

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 1 – Part A: Historical Issues

The evidence for this candidate was placed within the following mark ranges for each question section of this course assessment component.

Question 9: “King John failed as he lacked sufficient strength of character to stand up to Edward I”. How valid is this view of King John’s reign?

Introduction

The candidate was recognised as working between the **20-22** and the **23-25** mark ranges because:

- ◆ they have given clear context for the issue being discussed
- ◆ they have established a clear line of argument for their essay
- ◆ they have looked at the debate, although expanding this beyond chronicle accounts would have allowed them to move up the grid

Analysis, evaluation and line of argument

The candidate was recognised as working within the **23-25** mark range because:

- ◆ the candidate provides a detailed and effective analysis throughout their essay
- ◆ the argument presented considers several possible implications of the question, going beyond the obvious

Regarding John Balliol and the legal appeals to Edward I, the candidate provided evidence of the Scottish king’s early attempts to prevent such English interference, before continuing ‘*it was an act of defiance to his overlord – Edward found it intolerable. The quiet acts of defiance such as this are often overlooked when judgements of King John are made – under the confined of his sovereignty agreed by Bruce also, he could not act boldly instead he presents a quiet resistance. Amanda Beam argues that he cannot be slighted as lacking in strength due to his actions of 1295 in swearing the Franco-Scots Treaty of Amiens. The treaty was anti-Plantagenet, a vow of dual unity to support their sister nation in their fight against English tyranny when they were attacked.*

Concerning the good government of the country, the candidate argues ‘*Furthermore, Balliol is often written about as giving up the traditional role of the crown – never organising his lords, yet in a 4 year reign he held three parliaments, a greater proportional number than Bruce can attest to. These parliaments were not also the pointless musings of a vassal king. At his final parliament he declared his intent to go to war with England – not an act of someone lacking the strength to stand up to the English. Despite his defeat it was still Balliol at the helm, he led the fight against Edward, clearly standing up to him.*

Historical sources/interpretations

The candidate was recognised as working within the **23-25 mark range** because:

- ◆ they show clear awareness of possible connections between interpretations, acknowledging links between chronicles and the opinions of modern historians

For example: *'Court chronicler Rishanger calls him [John] 'a lamb amongst wolves' while Prestwich talks of the deliberate humiliation inflicted by the king and his lords designed to degrade the crown. 'During the process no more acts of defiance occurred – Balliol seemed resigned to his lot – in this instance he firmly lacked the strength of character to stand up to Edward I.'*

- ◆ there is an engagement with current historiography and an awareness of the context which created some of the historical interpretations

For example: *'Unsurprisingly the English chronicles view Balliol with equal – if not greater disdain – than Bruce. However, it is important to remember that Lanercost – the most critical chronicle of Balliol – was written in a priory founded by the Bruce family. Furthermore both Lanercost and Guisborough were written in the mid 1300s using the Bruce propaganda as a source for their chronicles. Prof Dauvit Broun argues that the English chronicles and Scottish equivalents such as Gesta are riddled with Bruce propaganda as it was their chief source of information. He claims it gives them an immense bias against figures such as Comyn, prejudicing opinion against them.'*

- ◆ there is an awareness of variations between interpretations, highlighting how historians can hold differing views on similar events

'As Fiona Watson argues less sympathetically in her later work, Balliol was bullied by King Edward and especially on issues such as the Treaty of Amiens and the war versus England had less input than believed. However, Michael Penman would argue that opinions such as this are firmly tainted by the work of pro-Bruce chroniclers. He would argue that while Balliol was occasionally weak, his character flaws have been highly exaggerated by the anti-Balliol chronicles.'

Question 11: To what extent was Robert Bruce's victory in the Scottish Civil War (1306–1309) due to the weaknesses of his opponents?

Conclusion

The candidate was recognised as working within the **20-22 mark range** because:

- ◆ they have made a clear overall judgement on the issue in the question
- ◆ they have evaluated key points or issues
- ◆ they have attempted synthesis. However, had this been developed with more focus on the other factors explored across their essay, this element could have moved further up the grid.

'Overall this essay has conclusively proven that the weakness of Bruce's opponents (the Comyns and the English) allowed him to win the civil war to a greater extent than the church or Bruce's own military genius. As a single factor the Comyn infighting and English incompetence dwarf any other factor as simply they facilitated them. Their woeful lack of opposition not only allowed Bruce to comprehensively win militarily but to win the propaganda war for the otherwise neutrals. The Comyns, Valance and Edward II must take most of the responsibility for the civil war victory and Scotland's future independence under Bruce as without their woeful incompetence he never would have been king.'

