



LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

1999

HISTORY

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The number of students taking history at Leaving Certificate continues to decline. In 1995 the number was 16,354 or 24.6% of the total Leaving Certificate cohort. In 1999 the number taking history was 13,624 or 21.2% of the total cohort.

While the causes of this decline are many and complex, the more readily discernible causes are essentially three in number.

- (i) The manner in which schools offer choice of subjects at senior cycle, where history is often timetabled against one or more subjects that have a more utilitarian appeal, militates against the popularity of history.
- (ii) The very nature of the subject, which necessitates the acquisition of higher order cognitive skills, can create a perception of history as a subject more difficult than available alternatives.
- (iii) The study of history necessitates a larger than usual amount of reading, which has become a significantly less practised skill than was formerly the case.

ORDINARY LEVEL

HISTORY

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ORDINARY LEVEL

Course I – Renaissance Civilisation

Irish History, 1477 – 1625

European History, 1453 – 1618

Number of Candidates – 113

EXAMINATION STATISTICS

Below is given a breakdown of the grades by number and percentage received by those 113 candidates.

TABLE 1

Grade distribution, 1999

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	21	21	20	19	8	17	7	113
%	18.6	18.6	17.7	16.8	7.1	15.0	6.2	100

The failure rate of 28.3% is particularly high and the examiner commented that it was obvious from many of the scripts that the candidates had not studied this course as some of them also attempted Course II.

ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION PAPER

Section A (40)

In this section candidates were required to attempt eight short answer questions from a total of fifteen.

All questions were attempted. A7 (packed parliaments), A13 (Old English and New English) proved to be difficult – some thought Old English was a 16th century language.

Section B (40)

In this section candidates were required to answer two paragraph questions from a total of six questions. All questions were attempted but the answers to B6 (Irish Colleges on the Continent in the 16th and 17th centuries) were very disappointing. B5 (the Spanish Armada) was sometimes confused with the arrival of Don Juan del Aguila in Kinsale in 1601.

Section C (120)

In this section candidates were required to answer two essay questions from a total of six. All questions were attempted but answers to C3 (Gaelic Ireland) contained much irrelevant material. Answers on social history very often confuse living conditions, food, clothing, etc.

from different centuries. Information such as “houses were bad and they were thatched” make the examiners’ task very difficult.

C6 (Ireland under James I, 1603 – 1625) was chosen by only a few candidates and the answers were very poor. All remaining four questions were answered satisfactorily.

Section D (40)

In this section candidates were required to answer eight short answer questions from a total of fifteen.

All questions were attempted. Very few good answers were received for D1 (Louis XI of France), D3 (Charles VIII of France in Italy), D6 (banking and trade), and D12 (Moscow in the 16th century).

Section E (40)

In this section candidates were required to answer two paragraph questions from a total of six. All questions were answered satisfactorily.

All questions were attempted but E3 (The Reformation in Scotland) was less popular than the other questions.

Section F (120)

In this section candidates were required to answer two essay questions from a total of six. All questions were well answered except F4 (The Ottoman Turks).

ORDINARY LEVEL

COURSE 2 – CONTEMPORARY CIVILISATION

IRISH HISTORY, 1868 – 1966

EUROPEAN HISTORY, 1870 – 1966

EXAMINATION STATISTICS

Below is given a breakdown of grades by number and percentage received by candidates.

TABLE 2
Grade Distribution, 1999

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	1332	1150	836	826	423	429	230	5226
%	25.5	22.0	16.0	15.8	8.1	8.2	4.4	

Despite a good choice of mainstream topics, the failure rate at this level remains in excess of 20%. The inadequacies of answers in history are best illustrated in sections C and F, which carry 60% of the total marks.

In Section C (30% of total) 11.5% of candidates scored full marks. Yet in this same section which contained questions on Home Rule, the G.A.A., the Gaelic League, the Irish Literary Revival, the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence, the Civil War, Cumann na nGaedheal, Northern Ireland before 1945, and Sean Lemass, 8.6% or almost 450 candidates either failed to attempt any of the above questions or received zero for their answers.

In Section F, which contained questions on France 1870-1914, on Bismarck, on World War I, on Benito Mussolini, on Britain in World War II, and on the Cold War, 17.2% or almost 900 candidates either failed to attempt any of the above questions or scored zero for their answers.

