

GUIDANCE

# GCSE Subject Level Guidance for History (2021)

November 2020

**ofqual**

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## Introduction

This document is part of a suite of documents which outlines our guidance for awarding organisations offering GCSE Qualifications in History.

This document sets out guidance which applies to all GCSE Qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in History. It supports the [GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for History \(2021\)](#).

This document constitutes guidance for the purposes of section 153 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the '2009 Act') and Condition GCSE (History) 1.

An awarding organisation has a legal obligation under the 2009 Act to have regard to this guidance, where relevant, in relation to each GCSE Qualification in History that it makes available or proposes to make available. Condition GCSE (History) 1 imposes the same obligation in respect of the guidance below which is issued under that Condition.

An awarding organisation should use the guidance in this document to help it understand how to comply with the *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for History*.

## Guidance set out in this document

This document provides guidance in relation to subject content, and on assessment objectives, for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in History

## Guidance in relation to subject content for Qualifications in History

The subject content for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in History is set out in the Department for Education's [History: GCSE Subject Content](#), document reference DFE-00346-2014 (the 'Content Document').

Condition GCSE (History) 1.1(c) requires awarding organisations to interpret the Content Document in line with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, published by Ofqual.

We set out our guidance for the purposes of Condition GCSE (History)1.1(c) below.

## Sources and interpretations

For the purposes of interpreting the Content Document –

- 'Interpretation' should be interpreted as meaning an attempt to portray and/or make meaning of the past using evidence, that is a deliberate construct created after the event(s). This can include both academic and non-academic interpretations;
- 'Sources' should be interpreted as meaning primary sources or sources that in either their origin and/or their authorship are contemporary to the period studied;

- a written 'source' should consist of more than one sentence;
- where the language in a source is adapted, this should not change the meaning or point of view expressed in the source; and
- the language of written interpretations should only be adapted where and when necessary, with the minimum change made. Where the language is adapted, this should not alter the interpretation expressed by the author in the original document.

## Guidance on assessment objectives for GCSE Qualifications in History

Condition GCSE (History)1.2 allows us to specify requirements and guidance relating to assessment objectives for GCSE Qualifications in History.

We published our requirements in relation to assessment objectives in GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for History and reproduce assessment objectives AO1 to AO4 and their respective weightings in the table below.

ID	Objective	Weighting
AO 1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key features and characteristics of the periods studied.	35%
AO 2	Explain and analyse historical events and periods studied using second-order historical concepts.	35%
AO 3	Analyse, evaluate and use sources (contemporary to the period) to make substantiated judgements, in the context of historical events studied.	15%
AO 4	Analyse, evaluate and make substantiated judgements about interpretations (including how and why interpretations may differ) in the context of historical events studied.	15%

We set out below our guidance for the purposes of Condition GCSE (History)1.2. This guidance explains how we expect awarding organisations to interpret these assessment objectives in terms of:

- the discrete 'elements' within each assessment objective that questions and tasks could target and/or seek to credit – our expectation is that each and every question/task should target or seek to credit at least one of these

elements, and may target or seek to credit multiple elements across one or more assessment objectives;

- the coverage expectations, such as in relation to the different elements within each assessment objective and how those elements should be sampled over time; and
- the key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective and the particular meaning for the subject of any key terms and phrases used; defined terms are shown in bold text, followed by their definitions.

In line with the obligations set out in Condition GCSE (History)1.2, we expect awarding organisations to be able to demonstrate how they have had regard to this guidance. For example, an awarding organisation could map how it has regard to the guidance as it:

- develops its sample assessment materials;
- delivers the qualification;
- develops and applies its approach to sampling the elements into which the assessment objectives are divided; and
- monitors the qualification to make sure it addresses all elements appropriately.

## AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key features and characteristics of the periods studied (weighting: 35%)

Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
n/a	<p>1a Demonstrate knowledge of the key features and characteristics of the periods studied.</p> <p>1b Demonstrate understanding of the key features and characteristics of the periods studied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Full coverage in each set of assessments<sup>1</sup> (but not in every assessment).</li> <li>■ No more than 10% of the total marks for the qualification should reward demonstrating knowledge in isolation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Features and characteristics</b> are aspects of subject content. Awarding organisations should explain their approach to targeting them in their assessment strategy.</li> <li>■ Questions/tasks may target element 1a in isolation, but element 1b should only be targeted in combination with element 1a or other assessment objectives.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this guidance, a 'set of assessments' means the assessments to be taken by a particular Learner for a GCSE Qualification in History. For clarity, the assessments taken by Learners may vary, depending on any possible routes through the qualification.

