III: MEDITERRANEAN HISTORY

Question 1 offered a choice between three essay questions. Question 1 (a) tested knowledge of the Greek War of Independence and the Eastern Question. The Greek War underlined the decline of the Ottoman empire. Candidates who only wrote about the Greek War of Independence, without addressing also the part of the statement concerning the Eastern Question, provided an incomplete answer. Question 1 (b) asked candidates to discuss the role of World War I in the decline of the Ottoman empire. Question 1 (c) concerned British control of the Mediterranean route between 1813 and 1914. Both questions 1(a) and 1 (c) were popular choices. It was observed, as in past sessions, that several answers were highly descriptive, while analysis and explanation of the reasons for key developments in question were limited.

Question 2 offered a choice between three essay questions. Question 2 (a) concerned Italian irredentism in inter-war Malta. Candidates were asked to consider if this posed a serious problem. Question 2 (b) invited candidates to compare the process leading to independence in Cyprus and Malta. Question 2 (c) concerned the failure of Arab states to achieve Palestinian statehood in the period to 1993. Questions 2 (b) and 2 (c) were both popular choices.

Question 3 offered a choice between two text-based questions. Each question comprised five sub-questions of equal weighting related to the passage. Question 3 (a) was based on the treaty of 1856 intended to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman empire. Candidates were to explain the reference to a treaty recently signed in Paris on 30 March, which was the treaty bringing about the end of the Crimean War (sub-question i). Moreover, they were asked to explain how the integrity of the Ottoman empire had been threatened by Russia (ii). An explanation was required for British support in favour of the Ottoman empire (iii). The ensuing threat to the integrity of the Ottoman empire by Russia was the subject of sub-question (iv). An account of the events leading to the fall of the Ottoman empire was also required (sub-question v).

Question 3 (b) was based on a report of the British naval and military operations in Egypt in 1882. Candidates were required to elaborate on British interests in Egypt up to 1882 (sub-question i), and the circumstances leading to the British bombardment of Alexandria that year (ii). In the description of the author of the passage, this was one of the 'greatest disasters of the age'. Candidates were asked to explain this statement. (iii). The developments following the events of 1882 were to be described (iv), and a more general reflection of British strategy in the Mediterranean was sought (sub-question v).

D. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Exam Board notes that candidates sitting for the Advanced Level History exam generally need to achieve the skills of analysis, as well as a good grasp of the factual knowledge and understanding of the various topics in the syllabus. Limited analytical skills were frequently observed, both in answers to essay questions as well as the document-based questions. Good essay writing skills, as well as the ability to critically evaluate and analyse historical sources, are necessary requirements. Candidates need to make sure that they have good knowledge of all the parts of the syllabus. Furthermore, candidates are encouraged to supplement school-based teaching and learning time by reading history books and other relevant material. It bears repeating that a good command of English is important for effective communication.

**Chairperson
Examiners' Panel 2025**