Thoroughness/relevance of information and approach

The candidate was recognised as working within the **23-25 mark range** because:

- ◆ there is clear evidence in the detail of their information of a wide range of serious reading
- ◆ they demonstrate considerable width and depth of knowledge on the topic
- ◆ the evidence and analysis are linked throughout the answer

Regarding the aftermath of the murder at Greyfriars Church in March 1306, he candidate notes: *'The Comyn family in particular suffered with a near total breakdown of leadership. Their once coordinated earldoms and castles at Buchan, Wigtown, Buittle and Urquhart amongst others became isolated and insular as the Comyn power struggle began. The family began to collapse from the inside with brothers, cousins and his wife all vying for power. Cowan notes that the 'Comyn family went into a huge decline post 1306' clearly due to John Comyns death. In terms of the civil war the death of Comyn was cataclysmic. It robbed an experienced military leader who despite defeat had led the resistance well until 1304. It is widely regarded that his knowledge would have been crucial in the fight against Bruce.'*

Regarding Bruce's military tactics and leadership, the candidate notes: *'The guerrilla warfare was also extended to the English but in a subtly different manner. Morris summarises that he knew he had to make life as difficult as possible for the English, to make them want to go home. Hence Bruce ordered the burning of crops and supplies, as well as the murder of livestock in frequent raids into the English stronghold of Lothian. He simply could not allow the English to come north. An army marches on its stomach and when the supply ships were*

destroyed Edward realise he had to turn back. His army was unsustainable and becoming unleadable.'

Candidate 1 – Part B: Historical Sources

The evidence for this candidate was placed within the following mark ranges for each question section of this course assessment component.

Question 14: How fully does Source A explain the approach taken by Edward I to increase his influence over Scotland between 1286 and 1292?

Wider contextual development

The candidate was awarded **4 marks** for wider contextual development within their overall mark for this question because they provided clear, detailed points of information which provided additional information, not in the source, about the approach taken by Edward to increase his influence over Scotland: *'It [the Treaty of Birgham] attempted to guarantee Scotland's sovereignty in the union with separate governments and church [wider contextual development]. Edward I had ordered an army to assemble at Norham, this was repeated when he gave his verdict for overlordship as he had assembled another army at Norham in case his ruling wasn't accepted [wider contextual development]. Edward demanded the he not be an arbiter but a judge of kingship in his capacity as overlord [wider contextual development]. It is called a crisis and Bishop Wishart the guardian has to reject it as only a king could accept such a thing.'* [wider contextual development]

However, the candidate also included further attempts at wider contextual development points which did not gain any marks as they failed to include sufficient detail or clearly explain the relevance of the information in relation to the question about the approach taken by Edward to increase his influence over Scotland. For example: *'However, the source does not fully explain the issue as it omits when Edward went round Scotland mustering claimants to the throne. Edward decided that if the guardians would not accept overlordship then the claimants had to – hence the more claimants the likelier acceptance was. The source also omits the Anglo-Norwegian discussions prior to the Treaty of Salisbury and Birgham. Edward reached out to King Eric suggesting the marriage of his son to the Maid of Norway as it would bring Scotland within his empire without consulting the Scots. However, the guardians found out and quickly became involved. Another omission is the Scottish debts paid to Eric by Edward I. To ensure the marriage went ahead Edward I paid the dowry owed to him for Alexander III's daughter in order to keep him happy with Scotland.'*

Question 15: Evaluate the usefulness of Source B as evidence of the effectiveness of William Wallace's leadership?

Provenance

The candidate was awarded **1 mark** for provenance within their overall mark for this question because they provided a clear evaluation of the usefulness of the authorship of this source and their access to accurate and relevant information when compiling their account: *'The source is from the Chronicle of Guisborough. The priory of which Guisborough wrote (Guisborough Priory) was on one of the main highways to Scotland in the north of England – and likely would have been*

privy to the views of returning English soldiers. This makes the source relatively useful as it will give a first-hand outsiders' view on Wallace's leadership.'

Historical interpretations

The candidate was awarded **1 mark** for using a historian within their overall mark for this question because they provided an historian's opinion to support a point of wider contextual development they included regarding Wallace's leadership at the Battle of Falkirk. This historian's view was relevant to the question and did not merely repeat a point of interpretation or wider contextual development, but added to the overall argument in relation to the effective leadership of William Wallace: *'Prestwich blames Wallace's lack of tactical advancement in the face of a far stronger English army for the desertion. The fact that he was deserted showed he was not an effective leader in battle – which would have been a useful inclusion.'*

However, the candidate was not awarded a mark for another attempt at providing an historian's opinion. Although the information provided was accurate, it was not linked to the overall question of the effectiveness of William Wallace's leadership: *'Dauvit Broun believes that the murders referenced [in the source] may have been English propaganda to grow hatred towards Wallace and the Scots.'*

Question 16: How much do Sources C and D reveal about differing interpretations of the means by which King Robert governed Scotland?

Interpretation linked to wider contextual development

The candidate was awarded **6 marks** within their overall mark for this question – 3 for **interpretation** and 3 for **wider contextual development** – because they selected relevant information from inside the first source and explained the link between that information and the question by providing additional contextual information to highlight and clarify the point being made, eg *'Source C mentions Robert held parliaments to govern Scotland. Parliaments gauged the support of the political community – and hence Robert held them fairly frequently [interpretation mark]. The political community's approval was essential to him due to the deposition clause in the Declaration of Arbroath [wider contextual development mark]. The source also discusses the rule through a royal bureaucracy. From the first days of the kingship Robert used the machinery of government to exert his rule [interpretation mark]. He revamped the system of sheriffdoms – ensuring that sheriffdoms and royal sheriffs were all within his peace and favourable to his cause [wider Contextual development mark]. The source further mentions he ruled using a law against the spreading of rumours about the king [interpretation mark]. The law was passed as a measure to try to stop a coup against Robert (such as the Soules Conspiracy) materialising – as people would only be allowed to talk approvingly of him in public' [wider contextual development mark].*