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# History

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Report on the Examination

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## General comments

It was pleasing to find that many students had been well-prepared for the examination and that centres had reacted positively to the experience of the 2016 series. Students tackled the sources' question in a more organised and effective way, paying due attention to provenance and tone but many did not apply sufficient own knowledge to the evaluation and did not identify the key points raised by the sources to help them locate their argument. Questions 02 and 03 were largely tackled well and students showed some understanding of specific elements of French foreign policy in the first half of Louis' personal government. The essay questions also showed that many students could focus effectively on a narrow period of history, selecting relevant examples to support a case and providing substantiated individual judgement. It was also pleasing that the tendency for some centres to use historians as sources of evidence without factual support had also receded into the past. There were, of course, some, whose knowledge of material or understanding of developments, were inadequate for the tasks set. It is largely as a help to centres to improve the performance of their students generally, but especially those who struggle with the demands of the specification, that the following comments are offered.

## Section A

### 01

Students were required to compare the value of two sources in explaining the reasons for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Nearly all students did offer a comparison, usually at the end of the review of both sources unfortunately not all students could be credited with a supported judgement. This was not because they lacked consideration of tone and provenance, although these were rarely integrated into the analysis of the sources. The main problem was that there was often very little real reference to the historical context except in the most general of terms. Many students wrote a commentary on the text, sometimes by simply re-writing its claims in their own words with very little supporting own knowledge. Students are expected to introduce items of own knowledge in assessing the accuracy of the sources; those who failed to do so were missing one of the key commands in the question and thus were losing opportunities of securing high marks. More able students also tended to give an overview of the line of explanation for the revocation being adopted by the source's author rather than adopting a line by line approach which often led to a loss of focus on the question itself – its value for explaining the reasons for the revocation. Moreover, some students did appreciate that the value of the source did not wholly rely on its factual accuracy. For example, Source B is questionable in its claim that Louis never 'read one word of the Bible' but this does not mean that the source is not valuable in assessing the reasons for the revocation.

It was a surprise how few students recognised Source A – the preamble to the actual revocation document – or knew that edicts were produced under the King's authority. Nevertheless, most students gained some credit for awareness that this was a legal document and was drawn up around the time of the revocation and had an authoritative tone. Again, very few students identified the 'protecting our kingdom from our enemies' reference and believed it referred to the Huguenots whereas it meant that the Dutch War and subsequent conflicts around the Réunion policy were over. More students surprisingly knew that Louis' grandfather had been a Huguenot himself originally which could be used to undermine the claims being made effectively by Louis himself. Most students gained their marks for evaluating the source's content by knowing that Louis was misled into thinking that most Huguenots had been converted; that any success of 'our efforts' was not really down to God's help but the persecution and blackmail adopted by Louis' officials. The 'previous troubles' were alluded to but also many pointed out that Huguenots as a class did not

pose significant problems in the Fronde. The source was rich in other lines of development and most students who had some knowledge could exploit it to some advantage.

Source B gave students easy opportunities for tone and provenance marks with the phrases ‘old trollop’ and Louis not ever reading the bible. However, a few students tried to make a little knowledge go too far and form arguments on the false premise that Liselotte was Maria Theresa’s sister and was thus prejudiced against Maintenon to protect her sister. Many chose here to comment on whether the ‘vicious persecution’ of the Huguenots was a fair description and used this as a basis for arguing that Source B was more trustworthy. However, others decided that the tone and provenance of Source B made it much less useful than an official document which was giving the public reasons for Louis’ actions which may have represented his genuine conviction due to being misled by his officials. Better answers tended to evaluate each source in turn and then write a substantial paragraph picking up on points made in the evaluation to come to a determination based on tone, provenance, analysis and own argument of which source was the more valuable.

## **Section B**

### **02**

Many students showed impressive factual knowledge here of the terms of the Treaty of the Pyrenees but did not always use this to focus on whether it established France as a great power. A few ignored the thrust of the question to argue that its main role was to show Mazarin’s great diplomacy. Others even more misguidedly saw it as establishing Louis XIV’s authority when he was not yet the absolute ruler of France. A few surprisingly did not consider the role of the dowry and better students used their knowledge to argue that the Treaty did not or did establish France as a great power. The secure Pyrenean border and the final acceptance by all of Europe of France’s gains at Westphalia and its victory in the Thirty Years War were key factors in supporting the view that it did establish France as a great power. Others argued that the victory was only secured finally with English support and that France was in economic and financial ruins with a very vulnerable north-eastern border and so France was not yet a great power. Others gained balance by claiming other events established France as a great power – the favourite alternatives being either that Westphalia previously or that bastion of students studying Louis XIV, Versailles, afterwards established France as a great power.

The best answers were those that knew the terms of the Treaty in detail and used them to assess the validity of the statement as this was the key given in the question.

### **03**

This question focused on motivation for a specific element of Louis XIV’s foreign policy – Réunions. Unfortunately, an appreciable number of students did not understand what reunions were or failed to explain what they were. Most did try to tackle the suggested issue of the question and found it relatively easy to refer to other motives and thus disagree with the rather overstated claim in the question. Few, unfortunately, were able to explain how the policy made his borders more secure in other than generalised terms; few referred to the north-east border where most of the territories involved were, and one or two even claimed that it aimed to strengthen all of Louis’ borders, presumably including those with the Atlantic or Mediterranean. Many looked back at Louis’ motives for the Dutch War and applied them to this policy, arguing that it was focussed against the Dutch when no former Dutch territories were involved. Others went to that alternative bastion of students studying Louis XIV, ‘gloire’, but then really failed to explain with evidence why this was; this was surprising as the Réunions saw one of the few quoted examples of Louis’s desire for ‘gloire’ – the celebratory Te Deum, the medals and all the other paraphernalia associated

with the entry into Strasbourg which is usually considered as part of the whole policy of Réunions. Other students saw the policy as an extension of the War of Devolution, but only a few argued persuasively for the basis of the parallel - that it was extending dynastic claims on a pseudo-legal basis.

Many students produced a parade of Louis' foreign policy objectives but failed to show with evidence how the policy of Réunion really advanced these. Better students tended to recognise that the policy was not just peaceful but did extend into military action, as for example in the capture of Luxembourg. Also, they understood that securing the border could include comprise both defensive motives, involving the construction of Vauban's military defences on newly acquired territory, and acting as a springboard for further advances up to, and indeed perhaps over the Rhine.

### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.