



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA
LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ECONOMIC HISTORY
HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
2000

INTRODUCTION

Structure

Economic History may be taken as a subject in the Leaving Certificate examination by all students not taking History as a subject in the same examination. The examination paper is divided into two parts as follows:

Part I: Economic History of Ireland (264 marks)

This part is divided into two sections. Section A deals with the Economic History of Ireland between 1660 and 1850. Section B deals with the Economic History of Ireland from 1851 to the present. There are six questions in each section. Each question carries 88 marks.

Candidates are required to answer on three questions from Part 1. Candidates must take one question from **each** section and take the third question from **either** section.

Part II: International Economic History (136 marks)

There is one section in this part, which deals with the history of the international economy from 1660 to the present.

There are nine questions in this section. Each question carries 68 marks. Candidates are required to answer on any two questions from this section.

The future of Economic History

As a single autonomous subject at Leaving Certificate level, Economic History will be examined for the last time at the Summer examinations in 2003.

Thereafter, major elements of the present syllabus in Economic History will be subsumed into the new Leaving Certificate syllabus for History which will be introduced into schools at the commencement of the academic year 2002/2003 and examined for the first time in the Summer examinations, 2004.

HIGHER LEVEL

Performance of Candidates

The following table gives the grade results, by number and percentage, for the year 2000.

Examination Results – 2000 (400 marks)

| Grade | A | B | C | D | E | F | N/G | Total |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Number | 28 | 59 | 101 | 62 | 21 | 11 | 5 | 287 |
| % | 9.76 | 20.56 | 35.19 | 21.60 | 7.32 | 3.83 | 1.74 | 100 |

Relative to the examination results in 1999, there was a significant increase in the percentage number achieving higher grades, and a corresponding decrease in the percentage number failing to achieve a D grade.

This, in part may be attributed to the fact that the absolute number of candidates sitting the examination in Economic History had decreased by 65% (from 438 to 287). Accordingly, it may be inferred that fewer numbers created a more homogeneous group of candidates showing interest and aptitude sat for the examination in 2000.

It may also in part be attributed to the fact that the examination paper contained a higher than average number of questions on the more salient aspects of Irish and international Economic History, and allowed candidates much scope for displaying their reading and knowledge.

Analysis of answering

Q.1 This question was not often attempted. There were some highly impressive answers bringing out clearly the advantages to the Irish economy of the provisions trade of the 18th century compared to the live cattle trade of the 17th century. However, some candidates discussed the Cattle Acts of the 1660s instead of discussing the cattle trade.

Q.2 Some very solid answers given on the impact on Irish agriculture of industrial development in Britain. However, too often candidates ignored the growth of the English market for foodstuffs as a consequence of industrialisation and urbanisation in Britain.

Q.3 This question on the integration of the Irish economy into the wider British economic system before 1800 was generally not answered relevantly. There was a tendency to discuss restrictive trade legislation of the 17th and 18th centuries, rather than examining much broader issues.

Q.4 Though very popular, this question on the role of the potato in the Irish agricultural economy between 1750 and 1840 was very often not answered relevantly. A high percentage of candidates simply discussed the Famine.

Q.5 This question on the economic consequences for Ireland of the Act of Union was answered well by many candidates and quite poorly by others. However, in most cases candidates displayed a reasonable understanding of the long-term economic effects of the union with Britain.

Q.6 This question on the changes that took place in transport up to 1850 was treated relevantly by all candidates, while a considerable number produced quite impressive answers which showed evidence of wide reading.

Section B – Economic History of Ireland 1851-present

Q.7 This question on the continuing decline of the population after 1851, and its consequences for the Irish economy, was taken by the great majority of candidates and was universally well answered.

Q.8 This question based on a comparison between Dublin and Belfast as industrial centres was usually well answered. In general, however, candidates were much better informed about Belfast than they were about Dublin.

Q.9 This question on the contribution made to rural development by the Congested Districts Board and the Co-operative Movement was rarely attempted. When attempted, answers were generally irrelevant. It may be inferred that this area of the syllabus is not receiving due attention.

Q.10 This question on the consequences of the Wall Street Crash on the Irish economy was usually well answered. Candidates were able to give reasons with reference to the structure of the Irish economy and to government policy under Fianna Fáil.

Q.11 This question on the economic consequences for Ireland of World War II was attempted by a high percentage of students who displayed accurate and well-informed answers.

Q.12 This question on the impact of membership of the European community since 1973 was answered by the majority of candidates. The question produced many impressive answers displaying evidence of background reading and preparation. In a number of cases the marks obtained for this question made the difference between getting a low grade and reasonable grade.

Section C – The International Economy

Q.13 This question on the main characteristics of trade during the Age of Mercantilism was attempted by many candidates and was usually answered accurately and relevantly.

