



AS HISTORY 7041/1H

Tsarist and Communist Russia, 1855–1964

Component 1H Autocracy, Reform and Revolution: Russia, 1855–1917

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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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** With reference to these extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two extracts provides the more convincing interpretation of the role of Alexander II in reforming Russia?

[25 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:** Answers will display a good understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. They will evaluate the extracts thoroughly in order to provide a well-substantiated judgement on which offers the more convincing interpretation. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. There will be sufficient comment to provide a supported conclusion as to which offers the more convincing interpretation. However, not all comments will be well-substantiated, and judgements may be limited. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **16–20**
- L3:** The answer will show a reasonable understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. Comments as to which offers the more convincing interpretation will be partial and/or thinly supported. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer will show some partial understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. There will be some undeveloped comment in relation to the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **6–10**
- L1:** The answer will show a little understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. There will be only unsupported, vague or generalist comment in relation to the question. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **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.

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:

- the argument of the extract is that Alexander II was not the key player in reforming Russia. He was influenced by others and was not determined in his own mind about the need for reform
- the extract suggests that Alexander II was committed to maintaining his autocratic power
- the extract suggests that the head of the Secret Police played an important role. Alexander II acted to avoid a peasant revolt.

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

- examples of those who influenced Alexander could include the Milyutin brothers, the 'Party of St Petersburg Progress', and his uncle, the Grand Duke Konstantin. The compromises contained in the Emancipation decree, and the restricted electorate for the Zemstva, might suggest Alexander was half-hearted in his commitment. Alexander reversed some reforms after 1866
- relevant context might include Alexander's conservative nature, his speech to the nobles where he explained the importance of reform coming from above, rather than from below. The introduction of political courts, the restrictions on education, or the tightening of censorship later in the reign also support the extract
- to challenge the interpretation, it might be suggested that Alexander was a 'Tsar Liberator'. He was aware of a number of problems facing the regime, not least those raised by the Crimean War. He had learned from the experience of his father. Although he reversed some liberal reforms in the 1860s, he returned to reform in the late 1870s.

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

- the extract argues that Alexander was the initiator of the reforms. He imposed his ideas on the nobility, as a response to the Crimean War
- it suggests that Alexander recognised the need for reform to maintain the power and prestige of the state
- the extract suggests that Alexander's education and previous experience were important. He had the ability to see what was required.

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

- this argument is supported by the traditional view of Alexander as an enlightened reformer, the context of the Crimean War, and Russia's experience in the war
- the context of the Tsarist autocracy supports this argument, as the change could only come by decree and with the support of the Tsar. Alexander addressed the nobles directly to win their support for reform. Alexander's travels in the Empire and the influence of his tutor Zhukovsky support the argument that Alexander was aware of the problems of the regime
- to challenge the interpretation, it could be argued that Alexander's commitment to reform was limited, as shown by his willingness to reverse the liberalisation in the 1860s. The measures of reform were

compromised, for example, the power of the Zemstva was limited, the peasants did not gain equality in the court system.

In arriving at a judgement as to which extract provides the more convincing explanation, students will need to recognise that these are contrasting interpretations of Alexander's role in the reforms. Extract A presents Alexander as being influenced by others and puts emphasis on the direct threat to the autocracy presented by the peasant uprisings. Extract B brings Alexander to the centre of the decision-making and suggests that he had a broader vision of the consequences of the defeat in Crimea. Students may reasonably conclude in favour of either extract. The quality of the response will depend on their understanding of the arguments and their deployment of contextual support.

Section B

0 2 'In the years 1881 to 1894, Alexander III strengthened the Tsarist regime.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with 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 good understanding of the demands of the question. They 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 leading to substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** 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. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be analytical comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance. However, there may be some generalisation and judgements will be limited and only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** The answer will show some understanding of the full demands of the question and the answer will be adequately organised. There will be appropriate information showing an understanding of some key features and/or issues but the answer may be limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some comment in relation to the question. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer will be 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 in the years 1881 to 1894, Alexander III strengthened the Tsarist regime might include:

