2010　　　　　　　　　　History: Renaissance Italy GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students, in general, handled the 2010 History: Renaissance Italy examination competently. Very few students left questions unanswered and, while some found the examination challenging, there were some very good responses. Some students were unable to complete the whole examination, but most demonstrated effective time management and completed all questions.

In this examination, it was important to confine answers to the appropriate timeframes in the questions. Some students did not do this, which meant that only certain parts of their answers were relevant and able to be assessed. Students need to be aware of the importance of the timeframes included in questions and structure their answers appropriately.

The effective use of evidence remains an important aspect of the most successful responses and this year there was a more detailed use of evidence in more of the answers. In the Section C essays, students were more careful to support their points with primary materials, which was very pleasing. Students should pay careful attention to the demands of particular questions. When students are asked for primary and secondary sources, they need to make an effort to include both in their response.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	5	8	10	14	14	10	12	11	5	3	**4.8**

This was a question that students found quite difficult. It was very important that students read the question carefully. The question asked for either economic **or** political interactions and many students answered it as though they had been asked for both. For many students the term 'principality' posed a problem – some chose to define the Kingdom of Naples or the Papacy as principalities, but if they were able to support their position in relation to these states, the assessors accepted this assertion. While weaker answers tended to concentrate on describing two states, the strongest answers showed an understanding of the interactions between two states. If students chose to write on political interactions they could have discussed Milan and Florence. They could have discussed the threat posed by Giangaleazzo Visconti to Florence in 1402. They could then discuss the relationship between Cosimo de Medici, unofficial leader of Florence, and Francesco Sforza, discussing that the backing the Medici gave Sforza helped him control Milan. The alliance that developed between the Medici and Sforza meant the Medici were able to rely on Milanese troops at times of crisis, such as when they were threatened by the faction led by Luca Pitti in 1465–66. The Medici and the Sforza maintained diplomatic relations with Lorenzo travelling to Milan when he was only nine years old.

Students could also have chosen to write about the interdependence of trade between some of the states on the Italian mainland. For example, Venice and Milan developed a trade in foodstuffs because of the fertility of the Lombardy Plain and the deposits of iron ore in this area supplied the components to produce weapons and armour.

The following high-scoring response discusses the political interactions between Florence and Bologna. This response sets out the interests of the two states that precipitated their interaction and uses detail to support their points.

Geographically Italy is relatively small. Therefore, city states required political relationships with other city states in order to develop, endure and thrive. This is demonstrated in the interaction between Florence and Bologna. Bologna, headed by the despotic Bentivoglio family, is located in the Romagna region, and, consequently, was under threat of annexation from Florence, Venice or the Papal States. Following the Peace of Lodi in 1454, Florence and Bologna formed a military alliance, where, 'it was in the interests of Bolognese independence, as well as Florentine prosperity to work together'. (Paul) The Medici of Florence openly supported the Bentivoglio as a political statement to Venice or the Papal States to wary of their expansionist ambitions. This political interaction proved to be beneficial for Florence, where in 1478, following the Pazzi Conspiracy, the Bentivoglio immediately sent armed troops towards Florence to quell the uprising. The political interaction served both states.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average 5.8
%	3	3	6	9	10	11	14	19	14	7	5	

This question asked students to explain the growth of humanist studies in the fifteenth century, which meant the material students could use was limited to this time. Unfortunately, some students spent part of their answer discussing the contribution of Petrarch to the growth of humanism, which was outside the scope of the question and therefore was not awarded marks. There were, however, a number of very fine answers to this question, and some students chose to focus on the development of the *studia humanitatis*. It is important to recognise that the new curriculum focused on the study of language and the humanities, rather than science and arithmetic as some answers suggested. Some of the most successful answers explored the development of schools at this time and some, for example, mentioned Vittorino da Feltre's school in Mantua.

Other answers concentrated more on the development of a civic consciousness and its relationship to political participation of Florentines like Salutati and Leonardo Bruni. The most successful answers were able to go on to discuss the development of the neo-Platonism of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola with the support of the Medici. The assessors accepted both of these approaches. Students who provided detailed responses achieved the best results.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 2. It demonstrates an understanding of the development of the humanist scholars' thinking at this time. This response also balances the different elements of the question within a fluent and accurate account.