Q.14 This question on the main changes that took place in British banking or British industry as a result of the Industrial Revolution was the most popular single question on the examination paper. Answers varied across the spectrum, from excellent to very poor. Candidates invariably chose British industry as opposed to British banking.

Q.15 This question on the importance of protectionist policies in the development of the German or the American economies between 1850 and 1914 produced many disappointing answers. Candidates tended to get lost in detail. Many candidates simply focussed on the German or American economies without dealing with the importance of protectionist policies in their development. A poor reading of the question resulted in candidates failing to address the central point of the question.

Q.16 This question on the economic effects of the development of transport during the 19th century was attempted by a slight majority of candidates who produced solid and well-informed answers. Many candidates scoring a low level of marks on other questions scored notably well on this question.

Q.17 This question on the creation of a world economy by 1914 was rarely attempted. However, when attempted answers were detailed and impressively accurate.

Q.18 This question on the problems of the international economy during the Inter-War Years was reasonably popular and answers were reasonably accurate. In many instances, however, candidates confined their answers to the post Wall Street Crash era, and failed to address the problems in the 1920s which emanated from World War I.

Q.19 This question on Soviet economy policies under Stalin was attempted by a majority of candidates and in most cases was answered accurately and comprehensively.

Q.20 This question on the response of the industrialised nations to the oil crisis of 1973 was rarely attempted. Answers were non-specific and generally superficial.

Q.21 This question on the reasons for the transfer of so much manufacturing industry from Europe to Asia over the past forty years was attempted by not more than six candidates. Answers given were reasonably accurate, identifying the basic factors which has given rise to this phenomenon.

Overall General Comment

From the above examination results, and from the above analysis of the written answers of candidates, certain salient features emerge.

There was a significant variation in the overall quality of answering. Many candidates submitted well informed and cogently argued answers which were relevant and comprehensive.

On the other hand, many candidates failed to achieve this level. In these cases, there was a tendency for answers to be ‘descriptive’ rather than ‘analytical’. This was especially the case where answers were based on inadequate knowledge of the question.

Although not as prevalent as in previous years, there were some cases of candidates presenting prepared ‘set’ answers which did not always fully address the particular focus of the question.

A very positive development is the steady improvement in the range of interpretations being offered. It was common to find the views of Cullen contrasted with those of O’Brien in terms of traditional versus revisionist debate.

It is clear that teachers and students are making commendable efforts to teach and to study a broad syllabus in Economic History, and the general standard of answering has improved.

Recommendations for Teachers and Students

- i. Opportunities for comparative study should be exploited more often as this significantly enhances the overall quality of the answer and the corresponding mark award. Contrasting views and interpretations, citing particular authors such as Cullen, O’Brien, or Ó Gráda, should be the standard goal to which all candidates should aspire.
- ii. Candidates should not be encouraged to prepare ‘set’ answers. This practice leaves the candidate with little room for manoeuvre during the examination, and in consequence prepared answers usually do not always fulfil the requirements of the questions on the examination paper.
- iii. Candidates should be made more conversant with the format and question requirements of the examination paper. The practice of offering answers to six and seven questions is not to be recommended. As five questions only can be awarded, candidates would be better served to concentrate their time and energies on five full questions.

ORDINARY LEVEL

Performance of Candidates

The following table gives the breakdown of grade results, by number and percentage, for the year, 2000.

Examination Results – 2000

| Grade | A | B | C | D | E | F | N/G | Total |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Number | 0 | 2 | 8 | 20 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 41 |
| % | 0.0 | 4.88 | 19.51 | 48.79 | 12.19 | 12.19 | 2.44 | 100 |

Analysis of Answering

Section A: Economic History of Ireland 1660-1850

Q.1 This question on the importance of the arrival of English and Scottish settlers in the development of the seventeenth-century Irish economy was not often attempted. Answers were reasonably good, but many answers lacked relevant factual details.

Q.2 This question on the importance of population growth in stimulating the Irish economy was attempted by very few candidates. Answers were of moderate standard. Many answers were incomplete.

Q.3 This question on the reasons for the fall in agricultural prices after 1815, and its effects on rural Ireland was attempted by many candidates. Answers were usually relevant and comprehensive.

Q.4 This question on transport in Ireland before 1850 was answered by many candidates and the answers were generally valid and relevant.

Q.5 This question on the linen industry in the North-East of Ulster was rarely attempted and answers were inadequate in terms of relevance and detail.

Q.6 This question on the loss of the potato crop between 1845 and 1848 was attempted by most candidates and answers were quite satisfactory. In many cases, this was the best answered question of the five questions attempted.

Section B: Economic History of Ireland 1851-present

Q.7 This question on the changes in Irish living standards between 1851 and 1914 was not attempted by any candidate.

Q.8 This question on industrialisation in the North-East of Ireland and the expansion of Belfast was moderately popular. Some answers were quite solid but in general answers were inadequate in terms of relevant information.

