

The expert



Susan Cashell teaches senior history in the Institute of Education. She is an experienced examiner at Leaving Certificate level and has given lectures to the History Teachers' Association. She is giving a lecture entitled "The marking scheme and how to improve your grade" as part of the HTAI conference for sixth years on Saturday, March 8th in the Burke Theatre, Trinity College Dublin. Registration is at 9.30am on a first come, first served basis.

Making the most of the mock exam

You may not have studied your entire course but this is a great opportunity to learn about exam format and your stamina.

This could be the hall where you are going to sit the Leaving Certificate so anything that familiarises you and takes away the nerves of the real exam is valuable.

Do not bring fizzy drinks to your exam; if you need a drink it should be water. Remember the toilet breaks in the Leaving Cert mean that the supervisor has to stamp your exam paper with the time you leave and it all has to be done again when you return – what a waste of valuable writing time.

The key to using this opportunity is time management. Spend about 42 minutes per question and no more, or else you will endanger your mark on the next question.

Danger areas include:

- ◆ Spending too long on the first part of the document, ie the three Cs, and not having enough time for the contextualisation;
- ◆ overwriting on one essay;
- ◆ no elaborate plans – you do not get any marks for plans unless there is something in them that is not in your essay.

Remember, it's unlikely that you will get full marks for any essay so leave a page and come back if you have time at the end.

Also, any essay question that has two sections does not have to be dealt with evenly; you can get up to 50 marks on the cumulative marks (CM) for dealing with one part of a question, but both parts must be mentioned. For example, if the question is on Anglo Irish relations from 1922-38, you have to refer to Cumann na nGaedhael and Fianna Fáil, even if you dispatch Cumann na nGaedhael in a paragraph. If you don't, you will be penalised on the overall evaluation (OE).

Do not spend time writing to your examiner apologising for a lack of time or wishing them a happy Easter; put that time to good use in writing points or a conclusion.

Post mocks

There is only one message for the History student and that is that preparation of the research study report (or special topic) is now your priority.



Time is key when planning for your mocks. Don't waste time on trips to the toilet or on elaborate plans

Look to the past for top marks

The first part of the history paper – the research study report – is a good way to pick up early marks

The Leaving Cert History paper is divided into the following sections:

1. A research study;
2. A documents based question – American documents;
3. Two essays chosen from the Irish history sections;
4. One essay chosen from the Europe and Wider World sections.

RESEARCH STUDY REPORT

This is prepared in advance and submitted at the end of April in a special booklet. It is worth 100 marks.

Do not neglect the supplemental sections, they are worth 50 per cent of the marks. Keep your titles simple and use dates where relevant.

The Outline Plan is worth 15 marks, and is broken down into the following subsections.

Define and justify (three marks): state what you are going to study and why you chose it. The reason you chose it should relate to its historical significance.

Aims (three marks): these are what you hope to have achieved by the end of your research. They must be specific to your topic.

Intended approach (three marks): students often mix these up with their aims. You must say how you intend to carry out your research. Keep it in the future tense, for example, you will go to the library, use the internet. State how you will store your notes and how many drafts you intend to do. You will keep a word count and on your teacher's advice will edit your account.

