



Common errors and guidance for 9389

Common errors

Rubric infringements

By component candidates should answer

- Component 1: both questions from 1 section
- Component 2: both parts of two questions from one section
- Component 3: on one extract
- Component 4: two questions from one section

Rubric errors are most common on Component 2. If a candidate infringes the rubric all their work will be marked and they will be awarded the best marks for a legitimate combination of components.

Timing

The most commonly seen issues include

- Component 1: too much time spent on part (a) at the expense of part (b)
- Component 2: too much time spent on part (a) at the expense of part (b) or too much time on one question over the other
- Component 3: too much / too little time reading the extract
- Component 4: too much time on one question over the other

These issues can be addressed by practising exam technique in ways such as encouraging learners to write a plan for their timing at the start of the exam or getting them to practise answering questions in timed conditions.

Planning

Principal Examiners frequently comment that the best responses have been planned. Commonly seen issues with planning include

- Component 1: the sources have not been read with sufficient care before starting the answer, this can lead to confused and contradictory responses. The answer to part(b) has not been planned
- Component 2: either one of the sections has not been thought through making the argument inconsistent or the judgement unsupported
- Component 3: the extract has not been read through before writing so the answer lacks a clear focus on the interpretation
- Component 4: lack of planning makes it difficult to present a coherent argument and develop a substantiated judgement

These issues can be addressed by practising exam technique, such as developing the ability to write a plan in 5 minutes, helping to build learner confidence as they approach the exams.

There are some issues which relate to specific Components. These will be addressed in more detail in the marking exercises but the main points are outlined below.

Component 1

Common weaknesses in answers to source-based questions include:

- over-reliance on basic comprehension of source contents
- face-value interpretation only
- absence of relevant contextual knowledge
- lack of effective cross-referencing between sources
- generalisations about bias which lack specific evidence, whether from the provenance, the other sources or relevant contextual knowledge
- unsupported assertions
- answers which lack focus on the question, lack balance, or are disjointed

Component 2

Common weaknesses in answers to structured essay questions include:

- lack of focus on the actual question
- narrative/descriptive approach
- unsupported assertions or vague generalisations
- unbalanced or one-sided argument
- inconsistent or implicit-only argument
- lack of detailed knowledge used to support arguments

Component 3

Common weaknesses in answers to interpretations questions include:

- a lack of focus on the interpretation
- too much unrelated contextual knowledge
- recounting the schools of thought on the topic
- attempting to find evidence of every school of thought in the extract
- inappropriate use of quotations
- lack of planning and thought before answering

Component 4

Common weaknesses in answers to essay questions include:

- lack of focus on the question
- providing an analytical framework with insufficient support
- writing a narrative / descriptive account
- lack of depth
- unsupported assertions or generalisations
- unbalanced or one-sided arguments
- implicit argument
- lack of planning