> *In the C15th there was a focus on both Neo Platonism and civic humanism, as well as an increased focus on the 'studia humanitatis'. In education, there was a 'new direction towards classical standards' (Kristeller). The study of rhetoric and grammar improved and increased dramatically with humanist scholars such as Salutati becoming Chancellors of Florence Indeed, it 'understood itself as a rebirth of letters and learning' (Kristeller). Ancient languages became the focus of education 'the latin language lay at the heart of the Italian Renaissance' (Hole). The study of history and the study of Ancient Greek continued spurred on by the arrival of Chrylosarus.*

Section B

Students generally understood the demands of this section and most made a competent attempt to answer all questions.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average 2.8
%	2	8	28	29	32	

This question was completed accurately and competently, with many students able to identify a number of ways the use of political spaces had changed in this time.

Students could have noted:
- the removal, as completely as it could, of the Medici on Florence's buildings and spaces
- the removal of Michelangelo's *David* and Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* – both emblems of resistance to tyranny – from the Palazzo Medici to the Palazzo dei Priori, *David* to its courtyard and Judith to the *ringhiera*
- in 1504, the republic decided to replace *Judith and Holofernes* with Michelangelo's *David* – 'the most dramatic sign of the republic's self representation as the new Jerusalem and the enemy of tyrants'. The new government was seeking to control the symbolic politics of the Piazza dei Priori – still (or once again) the most important of all Florentine civic spaces
- the revived republic created a memorable political space of its own – the huge Hall of the Great Council, constructed as an addition to the palace on the eastern side.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average 3.9
%	5	3	11	14	29	15	22	

Most students were able to discuss three examples of displays of political power in the Piazza della Signoria. Unfortunately, some students used the Ciompi Uprising of the fourteenth century as an example, even though this was not relevant to the question. Again, students needed to read the question carefully to understand that their examples needed to come from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Students could have included any three of the following:
- 1434 – the Albizzi and Cosimo
- the events of 1458
- 1465/66 – Piero de Medici
- 1478 – the events that followed the Pazzi conspiracy
- 1494 – the demise of the Medici
- 1498 – the execution of Savonarola
- 1502 – Florence's restructuring under Piero Soderini
- the location of civic and religious ritual: festivals like the Feast of St John the Baptist, Corpus Christi and the Procession of the Magi
- the various *Parlementos* that took place in the Piazza
- the events of the Council of Florence in 1439.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	6	8	12	12	12	17	16	6	7	**5.9**

It was important that students took notice of the terms of this question. By asking 'to what extent' the question gave students the opportunity to discuss the informal means used by the Medici to dominate Florence and to compare these means to the constitutional means the Medici had used; in order to complete their evaluation of the means the Medici used to exercise their power in fifteenth-century Florence. Good responses to this question had plenty of detail in their answers. Some students used excellent quotes and supporting examples from both primary and secondary sources. Lower-level responses focused on listing the official or constitutional means used by the Medici. The best responses commented on more than one Medici ruler and some noted the different means used by them.

Some of these could have included:
- vote buying
- paying the debts of individuals in order to 'buy' support
- exploiting the *bourse*
- interfering with the scrutiny lists
- use of the *accopiatori*
- strategic marriages
- patronage of art, architecture and humanists
- using civic and religious ritual to emphasise their leadership in the city
- diplomacy and foreign policy
- use of the Medici bank.

The following is an extract from a high-level response to Question 3. The student has identified the numerous means that Cosimo and Lorenzo de Medici used to consolidate their power, has provided an excellent amount of detail and has supported their points with quotations from historians.

Cosimo de Medici used unofficial means in order to 'create for himself a reputation such as probably no private citizen has ever enjoyed' (Guicciardini) and in order to gain an unprecedented level of power. For example, Cosimo was the first large scale artistic patron, in Florence, commissioning Donatello's 'David' and 'Judith Slaying Holofernes' as well as paying 40,000 florins to rebuild the Monastery of San Marco. He also patronised and subsidised the Procession of the Magi to pass his home in 1446 so as to gain the favour of the popolo, as well as paying a large sum to transfer the Church Council from Ferrara to Florence as Gonfalonier in 1439, an act which 'consolidated Cosimo's image as Head of State and almost an uncrowned prince' (Najemy) and brought honour to Florence.