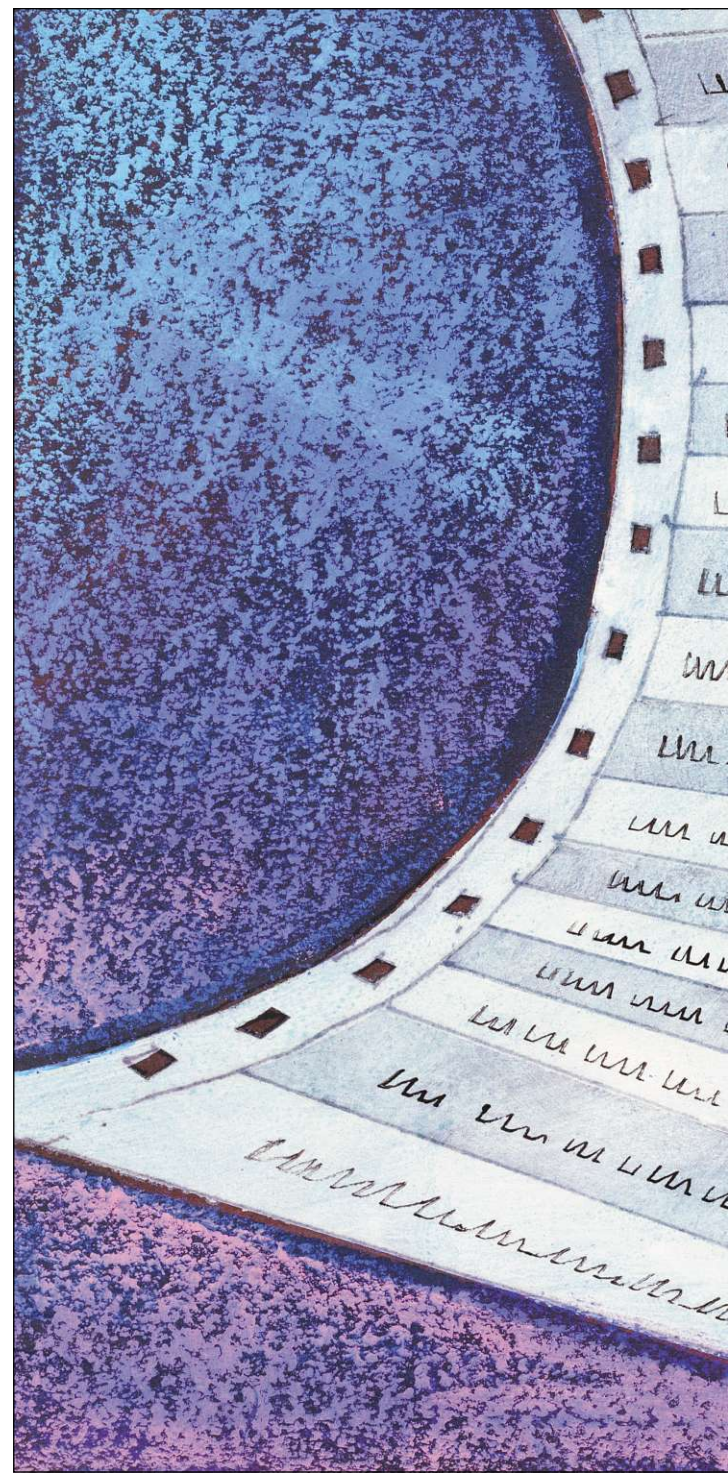
Three Sources (two marks each): number your sources 1 to 3. Make sure you state each source in detail – Author/ Title/ Publisher/ Date. For websites, you must have a detailed address. The title of a newspaper alone is not adequate. Date your downloads and keep your notes on index cards.

The difficulty here is fitting all the information on the outline plan page so practise writing in your booklet, which can be downloaded from the net on www.examinations.ie.

Evaluation of Sources

This is worth 25 marks. Do not repeat the titles, just the number from the outline plan page, this gives you more room to evaluate. Evaluate your sources in the same order as in your outline plan. Do not do more than three, as the marking scheme does not make allowance for them.

- ◆ You must state whether the source is primary or secondary.
- ◆ Remember, this is an evaluation, not just a book review, make sure you comment on the structure – did your source have an index, chapter headings, footnotes, maps, photos and a bibliography?



- ◆ State strengths and weaknesses and how helpful the source was for your research. Bias, objectivity, propaganda and selectivity are words that should appear in your evaluation.

Account

The account is worth 50 marks and is divided into:

Historical knowledge – 25 marks

Research skills – 15 marks

Presentation – 10 marks.

◆ Do not repeat your aims in the first paragraph of your account. You need a brief introduction no longer than a paragraph. Remember you are trying to realise your aims.

◆ Use quotations, and keep them short. Use statistics to illustrate a point.

◆ Refer to various historians' views, and use their names.

◆ Finish with a strong conclusion, and introduce new statistics and quotations. Make reference to the consequences of your topic. Give examples of historians' differing viewpoints on your topic

◆ Keep an eye on the word count. The maximum is meant to be 1,500 words. You will get away with a few hundred words more but if you write 3,000 words you will just annoy your examiner.

Review

This is worth 10 marks. Fill the page and keep your review specific to your topic.

- ◆ Explain how you choose your title.
- ◆ Did your outline plan work?
- ◆ Did you realise your aims?
- ◆ What problems did you encounter?
- ◆ What would you do differently?
- ◆ What skills did you acquire?

Remember, do not pick case studies or special personalities for the Research Study Report.