The quality of material presented as answers by some 30% - 35% of candidates is very poor indeed. It usually contains scraps of information relating to the question, together with a convoluted knowledge of history in general, which have been gleaned from a film or a historical documentary. Sometimes these media sources may have little relevance to the questions.

Some examples of common defects which appear annually are the following:

- (i) Poor layout with bad spelling and punctuation.
- (ii) Opinions without any supporting facts.
- (iii) Poor essay structure - introduction, paragraphs and conclusion.
- (iv) Evidence of racism and sectarianism with regard to other cultures and peoples.
- (v) Evidence of bias.

ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION PAPER

SECTION A (40)

Average Mark 25.7

In this section candidates were required to answer eight short answer questions from a total of fifteen.

1. The importance of Dublin Castle in Irish affairs.
This was seen as a centre of intelligence based on the Michael Collins film.
2. The Illustrated London News and Punch.
There were few mentions of the individual paper but most candidates knew of “ape-like creatures”.
3. The year 1886 described as a year of stress by Gladstone?
Very few correct answers were presented.
4. Local Government Act of 1898.
Very few correct answers were presented.
5. The Solemn League and Covenant, 1912.
It was seen by many as a petition or an oath against Home Rule.
6. Social and economic influence of World War I on Ireland.
The concepts “social and economic” were not understood by many candidates and sometimes the two world wars were confused.
7. Election bitterness in Ireland in the 1920s
This was popular and well answered when attempted.
8. The Economic War, 1932-1938.
This was well answered.
9. The Blueshirts.
This was reasonably well answered. Some candidates thought it was an English police force.
10. Two decisions of the Irish Government during World War II.
This was popular and well answered.
11. de Valera’s answer to Churchill in May, 1945.
This was reasonably well answered when attempted.
12. Ireland’s failure to gain admission to the U.N. in 1946.
This was not popular and not well answered; it was confused with Ireland’s neutrality in World War II. Russian veto rarely appeared in answers presented.
13. One achievement of Donogh O’Malley as Minister for Education.
This was well answered when attempted.

14. Name two Presidents of Ireland between 1937-1966.
Very few knew of any president other than de Valera, while a few candidates gave Winston Churchill as an answer.
15. Personalities associated with Ireland.
This was well answered but Ernest Walton presented problems for some candidates.

SECTION B (40)

Average Mark 30.6

In this section candidates were required to answer two paragraph questions from a total of six.

Question	Popularity	Comments
1. Gladstone and Ireland, 1868-1874	Average	Much information was given on the period after 1874. Answers were not confined to Gladstone's 1 st Government but overall, were reasonably good.
2. The Land War, 1879 – 1882	Average	Many failed to remain within the Land War Years, 1879-1882. Most answers were of a general nature on landlord/tenant relations.
3. 1913 Strike and Lock-Out	High	Most candidates gave good answers, especially on James Larkin's part in same.
4. 1937 Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann)	High	Candidates usually gave excellent answers.
5. Noel Browne	High	This question was well answered.
6. Northern Ireland, 1945 – 1966	Low	Many described Northern Ireland before the War and others gave information on Civil Rights and on the Provisional I.R.A. but good answers were few.

SECTION C (120)

AVERAGE MARK 85.5

In this section candidates were required to answer two essay questions from a total of six.

Question	Popularity	Comments
1. Home Rule and Unionism	High	This question was well answered. The foundations of Home Rule and Isaac Butt's part in the movement were clearly understood. Answers on Unionist opposition to Home Rule were also good.
2. Cultural Nationalism - G.A.A.; Gaelic League; Anglo-Irish Literary Movement	High	The G.A.A. and Gaelic League were well answered. The Anglo-Irish Literary movement was not well answered. Some confused the Gaelic League with field sports.
3. Ireland, 1916-1923	High	The 1916 Rising was the best answered part. The Civil War and the War of Independence were sometimes confused, and some answers had Black and Tans attacking the Four Courts. Overall, however, answers were satisfactory.
4. Cumann na nGaedheal in power, 1923 – 1932	Low	There were some excellent answers, but too often candidates confused Cumann na nGaedheal with the pre-war Fianna Fáil Government. Obviously this period is neglected.
5. Northern Ireland, 1920-1945	Low	The standard was disappointing. In some answers material dealing with Unionist opposition to Home Rule in the late 19 th and early 20 th century was used.
6. Seán Lemass	Low	There were some very good answers, but others thought that Ireland was very prosperous in the 1930s.

