

A level History 2015

explaining the changes



Page 1 [Contents](#)

Page 2 [Introduction - the drive for A level reform](#)

Page 3 [AS and A level History criteria for 2015 specifications](#)

Page 4 [New assessment objectives](#)

Page 5 [Our research](#)

Page 8 [Design principles for the new specification](#)



2. Introduction - the drive for A level reform

A level History qualifications are being reformed to ensure they're **rigorous** and **robust** and give students access to high quality qualifications which match expectations in the highest performing jurisdictions.

The drive for A level reform has come externally from a:

- Desire to ensure that A levels provide the **solid foundation** students need to **prepare them for degree-level study**.
- Need to address the concern that the **modular nature of the qualification** and **repeated assessment opportunities** have contributed to many students not developing deep understanding or necessary skills.



“ I believe that the primary purpose of A levels is to prepare students for degree-level study. All students should have access to qualifications that are highly respected and valued by leading universities. Current A levels do not always provide the solid foundation that students need to prepare them for degree study **”**

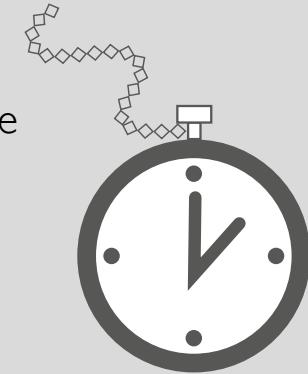
The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education January 2013

As a result, the following changes are being made to all AS and A level qualifications:

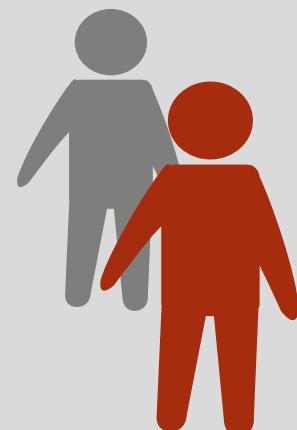
- **A level will be a linear qualification**, with all assessment at the end of two years to allow students to develop a better understanding of the subject over the course.
- **AS will be a stand-alone qualification** and will no longer contribute to an A level grade. AS will be a linear qualification with all assessment at the end of the course.
- **Higher Education involvement** in reviewing subject content requirements to ensure good preparation for degree-level study.

3. Key points in AS and A level History criteria - for 2015 specifications

- AS and A level: students must study the history of more than one country or state
- A level: must include topics from a chronological range of at least 200 years across the course
- A level: minimum 20% British history
- A level: retains requirement for 100 years change over time



- AS to be 100% examination
- A level has 20% coursework component assessing independently researched historical enquiry



4. New assessment objectives

There are now three assessment objectives: the former AO2 has been split out into AO2 (primary/contemporary source material) and AO3 (historical interpretations).

These assessment objectives are the same for both AS and A level: both qualifications must assess all three.

A01	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	50-60%
A02	Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within its historical context	20-30%
A03	Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted	20-30%

5. Our research

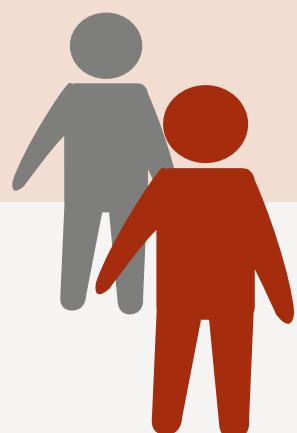
We've been consulting extensively over several years with teachers and lecturers in schools and colleges to gain feedback on the current A level qualification and seek ideas and input on the new specifications that are being developed.

As well as working with the History teaching community, we've had detailed conversations with historians from a range of UK universities to gather views on the 2008 specifications.

We've also set up a **Subject Advisory Group** with historians from UK universities and history education experts to get their input into the development of our new specification.

We've carried out research with:

- teachers and lecturers from schools and colleges across the country in face-to-face interviews, phone interviews, focus groups and surveys – from 2010 to 2014
- academics from a range of UK universities, in phone interviews and in Pearson's subject advisory group – from 2012 to 2014
- learned societies and subject associations



5. Our research - with teachers and lecturers

These are the key things you told us you wanted to see in a new specification.

What you told us...

1
2
3
4

Choice and range of topics

Freedom of choice for coursework content

Flexibility in meeting the **British requirement**

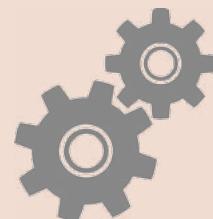
Flexibility in meeting the **200-year** rule



A **clear distinction** between **breadth** and **depth**



Source assessment
that avoids mechanical
approaches



5. Our research - HE and other stakeholders

From our conversations with HE and other stakeholders, these were the things they said they wanted to see at A level.

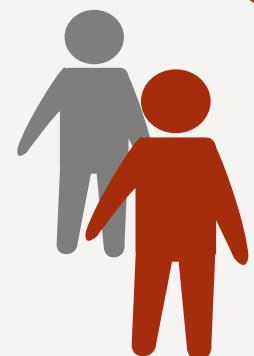
A wide range of history, allowing for broad courses, and enabling different choices from GCSE.

Coursework focused on **historical debate**, with more independent research.

More coherence and **more context** for depth studies.

Source assessments that encourage more sophisticated thinking.

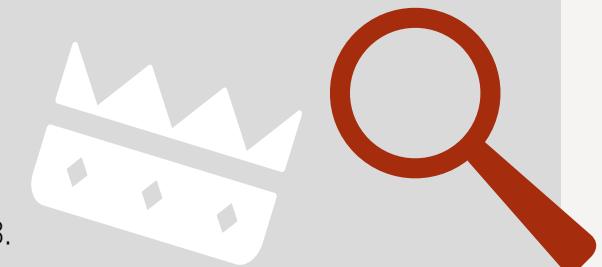
More **social** and **cultural history**, balanced with political.



6. Design principles for the new specification

Working with the new criteria, the feedback from teachers and lecturers, HE and other stakeholders, and drawing on what had worked well previously, these were our overarching design principles for the new specifications:

- Ensuring that all **subject content requirements are met in the examined papers** allowing a free **choice of coursework content** – something that many centres told us they wanted.
- Responding to feedback about the 2008 specification we've given **flexibility** in terms of where **British History** is studied – it doesn't have to be met in one unit only, and it could be done in Year 12 or Year 13.
- More **coherence** and more **context** for depth studies.
- Allowing AS and A level History to be **co-taught**.



We've also focused on the following principles in designing the content of the new specification:

- Providing **Options** from medieval, early modern and modern history.
- Incorporating **more social** and **cultural** history.
- Making a conscious effort to **differentiate** between **A level** and **GCSE** content.
- Ensuring that there is **flexibility** in meeting the new **200 year chronology rule** – within one period or across **periods**.