## AO2: Explain and analyse historical events and periods studied using second-order historical concepts (weighting: 35%)

Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
n/a	This AO is a single element.	Full coverage in each set of assessments (but not in every assessment).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Explain</b> means giving an account of the outcome of analysis and/or justifying a conclusion in questions requiring an evaluation.</li> <li>■ <b>Analyse</b> means deconstructing information and/or issues to find connections and provide logical chain(s) of reasoning.</li> <li>■ <b>Historical events and periods</b> are aspects of subject content. Awarding organisations should explain their approach to targeting them in their assessment strategies.</li> <li>■ This assessment objective should usually be assessed in conjunction with AO1.</li> <li>■ Learners should be assessed on at least two of the second-order historical concepts specified in the Content Document in each set of assessments. Any question/task can target one or more of those second-order historical concept(s).</li> <li>■ Awarding organisations should explain in their assessment strategies how they will achieve coverage of, and balance between, those second-order historical concepts within each set of assessments and over time.</li> </ul>

AO3: Analyse, evaluate and use sources (contemporary to the period) to make substantiated judgements, in the context of historical events studied (weighting: 15%)

Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
n/a	<p>1a Analyse sources contemporary to the period</p> <p>1b Evaluate and use sources contemporary to the period to make substantiated judgements, in the context of historical events studied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Full coverage in each set of assessments (but not in every assessment).</li> <li>■ Up to one-third of marks for AO3 for questions/tasks that target element 1a only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Sources (contemporary to the period)</b> means primary sources or sources that in either their origin and/or their authorship are contemporary to the period studied. This could also include contemporary evidence that is collected and presented at a later date, for example raw data.</li> <li>■ <b>Historical events</b> are aspects of subject content. Awarding organisations should explain their approach to targeting them in their assessment strategy.</li> <li>■ Learners should consider more than one source in each set of assessments. Individual questions/tasks may target a single source.</li> <li>■ The emphasis here should be on Learners' own engagement with sources – consideration of others' views would be part of AO4.</li> <li>■ Questions/tasks should either target element 1a in isolation, or elements 1a and 1b together.</li> <li>■ Learners' knowledge and understanding of the historical context may be credited as part of AO3, but only where it is presented in a way which is relevant and intrinsically linked to the analysis/evaluation/use of the source – it should not be credited in isolation.</li> </ul>



**AO4: Analyse, evaluate and make substantiated judgements about interpretations (including how and why interpretations may differ) in the context of historical events studied (weighting: 15%)**

Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
n/a	1a Analyse individual interpretations 1b Analyse how interpretations differ 1c Analyse why interpretations differ 1d Evaluate and make substantiated judgements about interpretations in the context of historical events studied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Full coverage in each set of assessments (but not in every assessment).</li> <li>■ At least half of the marks for AO4 should be allocated to element 1d.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An <b>interpretation</b> is an attempt to portray and/or make meaning of the past using evidence, that is, a deliberate construct created after the event(s). This can include both academic and non-academic interpretations.</li> <li>■ <b>Historical events</b> are aspects of subject content. Awarding organisations should explain their approach to targeting them in their assessment strategies.</li> <li>■ Learners should consider more than one interpretation in each set of assessments. Individual questions/tasks may target a single interpretation.</li> <li>■ Interpretations may be presented in different ways, ranging from single attributed quotations to a number of extracts with multiple attributions. They may include non-textual interpretations.</li> <li>■ Interpretations may be analysed and evaluated in different ways, and different approaches can be equally appropriate and legitimate. These different ways may include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ the Learner’s knowledge and understanding of the wider historical debate (although we do not expect Learners to show knowledge of particular historical schools of thought or learned responses regarding individual historians);</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ the methods or approach that have been used by an author;</li> <li>□ how an interpretation may have been affected by the time in which the author was writing;</li> <li>□ how an interpretation may have been affected by its intended audience and/or purpose;</li> <li>□ the Learner’s knowledge and understanding of the period/events studied; and</li> <li>□ the evidence made available to the Learner.</li> <li>■ Awarding organisations should explain and justify their approach to interpretations in their assessment strategies.</li> <li>■ Evaluations of interpretations may be based on the Learner’s own knowledge, but analyses of interpretations will usually consider matters other than the Learner’s own knowledge of events.</li> <li>■ Questions/tasks may target element 1a in isolation. Questions/tasks targeting elements 1b and/or 1c and/or 1d, should necessarily also target element 1a.</li> <li>■ Questions/tasks assessing element 1c should require the Learner to provide an explanation of why interpretations differ.</li> <li>■ Learners’ knowledge and understanding of the historical context may be credited as part of AO4, but only where it is presented in a way which is relevant and intrinsically linked to the analysis/evaluation of the interpretation – it should not be credited in isolation</li> </ul>
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