SECTION D (40)

AVERAGE MARK 25.1

In this section candidates were required to answer eight short answer questions from a total of fifteen.

1. Population increase pre-1914. This was not well answered and was not popular.
2. Improvements in democracy pre-1914. This was not well answered. The term 'democracy' was not understood by many.
3. Turkey 'the sickman of Europe'. This was not popular and poorly answered.
4. Newspapers and public opinion - This not well answered, and when attempted was associated with wartime propaganda. As with Q.1 above, social history is not well known.
5. Why Germany helped Lenin's return to Russia. This was poorly answered.

6. Lenin's N.E.P. This was not well answered.
7. Two difficulties faced by Weimar Germany .
This was very well answered and very popular.
8. How the Wall St Crash affected Europe. This was very well answered and very popular.
9. Night of the Long Knives. This was not well answered.
10. Collectivisation in Soviet Russia. Though not popular, some very good answers were presented.
11. Why Franco's Nationalists won the Spanish Civil War.
Though not popular, it was well answered when attempted.
12. Why the U.S.A. entered World War II . This was not popular and not well answered. Both world wars were confused by some candidates.
13. Suez Crisis 1956. This was not popular and poorly answered, being sometimes confused with the Panama Scandal in late 19th century France.
14. Charles de Gaulle. This was not popular and not well answered.
15. Personalities were well answered. Picasso and Dylan Thomas were the best known.

SECTION E (40)

Average Mark 28.8

In this section candidates were required to answer two paragraph questions from a total of six.

Question	Popularity	Comments
1. Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1870-1914	Low	This was not well answered, Austria – Hungary being confused with Turkey
2. European Powers Overseas, 1870 – 1914	High	The part played by Britain and France overseas was very well answered. Germany’s part was less well known.
3. The 1905 Revolution in Russia	Average	There was some confusion with the 1917 Revolution, but many excellent answers were received on Fr. Gapon’s march, etc.
4. Why Germany was dissatisfied with Versailles	High	It was well answered as this aspect of the course leading to the rise of Nazism is usually well treated in schools.
5. Konrad Adenauer, 1949 – 1963	Low	Answers on the years of “the German Miracle”, on Adenauer’s friendship with France, on the growth of the Common Market, on the sphere of authority of NATO, etc. were good.
6. The U.S.S.R under Khrushchev	Low	Some excellent answers were received, leading one to believe that many ordinary level students prepare for this examination in mixed classes.

SECTION F (120)

AVERAGE MARK 82.2

In this section candidates were required to answer two essay questions from a total of six.

Question	Popularity	Comments
1. France, 1871-1914	High	The 1870 – 71 War and internal scandals appeared often but very little was known on the ‘Belle Epoque’ .
2. Bismarck	High	Answers, especially on domestic policies were good. His relations with other countries, or Germany overseas, were not well treated.
2. The First World War, 1914 – 1918	High	This was well answered except for (ii) the War at Sea. Often at this level some confusion exists as to differences/similarities between the two world wars.
4. Benito Mussolini	Average	Answers were generally good on Mussolini’s rise to power, and on his political consolidation of that power, etc. His foreign policy and the Second World War, 1939-45, were not well treated.
5. Britain in World War II, 1939 – 1945	Low	There were some good attempts but generally answers were of poor quality. Britain’s stand against Germany, the R.A.F., Dunkirk, the part played by Britain in North Africa, against Japan in Burma, and in the North Atlantic, are not well known.
7. The Cold War, 1945- 1966	Low	There were some good answers but generally attempts were poor. One examiner reported seven answers on the German Winter Campaign in Stalingrad, 1941-43.

Scripteanna trí Ghaeilge

Bhí 44 script i nGaeilge, iad go léir ar Chúrsa II. Ní raibh aon difríocht i gcaighdeán na staire sna scripteanna seo agus na scripteanna a freagraíodh trí Bhéarla.

HIGHER LEVEL

HISTORY

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History Course I

Higher Level

Renaissance Civilisation

Irish History, 1477 – 1625

European History, 1453 – 1618

Introduction

Below is given a breakdown of grades by number and percentage received by candidates:

TABLE 3

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	10	45	69	62	12	5	2	205
%	4.87	21.95	33.66	30.24	5.85	2.45	0.98	

Overall, Course I was well answered. While the percentage achieving A + B grades was almost the same as in 1998, there was however, a noticeable increase in the E, F and NG grades.