Section C

Question chosen	None	1	2
%	3	72	25

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	4	1	2	2	4	2	6	2	5	3	4	6	9	7	10	11	7	7	6	1	1	**11.4**

Students must display effective use of a range of primary source material and historiography. While the use of evidence in the essays on both Florence and Venice was skilled in a number of the responses, there were some students who thought it was acceptable to write an essay without including any supporting evidence.

Both essay questions included quotations and students should have made some use of these in their essay responses. In order to achieve a high score in Section C, students need to base their essay around an argument in response to the question, and not simply narrate all they know about social life in one of these Renaissance cities. There were some students who used prepared essays in the examination and while some of these showed impressive preparation and historigraphical discussion, they could not score highly because they ignored the question being asked.

Question 1 – Florence

In response to the words of Neri di Bicci, students had to examine the way that he saw his place in this society and had to analyse the importance of occupation, parish, gonfalon and quarter in developing and understanding Florentine identity. Students then had to extend their analysis to look at how individual Florentines developed their social identity. This discussion should have included the differences between social classes and the different understandings of the parish, district and quarter.

It was good to see that many students moved beyond the vague discussions of *parenti*, *vicini* and *amici* and there were also discussions of other social institutions like the parish, the confraternity and festivals and their role in the construction of social identity.

Below is an extract from a high-scoring response, which details the way a Florentine used geography and occupation to understand his place in the world. The use of examples and primary sources is particularly fine in this response.

> *Neighbourhood was vital in assuring that social identity was maintained, in that it allowed someone a point of reference where one was known. For instance, Michele di Simone referred to himself as a 'cobbler by the bell tower' in the district of 'the Ox' and therefore his neighbourhood allowed him to define his role in the community. Similarly for members of the Drago Verde, the poorest lived in an area called ' in Calandoli' which literally means destitute. For such people, even those of poor families, this provided a means by which they could be identified and how they could be defined amongst themselves. Also, social identity within the gonfalone depended on tax and political elements, due to the neighbourhood's role as 'administration organs' (Eckstein). For instance, Giovanni Morelli's identity within his gonfalone was that of 'fiscal scapegoat' as he received 'a great tax from [his] neighbours' (Morelli)*

Below is an extract from a medium- to high-level response. The student has identified the elements of the neighbourhood that conferred identity but the essay does not move beyond the general examples.

> *A man's trade had a huge impact on his political and social opportunities. Following the 1293 Ordinances of Justice guild membership became a pre requisite for holding office. Thus whilst bankers, doctors and lawyers had political power, the 50% of the citizens who constituted the popolo minuto, and who mostly worked in the cloth industry were shunned from the political arena. Thus trade also helped to determine one's class. Certain occupations also allowed persons to form business ties with other influential citizens.*

Question 2 – Venice

Again, students needed to make some use of the quote provided in the question. In this essay, students should have referred to both class and gender in terms of social identity. This meant that students should have identified and discussed all three classes as well as both genders. Many students wanted to write about social harmony and the networks that crossed class lines, and there were some fine discussions of the networks of female patronage and the networks of support provided by the *Scuole*. While these discussions were impressive, they needed to assess the extent to which class and gender defined what a Venetian could do and how they were regarded. This was the point that the essay needed to come back to.

Some of the best answers made a strong case that, at least among men, being a Venetian first and an individual of a particular class second, was the main determinant of social identity. Quite a few answers identified the role of maritime and mercantile activity in cutting across class lines; for instance, the encouragement of investment in the state galleys and the closeness of patricians and *cittadini* in business. However, few responses paid enough attention to the effect on social identity of having a fixed ruling class, who had status, privilege and responsibilities, regardless of wealth.

Some discussions of female networks forgot to point out that gender affected social identity far more for the patrician and *cittadini* than for 90 per cent of the *popolo*. In the discussions of social cohesion, there was a lack of detailed

knowledge of the *Scuole*. Some referred to the use of robes among the *Scuole Grandi* but few pointed out that activity within the *Scuole Grandi* was influenced by class and wealth, although there were some fine discussions of how the activities of the *Scuole* reduced class differences. Some students gave a lot of information about patterns of female charity but they did not make this relevant to an essay on social identity. Very few were aware of the heightened emphasis on social class in the sixteenth century, as indicated by the formal writing of the Book of Gold and the Book of Silver, and the attempts to make patrician men marry within the patrician class. The best features were the inclusion of more evidence, including the use of evidence from the lives of specific individuals, such as Tommaso Rangone, Clara Morosini and Vicenzo Catena.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. This response demonstrates the importance of the Serrata in identifying social class, which is a logical place to start a discussion of Venetian social identity. While the response is still quite generalised, it does display knowledge of how this event contributed to the social structure of Venice and uses some detail to support this point.