- after the assassination of his father, Alexander was committed to maintaining Tsarism and reviving the principles of ‘autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality’. He was influenced by the conservative Pobedonostsev. He issued the ‘Manifesto on Unshakeable Autocracy’ and abandoned the proposals to increase democracy made by Loris-Melikov
- emergency laws were passed to increase the power of the state. Alexander III created the Okhrana, appointed Land Captains in the provinces, weakened the role of the Zemstva, further restricted the universities and gave the Orthodox Church more control over education. Alexander maintained a strict and unyielding policy of repression
- Alexander promoted economic growth under Vyshnegradsky and Witte, who acted under the Tsar’s direction. Russia’s economy began to modernise, supported by economic reforms such as the abolition of the poll tax, factory legislation, and Land Banks
- Alexander repressed national and ethnic minorities to unite the Empire to create a shared Russian identity. He enforced the use of the Russian language in Poland and the Ukraine, for example, and encouraged the spread of Orthodox belief. He increased the restrictions on the Jews who became a scapegoat for popular discontent.

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1881 to 1894, Alexander III strengthened the Tsarist regime might include:

- Alexander III’s policy of repression was severe, but this caused resentment and did not eliminate the opposition. Opposition groups were in exile or forced underground, but continued to be active, for example, Plekhanov. The People’s Will was revived in the late 1880s. Severe repression led to support for more radical ideas such as Marxism
- Alexander III was not an effective Tsar because he was poorly prepared at his sudden accession. He disliked official business or detailed discussion, preferring to issue orders without consultation or discussion
- in promoting rapid economic growth, Alexander III created social problems which were to weaken Tsarism, for example, the growth of an industrial workforce. Increased taxes put a burden on the peasantry. Lack of welfare support from the government in the famine of 1891–1892 created liberal opposition in the Zemstva
- the policies of Russification and anti-Semitism created opposition. Nationalist resentment increased, Jews supported opposition and revolutionary groups.

Answers will show an understanding of the significance of Alexander’s policies in the development of the Tsarist regime. It could be argued that Alexander III’s counter-reforms made opposition virtually impossible. He created internal stability which allowed for economic growth. The Tsarist regime seemed to be in a stronger position in 1894 than in 1881. On the other hand, the extent of the repression and the Russification of the Empire provoked opposition which was to become more significant in the longer term. It was during Alexander III’s reign that ideas such as Marxism began to take root in Russia. Nicholas II inherited a difficult situation from Alexander III.

0 3 'In the years 1894 to 1914, Russian industry was transformed.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with 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 good understanding of the demands of the question. They 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 leading to substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** 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. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be analytical comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance. However, there may be some generalisation and judgements will be limited and only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** The answer will show some understanding of the full demands of the question and the answer will be adequately organised. There will be appropriate information showing an understanding of some key features and/or issues but the answer may be limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some comment in relation to the question. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer will be 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 in the years 1894 to 1914, Russian industry was transformed might include:

- there was a 'great spurt' in the economy under Witte as Minister of Finance. It was stimulated by state and foreign investment in heavy industry and infrastructure. Investment in the railways was a key driver of modernisation, for example, the Trans-Siberian railway which opened up Western Siberia
- there were significant increases in coal, iron ore, steel, and oil. Russia began to exploit vast raw material reserves, achieving a growth rate of 8% per year. The development of heavy industry stimulated the internal market and was a boost to light industry, such as manufacturing
- rearmament stimulated industrial growth in the years after the Russo-Japanese War. By 1914, Russia was the fifth largest economy in the world. Large, modern industrial plants had developed in 'European Russia.'

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1894 to 1914, Russian industry was transformed might include:

- the extent of railway development and the size of the economy were small in relation to the size of the country. Russia remained the least industrially developed of the European powers and the economy was still dominated by agriculture
- industrialisation was geographically very uneven, mostly concentrated around the major cities of Moscow and St Petersburg. Large parts of the country remained isolated and remote. Industrial development was restricted by the backwardness of agriculture
- industrial growth seemed impressive but was limited and badly managed. Growth was largely due to population increase and was too dependent on foreign loans. Foreign debt was expensive for the government. There was a lack of internal demand for industrial goods, limiting the growth of industry.

Answers will show an understanding of the extent of change of Russian industry in this period. It could be argued that, under Witte, Russia became industrial, experiencing a 'take-off', which could be described as a transformation. Alternatively, the changes to the industrial economy could be seen in the context of the vastness of the country and the rapidly increasing population. The judgement might be that the industrialisation of Russia was modest in these years. Comments on agricultural change will be credited if they relate to industrial development.