This can be attributed to several factors:

- (i) Only 50% of candidates took the special research topic as compared to 75% in Course II.
- (ii) It is obvious from the answers that mainstream topics in Irish history, such as religious change and changes in land ownership, are not adequately dealt with in schools.
- (iii) It is obvious also from references in many answers that some candidates depend almost entirely on class notes and potted/printed synopses which have been in circulation for many years.

NUMBERS TAKING COURSE I

Selected years

The following shows the decline in numbers from 1991 to 1999.

TABLE 4

Numbers taking Course I, 1991 - 1999

Year	No. of Candidates Course I	% of Total	Total History
1991	276	2.4%	9,734
1995	281	2.7%	10,389
1998	373	3.1%	9,028
1999	205	2.4%	8,407

The numbers opting for this course vary from year to year and from 1991 have never exceeded 400. This year there was an appreciable fall in numbers from the previous year, 373 to 205.

Breakdown of Entries per school

Total Schools – 33

In addition to the fall in numbers, most of the schools taking Course I are outside of Dublin. Apart from 3 schools on Dublin's southside, this course has largely been abandoned by teachers in the capital. In relation to class size, only 3 schools have classes of more than 19 students while some 66% of schools have classes ranging from 1 to 8 pupils. It is possible that quite a large percentage of candidates do not attend formal classes.

TABLE 5

Candidates and Schools, History Course 1, 1999

Candidates	Number of Schools	% of Total
1	6	18.2%
2 – 4	8	24.2%
5 – 8	8	24.2%
9 – 18	8	24.2%
19 +	3	9.2%

Irish History

SECTION A (80)

Average Mark 48.8

Question	% choice	Quality of answers	Comments
1. Gearóid Mór	78%	Very good	This was well answered. The requirement to treat of strengths and weaknesses was closely followed.
2. The Butlers of Ormond	Zero	-	-
3. Gaelic Ireland	10%	Average	This was attempted sometimes by weaker candidates and usually not well answered. This may be due in part to the inadequate treatment of the topic in standard school texts.
4. Religious Change	10%	Average	External events were usually well treated, but doctrinal aspects and religious changes were less well known.
5. Queen Mary Tudor's Policies in Ireland	2%	Poor	This was attempted by a few candidates and the answers were vague and often inaccurate. There seems to be some confusion in students' minds as regards this Catholic monarch who ruled only for five years.

Irish History

SECTION B (80)

AVERAGE MARK 45.3

Question	% choice	Quality of Answers	Comments
1. Elizabeth I - Catholics in Ireland during her reign	7.4%	Average	The answers gave some of the main Events of Elizabeth's reign in Ireland but failed to show how her policies and her actions affected Catholics.
2. Opposition to Elizabeth in Munster	10.9%	Good	The main events in Munster during Elizabeth's reign were given. The Plantation of Munster was sometimes Less well explained and many failed to include the effects of the Nine Years' War on the province.
3. Hugh O'Neill's part in the Nine Years War	60.0%	Very good	Good detailed answers were given Showing excellent knowledge of warfare in the 16 th century.
4. Plantation of Ulster	20.0%	Average	Some answers were of the "planters out" variety. This is particularly disappointing when land and plantations are central to history at both senior and junior levels.
5. Mountjoy and Chichester	1.7%	Poor	When attempted, answers were poor.

European History

SECTION C (80)

AVERAGE MARK – 40.3

Question	% choice	Quality of Answers	Comments
1. Monarchies in France or England	26.1%	Good	Answers on both France and England were good. Both Louis XI and Henry VII were well treated.
2. The Renaissance in Italy.	21.5%	Good	This subject is well known in schools as it is part of all Junior Certificate History. Some answers, however, lacked the depth and range required at Leaving Certificate level.
3. Exploration and Conquest	47.7%	Good	At times, some answers concentrated too much on one motive to the exclusion of others.
4. Kings of France - involvement in Italy, 1494-1529.	Zero	-	-
5. Erasmus	4.7%	Good	Good detail was given on Erasmus and on his contribution to both the Renaissance and the Reformation.

European History

SECTION D (80)

AVERAGE MARK – 44.3

Question	% choice	Quality of answers	Comment
1. Martin Luther	70.3%	Very good	Much detail and good structure were evident in most answers. Occasionally, however, some irrelevant information was given in an effort to explain Luther's personality.
2. Calvinism	7.8%	Very good	An excellent understanding was shown of the spread of Calvinism in Northern Europe.
3. The Counter - Reformation	6.2%	Good	This was reasonably well treated by the small number who attempted the question.
4. Philip II of Spain	1.6%	Poor	Foreign policy was treated reasonably well but internal Spain treated poorly.
5. The Thirty Years War	14.1%	Good	It was well answered and the main reasons were set down and explained.