> *There were aspects of Venice which created social identity through class as seen in the Serrata or 'Lock Up' of 1297. Known as the 'foundation of the eternity of this Republic' it totally closed off the Patrician class from that of the cittadini and the Popolani. Patricians were given their social identity through clothing, seen in uniform black robes with fur trim (a sign of their political abilities) while cittadini were given plain, untrimmed black robes. However certain privileges, specific to each class further identified their social standing.*

The following medium- to high-level response made a very good point about the factors within Venetian society that brought the different groups together. This was a good point to make in an essay that asked 'to what extent' social identity was influenced by class and gender.

> *Similarly, women established cooperative 'horizontal and vertical' (Crouzet Pavan) ties of kinship and affection which overcame tendencies of social division and contributed to the relative harmony of Venetian society. The restricted living environment of Venetian women saw the establishment of an intimate female space, in which they knew the most intimate details of each others lives and looked after one another in times of hardship.'Venetian patrician women saw themselves as protectors and nurturers to assist Popolani women in any way they could' (Romano). Bellini's 'Madonna with Donors' is a reflection of this sense of identity of patrician women like Madonnas, the protectors of humanity.*

Section D

In general, this section of the examination was handled competently. Students clearly understood the elements of the Myth of Venice and were able to demonstrate this knowledge. High-level responses structured their answers according to the terms of the question, whereas some medium- and lower-level responses provided less relevant material.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	6	19	29	41	3.0

Many students were able to comment accurately on the Myth of Venice. However, some were not able to address the specific requirements of the question, in terms of its focus on 'architecture' and 'the use of public space'. Those who did address the relevant area used the sample material in the visual to display their knowledge. Students were expected to refer to both architecture and public space in their response.

Students could have chosen four of the points below.
- Sansovino's sixteenth-century library and the *loggetta,* with their classical columns and sculptures of Roman gods, suggest how Venice was promoted as the New Rome.
- The clock tower, built between 1496 and 1501 at a time that Venice was bankrupt highlights Venice's wealth.
- The Doge's palace, the seat and symbol of government, indicates Venice's remarkable political stability.
- The Basilica San Marco, a memorial to the Evangelist St Mark, was perceived as the final resting place of the saint and gave Venice a reputation as a pious city that had divine protection.
- Situated on the water, Venice seemingly rose from the waves. Bassano's painting emphasises the unique location of Venice and how central water was to the public space. It was both a place of arrival and departure and played a role in Venice's most significant ceremonies, like the Marriage of the Sea.
- The Piazza and Piazzetta were significant public spaces for Venice's many festivals and important events. Both these piazzas symbolised the social stability for which Venice was renowned. In Bassano's image, he highlights this with a multitude of people, patricians, soldiers, the titular head of state, the Doge, common people in the foreground and Pope Alexander III.
- The expansion of the size of the piazza to accommodate all Venetians.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	58	35	1.3

This question was well handled. The most successful responses made two separate observations about the role of the Doge.

Students would be expected to comment on some of the following:
- the Doge as first among equals
- the intrinsic relationship between religion and state
- the symbol of justice
- the Doge as the head of a prosperous and blessed city-state.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	12	17	28	20	23	2.3

Of all the Section D questions, students appeared to find this the most challenging. Answers varied widely in terms of the examples used; however, some of the most common examples of checks and balances related to the *Ducal Promissione* as a means of maintaining stability. The students also identified social features, such as the Golden Book and the *Scuole* as features of Venetian society that ensured stability, and the assessors accepted these.

Students could have identified any of the following:
- *Ducal Promissione*
- limitations on movement by the Doge
- the Doge has to be in the company of other officials when opening his mail
- rapid turnover of office
- small councils of government
- the role of the Council of Ten
- the auditing of the Ducal affairs on his death (the three inquisitors)
- the Doge being discouraged from mixing with foreign diplomats on his own.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. The student has clearly identified a number of the 'checks and balances' and has supported these points with both primary and secondary sources. The fluency with which the Loredan claim is integrated into the first sentence is highly expressive and provides a solid foundation for the points that follow. The student has also linked these checks and balances with the reason for these features of Venetian government. This answer is detailed and well documented.

