



A-level HISTORY 7042/1E

Component 1E Russia in the Age of Absolutism and Enlightenment, 1682–1796

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk)

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Supporting Marking Guidance

A separate Supporting Marking Guidance document has been created for use in this series and any future series.

It has been written by the senior examining team. It applies to all A-level History options. The purpose of the guidance is to clarify key aspects of the mark scheme and further ensure consistency of approach across all options. The guidance does not reflect a change in the standard applied, but clarification and amplification of the standard. We hope that the guidance document will aid you in your understanding of how the standard should be applied and deepen your understanding of how the key aspects of the mark scheme work. The Supporting Marking Guidance should always be used in conjunction with the mark scheme, and any relevant examiner standardising and teacher training material.

Examiners can find the Supporting Marking Guidance on the associate extranet.

Teachers can find the Supporting Marking Guidance alongside the current mark scheme on Centre Services on results day. It will also be published with any future assessment materials on the public website.

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to Catherine the Great and the Enlightenment.

[30 marks]

Target: AO3

Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of the interpretations put forward in all three extracts and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. Evaluation of the arguments will be well-supported and convincing. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of the interpretations given in all three extracts and combines this with knowledge of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. The evaluation of the arguments will be mostly well-supported, and convincing, but may have minor limitations of depth and breadth. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Provides some supported comment on the interpretations given in all three extracts and comments on the strength of these arguments in relation to their historical context. There is some analysis and evaluation but there may be an imbalance in the degree and depth of comments offered on the strength of the arguments. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** Provides some accurate comment on the interpretations given in at least two of the extracts, with reference to the historical context. The answer may contain some analysis, but there is little, if any, evaluation. Some of the comments on the strength of the arguments may contain some generalisation, inaccuracy or irrelevance. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** **Either** shows an accurate understanding of the interpretation given in one extract only **or** addresses two/three extracts, but in a generalist way, showing limited accurate understanding of the arguments they contain, although there may be some general awareness of the historical context. Any comments on the strength of the arguments are likely to be generalist and contain some inaccuracy and/or irrelevance. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must assess the extent to which the interpretations are convincing by drawing on contextual knowledge to corroborate and challenge the interpretations/arguments/views.

In their identification of the argument in Extract A, students may refer to the following:

- Voltaire and other philosophes saw Catherine the Great as an enlightened ruler and were right to do so
- the praise that Catherine the Great received from the philosophes
- the change in Russia from the barbarity of the past to the civility of Catherine's rule
- aspects of Catherine's rule: eg curbing despotism; the rule of law; control of the Church; religious toleration, education reform.

In their assessment of the extent to which the arguments are convincing, students may refer to the following:

- to support the arguments in the extract, students may refer to Catherine's relationship with the writers of the Enlightenment, eg the correspondence with Voltaire, the visit of Diderot
- to support the arguments in the extract, students may refer to Catherine's ideas and reforms that demonstrate enlightened influences, eg: the Instruction; the Charter of the Nobility; religious tolerance; reforms to the legal system, educational reform
- to challenge the arguments in this extract, students may refer to Catherine's continuing belief in the Tsar's absolutism and her response to threats to this, eg Pugachev; the French Revolution, her reliance on the nobility
- to challenge the arguments in this extract, students may refer to the limits of Catherine's reforms: eg the lack of progress of the Great Commission; the limited impact of schools, the expansion of serfdom.

In their identification of the argument in Extract B, students may refer to the following:

- Catherine wanted to be perceived as an Enlightened ruler as it was a method of increasing her glory
- the philosophes supported Catherine despite the limits of her reforms
- Catherine's use of the Instruction as a propaganda
- Catherine's hypocrisy – proclaiming herself as a liberal whilst behaving as an autocrat.

In their assessment of the extent to which the arguments are convincing, students may refer to the following:

- to support the arguments in the extract, students may refer to Catherine's international reputation, eg as an enlightened despot
- to support the arguments in the extract, students may refer to Catherine's failure to introduce enlightened policies into Russia despite rhetoric: eg serfdom; centralisation of power, the protection of noble status
- to challenge the arguments in the extract, students may refer to the practical difficulties that Catherine faced, eg her position as a foreigner and a usurper; the social structure, the size and economic backwardness of Russia which hindered reform
- to challenge the arguments in the extract, students may refer to reforms which demonstrate Catherine's true adherence to enlightened ideas: economic changes following physiocratic theories;

the expansion of education; Catherine's support for cultural changes, the codification of the legal system.

In their identification of the argument in Extract C, students may refer to the following:

- Catherine the Great implemented enlightened ideas but did so in the context of the reality of Russia
- the Instruction was a short-term measure designed to enable debate
- she made legislative changes in the longer term, such as to the nobility and education
- her ability to do this was a sign of her brilliance not hypocrisy.

In their assessment of the extent to which the arguments are convincing, students may refer to the following:

- to support the arguments in the extract, students may refer to the nature of the Russian empire, eg the different peoples/traditions/cultures/religions/privileges, eg the Cossacks
- to support the arguments in the extract, students may refer to the dangers of ignoring the reality of Russia, eg the nature of the complaints that led to the Pugachev revolt; the reliance on nobility to control the country
- to support the arguments, students may refer to the nature of Catherine's reforms that intended to introduce enlightenment to Russia, even if not always fully realised: the Charter of Nobility, the towns, serfs; the expansion of education
- to challenge the arguments in the extract, students may refer to other factors that impacted on how Catherine introduced enlightened ideas, eg her own position, ambition and support for absolutism.