Irish and European History

SECTION E (80)

RESEARCH TOPIC AND ESSAYS

Question	% Choice	Average Mark	Quality of Answers	Comment
1. Special Research Topic – Ireland	31%	64.8	Very good	As distinct from Course II, special topics on Ireland slightly outnumbered those on Europe. Many essays showed signs of genuine research. Good answers were given to the supplementary questions. Some used sources to good effect.
2. Essay - Ireland	18%	42.7	Good	The quality was equal to the standard in sections A to D. Shane O’Neill was the most popular choice, followed by the Pale, and Surrender and Regrant. Very few attempted the Spanish Armada or the Irish on the Continent.
3. Special Research Topic – Europe	27.4%	62.6	Very good	The standard was slightly lower than in 1 above. There was evidence of ‘group topics’, up to 80% in some centres, with answers to supplementaries almost identical. There was also much evidence of genuine work, however.
4. Essay - Europe	23.6%	59.1	Very good	Essays were well written. Ferdinand and Isabella was followed in popularity by Ivan the Terrible. Very few attempted the other three essays.

COURSE II
CONTEMPORARY CIVILISATION

Ireland, 1868-1966
Europe, 1870-1966

INTRODUCTION

Below is given a breakdown of grades by number and percentage received by candidates:

TABLE 6

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	826	1847	2505	2255	635	250	89	8407
%	9.83	21.97	29.80	26.82	7.55	2.97	1.06	

Despite some adverse comments regarding the examination paper for Course II, the overall results were in keeping with those in the recent past. When compared with the 1998 results, however, there was a slight reduction in the percentage that achieved grade C or higher, while there was a 2% increase in grade E or less.

ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION PAPER
SECTION A (80)
AVERAGE MARK – 42.38

Question	% Choice	Average Mark	Quality of Answers	Comment
1. Irish Agriculture	34.0	49.1	Very good	This question was well answered. Land Legislation was incorporated by some but less so by others.
2. Michael Davitt	28.2	43.2	Fair	Candidates' knowledge of Davitt after 1882 was limited – many did not understand his views on land nationalisation. Some confused the role of Davitt with Parnell.
3. Various Topics - National Awakening; etc.	21.6	41.0	Reasonably Good	Language and games were well answered. Some excellent attempts were presented but many narrative-type answers lacked analysis or assessment of contributions. Very few attempts on role of women in National awakening were presented.
4. Carson and Craig	4.5	40.7	Average	While the involvement of both Carson and Craig in Unionist opposition to Home Rule was understood by the majority, details of that involvement were sketchy.
5. Arthur Griffith	11.7	39.9	Average	There were some excellent answers on Griffith's early career and on his political And economic ideas. His part in later Sinn Féin, in the 1918 election and in the Treaty was sometimes inadequately treated.

SECTION B (80)

AVERAGE MARK 40.29

Question	% choice	Average Mark	Quality of answers	Comment
1. W.T. Cosgrave	10.6	46.19	Very good	His political career in Government, 1922 – 1932, was well answered. His earlier and later career were Often ignored.
2. The Blueshirts	22.24	42.32	Reasonably Good	While most candidates could give a detailed narrative account of the Blueshirts, some found difficulty with “the circumstances in which the movement arose” , and failed to see it in its wider European context.
3. Anglo-Irish relations, 1932-1945	61.89	45.22	Very good	This was the most popular question and answers were very good.
4. Sir Basil Brooke	0.86	41.6	Average	Some candidates gave excellent answers, showing very clear understanding of the Unionist position. From the low % choice it is obvious that Northern Ireland does not receive sufficient Attention in class.
5. Ireland in the 1950's	4.41	26.14	Very poor	This was attempted by candidates who gave vague, rambling answers about poor housing, Catholic Church domination and an uncaring society. Little or nothing was written on two inter-party governments, on emigration, on the beginnings of foreign investment, on Whitaker, on the early Lemass period, etc.