Q.9 This question on the social and economic importance of land purchase was attempted by very few candidates. In most cases candidates merely listed the Land Acts and ignored the central focus of the question.

Q.10 This question on the economic consequences for Ireland of World War II produced some very satisfactory answers, where both the positive and the negative consequences were discussed.

Q.11 This question on the Programme for Economic Expansion and its effects on the Irish economy was answered by a majority of candidates who were able to discuss the fact that the plan recognised the failure of protectionism and the need to open up the Irish economy to external investment.

Q.12 This question on the effects of membership of the European Community brought forth many excellent answers which referred to improved infrastructure, capital investment and improvements in the availability of markets.

Part II: The International Economy

Q.13 The question on the necessity for an agriculture revolution before an industrial revolution could take place was answered by very few candidates. Answers were generally weak and inconclusive with no attempt at demonstrating the necessity for one revolution to have taken place before the other could develop.

Q.14 This question on the changes in industry during the Industrial Revolution was the most frequently answered question in this section. Many candidates offered solid relevant answers mentioning such factors as the introduction of the factory system; new

technology; increasing urban location and growth in output per worker.

Q.15 This question on the importance of developments in transport during the Industrial Revolution produced answers which were quite mixed in terms of relevance and comprehensiveness.

Q.16 This question on the main features of

- i. mercantilism
- ii. laissez-faire
- iii. tariffs

was answered accurately by many candidates, while others failed to understand the concepts given.

Q.17 This question on the principal features of the world economy that had emerged by 1914 was not attempted.

Q.18 This question on economic development in Soviet Russia or in Japan was rarely answered. When answered, candidates opted for Soviet Russia, instead of Japan. In the case of Soviet Russia, candidates were expected to display an understanding of collectivisation and the effects of the Five Year Plans. In the case of Japan, the role of government and banks should be explained.

Q.19 This question on the problems created by the Great Depression produced some solid answers on America and on Germany.

Q.20 This question on the economic importance of the increase in the female workforce was not attempted.

Q.21 This question on the main obstacles to economic development in the **developing world** since 1960 was often attempted. Answers were usually solid and comprehensive, and improved the overall mark of the candidates.

Overall General Comment

From the above examination results and from the above analysis of the written answers of candidates, certain salient features emerge.

- (a) Some 26% of candidates failed to achieve a D grade. Those candidates generally offered answers that were usually very short and contained few relevant factual details. Many answers contained little more than one or two generalisations, while a large percentage failed to answer all five questions.
- b. There were no candidates in the A1, A2 or B1 categories. The fact that the highest category achieved was B2, may be attributed to the fact that candidates failed to write five answers that were sufficiently comprehensive. In many cases, candidates scored highly on three questions, but failed to write adequate and relevant information on the remaining two questions.

Recommendations for Teachers and Students

- i. Candidates should be made aware of the imperative to answer all five required questions. Even in certain cases where the fourth question may not be fully answered in consequence, it is more beneficial to attempt the fifth question.
- ii. Candidates should be given time and practice in writing examination-style answers which are relevant to the question and sufficiently comprehensive in treatment.
- iii. Candidates should be made conversant with the basic concepts and terminologies used in Economic History. Concepts such as mercantilism, laissez-faire, tariffs, and terminologies such as international, developing world, growth and decline, are central to the study of Economic History. Without a certain facility in the understanding and use of such concepts and terminologies, the ability of candidates to interpret and answer questions on the examination paper is consequently impaired.
- iv. Where possible and relevant, candidates should refer in their answers to any authors, books or articles they may have studied or consulted in preparation for the examination.

APPENDIX I

ECONOMIC HISTORY RESULTS

ORDINARY LEVEL (ATGL)

| Year | Total | A | B | C | D | E | F | N/G |
|-------------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| 1997 | 62 | 0.00 | 9.60 | 22.60 | 38.80 | 3.20 | 11.30 | 14.50 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1998 | 32 | 3.10 | 12.50 | 31.20 | 25.10 | 28.10 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 1999 | 14 | 0.00 | 0.0 | 35.70 | 28.50 | 14.30 | 14.30 | 7.10 |
| 2000 | 41 | 0.00 | 4.88 | 19.51 | 48.79 | 12.19 | 12.19 | 2.44 |

HIGHER LEVEL (ATAL)

| Year | Total | A | B | C | D | E | F | N/G |
|-------------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| 1997 | 708 | 2.70 | 22.80 | 35.70 | 25.70 | 9.20 | 3.00 | 1.00 |
| 1998 | 520 | 2.70 | 18.30 | 36.10 | 27.20 | 11.30 | 3.30 | 1.20 |
| 1999 | 438 | 1.80 | 18.30 | 39.00 | 26.00 | 10.30 | 3.70 | 0.90 |
| 2000 | 287 | 9.76 | 20.56 | 35.19 | 21.60 | 7.32 | 3.83 | 1.74 |

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