Section B

0 2 How important were Peter the Great's military reforms to his foreign policy success?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Peter the Great's military reforms were important to his foreign policy success might include:

- Peter's creation of new modern regiments in his childhood served as a model for later reforms: the Preobrazhensky and its importance from Azov onwards in Russian success
- changes to the existing Russian army were important in leading to success in the Great Northern War from 1705 onwards: eg the introduction of a uniform/training manuals/conscription after Narva
- the development of a Russian navy was crucial to success in the Great Northern War: Russia's geographical constraints and lack of a naval tradition before Peter; failure in the first Azov campaign; Russian dominance of the Baltic after Cape Hango and this dominance forcing the Treaty of Nystadt
- the use of foreign officers led to success: the impact of the Great Embassy on recruitment of foreign officers; the use of foreign teachers in, for example, the Naval Academy; examples of foreign officers recruited by Peter, eg Patrick Gordon and Franz Lefort.

Arguments challenging the view that Peter the Great's military reforms were important to his foreign policy success might include:

- the changes made to the Russian economy were crucial to foreign policy success: eg factories, ironworks, the strengthening of serfdom and use of conscription in industry all supported the war effort and enabled foreign policy success
- Russian absolutism allowed Peter to direct all Russian effort to support for war effort which was important to foreign policy success: governmental reform, eg the Senate replacing the Duma; local administrative changes to increase state finances, the creation of the College system
- the diplomatic situation at the beginning of the 18th century assisted Russian foreign policy success: eg Russia's alliance with Saxony and Denmark-Norway which distracted Sweden after Narva; the failure of the Ottomans to support Sweden after Pruth, the desire of the Great Powers to end the Great Northern War in 1721
- the weakness of Russian rivals was important to Russia's foreign policy success: the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman empire; Ottoman lack of interest in conflict with Russia evidenced by the terms of the Treaty of Constantinople, the over-extension of the Swedish empire.

Students may argue that the military reforms that Peter the Great introduced were vital to his military success, particularly in turning the tide in the Great Northern War after 1705. However, other students may recognise a broader context, both internally within Russia and in the nature of Russia's opponents. Better answers will be able to demonstrate links, for example arguing that Peter's military reforms enabled him to take advantage of his opponent's weaknesses or, in showing how military reforms were dependent on other domestic changes.

0 3 To what extent did Russian society change during Peter the Great's reign?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Russian society changed during Peter the Great's reign might include:

- ideas about westernisation; the challenge to traditional views about the role and nature of Russia in the world
- a new nobility: the rise of New Men such as Menshikov, both from outside the nobility and the development of a new westernised elite exemplified by St Petersburg; young nobles being encouraged to be educated abroad
- the expansion of serfdom and the decline of the free peasants, the encouragement to use serfs in industry as well as agriculture
- the beginnings of an entrepreneurial class: the development of factories/ironworks etc; the law of Single Inheritance and incentives for nobles to become involved in commercial activities
- the formalisation of a Service State exemplified by the Table of Rank: meritocracy replacing the importance of the old traditional Boyar families; the replacement of the Duma by the Senate.

Arguments challenging the view that Russian society changed during Peter the Great's reign might include:

- the continuity of the basic structure of Russian society: Tsar/nobility/serf
- the nature of the Russian state and governance structure and the limitations this brought: the need to use the nobility in local government; financial imperatives such as the Poll Tax which strengthened traditional structures
- Russian culture: traditional conservatism; the influence of the Orthodox Church; passive resistance in all strata of society, the insularity of Muscovy and its geographical isolation
- the unchanging economic basis of Russia: the failure to develop a middle class; the expansion of serfdom; noble status, subsistence agriculture.

Students may emphasise the continuities in Russian society, particularly relating to the nobility and serfs. However, other students may recognise that the scale of Peter the Great's reforms inevitably produced some change. Better answers will debate the extent of this change and may conclude that whilst societal change is typically difficult to progress, the impact of westernisation kick-started profound changes in Russian society.

0 4 'Catherine's greatest foreign policy success was the partition of Poland.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Catherine's greatest foreign policy success was the partition of Poland might include:

- Russia's status as the key power in central and northern Europe; alliances with Austria and Prussia and the importance of Catherine the Great in achieving this, particularly the second and third partitions
- Russian expansion: Russia gained Polish Livonia and Belarus in 1772, all of Eastern Poland in 1792, and a further 120 000 km in 1795
- the security afforded by a buffer zone in the West, particularly in the context of the rise of Prussia
- the greater dominance of the Baltic that the partitions enabled: the extension of the Russian coastline and ports
- domestic impact: Catherine portrayed as the protector of Russian Orthodoxy.

Arguments challenging the view that Catherine's greatest foreign policy success was the partition of Poland might include:

- success against Turkey fulfilled long-term Russian objectives: access to the Azov Sea in 1774 and further access to the Black Sea and Mediterranean; southern border secured
- territorial gain in the south surpassed gains in Polish partitions: annexation of Crimea in 1783; gain of Ukraine; economic benefits from these
- Russia's previous relationship with Poland: already a client state so limited gain; not a key objective of Catherine and initially driven by Prussia; led to some loss of tradition territory, eg Galacia; not marked or celebrated within Russia
- the negative impact of the partitions on Catherine's enlightened reputation in Europe: seen as a violator of international law.

Students may argue that the gain of Polish territory was Catherine's greatest success, solidifying Russia's status as the pre-eminent central European power. However, other students may argue that this was eclipsed by Catherine's success in the Balkans, particularly as this was such a long-standing Russian aim. Better answers will compare the various merits of all of Catherine's foreign policy successes, perhaps recognising Catherine's ability to balance competing demands, and come to a supported conclusion which demonstrates judgement.