> *Venice's government being composed as harmony and being a balance of the best' (Loredan) was protected by its system of interlocking councils, which checked one another and prevented the concentration of power within a single individual or a group. The Council of Ten, 'a very severe magistracy' (Sanudo) ensured that areas of Venetian government and social institutions, like the Scuole, acted within the law. Similarly, the Doge had to swear to the Promissione before taking his position. The promissione were a series of promises to regulate the power of the Doge which included him not being able to hold a private audience without his Savii and prevented him from leaving Venice. The prevention of any concentration of power ensured the stability of the Venetian government.*

The following is a medium- to high-level response to this question. The student has made a number of points in relation to the checks and balances that existed, but the response lacks detail or source material and this weakens the answer. The student makes a link between the checks but in a less sophisticated manner.

> *After the Tiepoline Conspiracy of 1310, the Council of Ten was introduced in order to prevent a revolution. Also the Golden Book (Libro D'Oro) prevented any person not from a good wealthy family from sitting in government. Furthermore, the Doge himself had very little power and had to consult other members of government before acting. All of these together worked to ensure that there were no rebellions of the people and to ensure the Doge himself did not attempt to take over.*

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	3	4	6	8	15	16	15	17	6	4	5.6

Students were required to provide two elements in their response to this question. Answers had to discuss the sacred legends and look at challenges to this view of Venice. Students needed to address both parts of the question to receive

full marks. Some students chose to tailor their discussion of the challenges to the Myth to the sacred legends the Venetian government had used and other students chose to write more generally on the challenges to the Myth. Both approaches were acceptable.

Sacred legends integral to the Myth of Venice included the formation of Venice, the translation of the body of St Mark, the Alexander III myth, and the Marriage of the Sea. Some students chose to write on the Venetian legends associated with the True Cross Cycle. All of these were acceptable.

In addition, any of the following points could have been included.
- The legend of the translation of the body of St Mark in 828/29 is foremost to the myth because this gave Venice a powerful evangelist to protect the city. Peyer and Fasoli argue that by the tenth century the government was propagating the myth based on their possession of St Mark's relics.
- A range of legends that were propagated in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, such as the Pope Alexander III legend, reinforced aspects of the myth and gave Venice important emblems that symbolised the myth such as the *trionfi*. Muir and Fortini-Brown argue that following half a century of political upheaval, following the *Serrata*, the government promoted Venice's political stability and divine ordination to reinforce their grip on government.
- Other legends evolved over successive centuries – when Venice's lack of a classical past placed her at a disadvantage, the legend of her Trojan origins emerged.
- The Marriage of the Sea ceremony was also used to emphasise the city's uniqueness; it focused on the relationship Venice had with the sea and the fact that she was an unwalled city that remained inviolate.
- Following the catastrophic events in the first decade of the sixteenth century, Chabod and Muir argue that the government systematically promoted all sacred legends, including Venice's origins to reinforce her status at a time when it was declining.
- The Portuguese discovery of a trade route around the Cape of Good Hope threatened Venice's monopoly of the spice trade.
- The advances of the Turks reduced the territory of her Maritime Empire.
- The League of Cambrai reduced and almost annihilated her Terra Ferma Empire.
- The challenges to the constitutional integrity of the Venetian Patriciate by the actions of various Doges like Falier.
- The covert operations of the Council of Ten.

An excellent response began as follows.

Venice was 'built more by divine and human will…and is a city above all others' (Sanudo). The sacred legends of the miracles of the relics of the True Cross celebrated in the painting of Bellini 'Miracle of the True Cross at the Bridge of San Lorenzo' and Mansueti's 'Miracle of the Cross at the Bridge of San Lio' reflect the divine elements of Venice and suggest Venice as a sacred city. Similarly the translation of the body of St Mark is illustrated in the lunettes on the façade of San Marco. Chambers claims that the 'presence of the Evangelist gave Venice a sanctity like that of Rome with St Peter' suggesting Venice's unique location and as the 'New Rome', 'the one true home of justice'

However Muir asserts that 'in response to diplomatic failures the Venetian government retreated into the comfort of the Myth which grew, according to Chabod, in inverse proportion to the decline of Venice's actual power.