SECTION C (80)**AVERAGE MARK 42.6**

Question	% choice	Average Mark	Quality of Answers	Comment
1. Europe, 1870-1914 - economic and social history	8.6	31.6	Poor	Generally weak and inaccurate answers which very often contained irrelevant political information were presented. It seems social and economic history is being neglected in class.
2. European expansion overseas	28.6	45.1	Good	There was sometimes a failure to deal properly with relations between countries and a tendency to over-emphasise results rather than causes.
3. France, 1871-1914	28.5	46.6	Very good	Internal difficulties were well treated. Much detail was given on late 19 th and early 20 th century France – monarchists, republicans, church/state relations, etc. There was some evidence of rote learning.
4. The Eastern Question	18.5	46.6	Very good	Good detailed knowledge prevailed. Some candidates over-concentrated on the causes of World War I.
5. Lenin	15.8	46.1	Very good	Many excellent answers on pre-revolutionary Russia, on the Bolsheviks' rise to power, and on Lenin's short term as leader. The main points were well explained. Some drifted into general Russian history, to Rasputin, etc., and confused events and personalities.

SECTION D (80)**AVERAGE FOR SECTION 42.05**

Question	% Choice	Average mark	Quality of answers	Comment
1. Benito Mussolini	51.7	44.2	Reasonably good	This was generally well answered but with an over-emphasis on the pre-1922 period at times. Some also tended to ignore external affairs.
2. The League of Nations	12.8	32.0	Poor	The answers tended to be rather short and sometimes gave too much detail on the structure of the League, while failing to explain the part it played in International affairs.
3. Germany in World War II, 1939 – 1945	22.4	40.1	Average	There were some excellent answers but at times there was a tendency to give a narrative account of the war with no analysis of Germany's defeat. Ribbentrop's diplomacy, and early relations with Soviet Russia, were not well treated.
4. Great Britain, 1945-1966	2.9	51.9	Very good	Candidates gave excellent answers on Labour in power, on the welfare state, on joining the E.E.C, on relations with France, on problems with the colonies, etc.
5. The U.S.A. and Europe, 1939-1966	10.2	37.9	Average	This was sometimes attempted by candidates who dealt only with the Cold War. The war years and the rebuilding of Europe under the Marshall Plan were often not mentioned.

SECTION E (80)

AVERAGE MARK—42.38

Question	% choice	Average Mark	Quality of Answers	Comment
1. Special Topic –Ireland	45.6	71.6	Excellent	There was evidence of research, Lists of sources and good answers to supplementary questions. There were also some good accounts with less than convincing efforts at supplementaries, leading examiners to suspect that an easy approach had been taken.
2. Essays – Ireland	13.8	43.4	Average	The standard was the same as in other sections. Popularity: 1. Conservatives and Ireland E2 (iii) – 48.1% 2. Irish language: 1922 – 1966 E2(iv) – 33.8% 3. Churches in Irish History : E2 (i) – 13.3% 4. Isaac Butt: E2(ii) – 4.5% 5. The Labour Movement: E2(v) 0.3%.
3.Special Topic - Europe	30.0	67.1	Very good	The quality of the answers was in keeping with E1 above. The average mark was not as high, due to two factors: (i) some candidates find it difficult to access European sources – both primary and secondary. (ii) Lack of expertise on proper use of internet websites.
4. Essays - Europe	10.6	44.4	Good	The standard was generally the same as in E2 above. Popularity: 1. Spanish Civil War: E4(iii) - 32.5% 2. Gt. Britain + Germany: E4(i) - 22.1% 3. European Unity: E4 (v) - 16.3% 4. Konrad Adenauer : E4 (iv) - 15.1% 5. The War at Sea: E4(ii) - 14.0%

GENERAL COMMENT

(a) Problems relating to the Teaching and Examining of Course II

This is a particularly long course in modern history. In European history it stretches from the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 to the Brezhnev era of the Cold War in 1966, and in Irish history from Gladstone's Liberal Party's victory in 1868 to Seán Lemass' retirement from politics in 1966. The course covers a period of dramatic change from a post-industrial revolution society to the beginning of the electronic era.

While the aims and objectives of the course are clearly set out, the content is not. In such circumstances, examination questions set on various topics, chiefly on political history, have come to delineate course content. In more recent times, the reappearance from year to year of certain personalities and topics has further narrowed the course. These questions have come to be called "mainstream history" or to quote a commonly used phrase: "bóthar mór". In some instances the course content taught has been even reduced to about 20 prepared essays, very often with little reference to "the main trends, issues and events ... of the period" (Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, p.206).

It must be emphasised, however, that the great majority of teachers make a genuine effort to teach this long and detailed course. As a wide choice of questions is offered, certain topics may not be treated in great detail. When specific topics do not appear on the examination paper, this does not cause any problems as candidates have other choices. If, on the other hand, a sizeable percentage of the course is omitted, then the candidates' options are narrowed considerably. This results in adverse comments levelled against the examination papers.

(b) The Research Topic – SECTION E

The percentage of candidates who opted for this question was approximately the same as in 1998.

1998	-	75.3%
1999	-	75.6%

A very high standard of work was noticeable in many of the answers. As in previous years, there was a considerable difference between the marks for the research topic and the marks for other questions on the examination paper. Topics on Ireland were higher by 21 marks than the average marks for questions in Section A and Section B while topics on Europe were 17 marks higher than the average marks for questions in Section C and Section D. It is quite obvious that the question on the research topic as presently constituted is not a very good indicator of a candidate's ability in history. It is not able to discriminate between a very good/genuine study and an average attempt. The following are some of the problems associated with the Research Topic:

- (i) The similarity of the language in descriptive passages is very noticeable in cases where all, or a very large percentage, of a class offer the same topic.
- (ii) Several examiners noticed excessive use of the internet websites without any reference or any address, or without any other source.
- (iii) Topics on the same subject using the same plan and exactly the same sources appear in centres sometimes over 100 miles apart. This leads one to conclude that well prepared topics are in circulation.
"Casement's formative years" which appeared in centres in South Dublin, in Waterford, and in the Midlands is a good example of this.

(iv) Well prepared essays for E2 and E4 which fail to appear on the examination paper are skilfully “turned into” topics by candidates. Some of these candidates make very feeble efforts indeed to answer the supplementary questions and sometimes give sources which do not have any connection with the so-called topic.

(c) Lack of emphasis on certain parts of the course

The low percentage of candidates who answer questions on social and economic history, on Northern Ireland, and on Britain, continues to be disappointing. This was especially true this year – the uptake being less than 1% in some cases.

(d) Time allocation – number of questions

This continues to be a source of concern. Some candidates are unable to complete the paper in three hours due to inadequate division of time between sections – usually spending far too much time on the special topic in SECTION E and as a result being unable to complete one of the other sections – usually SECTION D. This year this amounted to 11.7% of all candidates.

For a further breakdown see the chart below.

TABLE 7
Failure to complete Five Questions

Failed to complete 1 SECTION	Failed to complete 2 SECTIONS	Failed to complete 3 SECTIONS
6.4%	3.0%	2.3%

(e) Freagairt trí Ghaeilge

Bhí 337 script i nGaeilge i gCúrsa II. Bhí an caighdeán a bheag nó a mhór ar an dul céanna leis na scrípteanna a freagraíodh i mBéarla.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Due emphasis should be placed on parts of the course which are being neglected - Northern Ireland; Britain; and economic and social history, both Irish and European.
2. In relation to the research topic, it is imperative that students conduct individual independent research, placing due emphasis on the sources consulted and on the skills acquired in the process.
3. It must be emphasised that general textbooks do not necessarily cover the syllabus in all aspects; as the examination paper reflects the syllabus, it is recommended that deficiencies in particular texts be remedied by appropriate teaching strategies and by supplementary reading.
4. Given the nature of this written examination, it is advised that time be managed to accommodate the training of candidates in the writing of answers to questions .

TABLE 8
EXAMINATION RESULTS 1997 and 1998
ORDINARY LEVEL – COURSE 2

1997

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	1035	1139	1151	1221	494	510	266	5816
%	17.8	19.6	19.8	21.0	8.5	8.8	4.5	

1998

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	1316	1333	1013	961	477	494	216	5810
%	22.7	22.9	17.4	16.6	8.2	8.5	3.7	

TABLE 9

Examination Results 1997 and 1998

HIGHER LEVEL COURSE 2

1997

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	687	1912	2878	2436	739	261	108	9021
%	7.6	21.2	31.9	27.0	8.2	2.9	1.2	

1998

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	817	2198	2919	2236	576	222	60	9028
%	9.0	24.3	32.3	24.8	6.4	2.4	0.7	

TABLE 10
HIGHER LEVEL COURSE I
1998

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
Number	25	75	135	115	17	6	0	373
%	6.7	20.1	36.2	30.8	4.6	1.6	0	