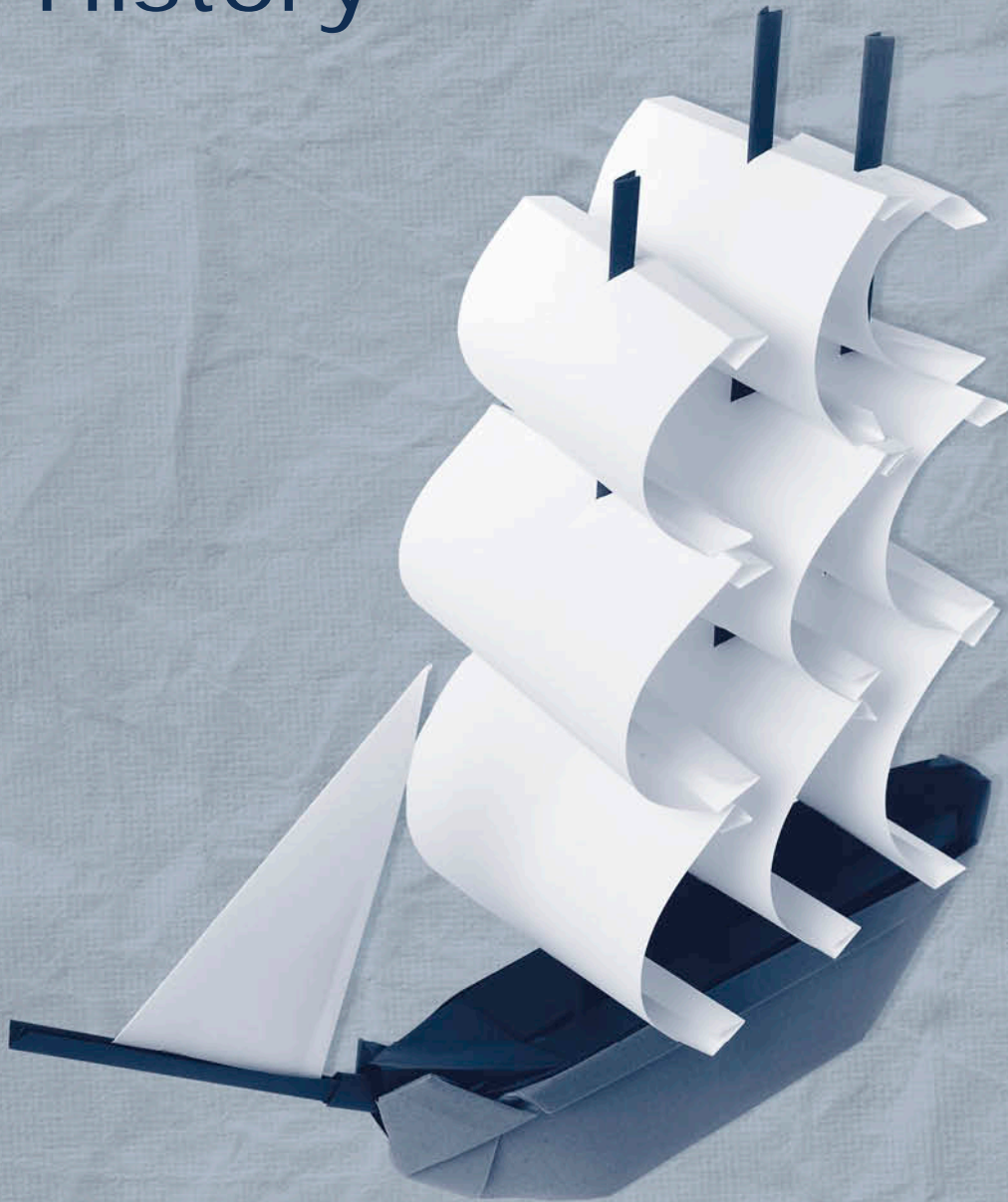


Pearson Edexcel AS and A Level in History



APPLYING CRITERIA

Guidance on the application of valid criteria in making a judgement

ISSUE 3

GCE History 2015

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The application of valid criteria in making a judgement

‘criterion: a principle or standard by which something may be judged or decided’

Oxford dictionaries

The requirement for a response to establish and apply valid criteria in the process of making a judgement is to be found in both AS and A level in questions that target AO1 and AO2.

This is not something new to the study of A Level History. Good students have always had to weigh up factors and explain why they see one as of greater significance in reaching a conclusion or judgement – otherwise they are simply asserting. In the new 2015 A Level, this has been explicitly stated in the levelled marking grids.

AO1: Making judgements and applying criteria

For AO1 the requirement for applying valid criteria is found in the mark scheme element that is related to substantiated evaluation and judgement (bullet point 3). The mark scheme progression moves from the lack of or implicit use of criteria through to the selection and application of valid criteria that will enable an evaluated judgement to be made in the response.

At AS the progression leads to Level 4.

4	17–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues relevant to the question are explored by an analysis of the relationships between key features of the period, although treatment of issues may be uneven. • Sufficient knowledge is deployed to demonstrate understanding of the demands and conceptual focus of the question and to meet most of its demands. • Valid criteria by which the question can be judged are established and applied in the process of coming to a judgement. Although some of the evaluations may be only partly substantiated, the overall judgement is supported. • The answer is generally well organised. The argument is logical and is communicated with clarity, although in a few places it may lack coherence and precision.
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At A level the progression leads to Level 5, with the requirement for a more effectively substantiated judgement to be reached through the evaluation of the relative significance of criteria established and applied.

5	17–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues relevant to the question are explored by a sustained analysis of the relationships between key features of the period. • Sufficient knowledge is deployed to demonstrate understanding of the demands and conceptual focus of the question, and to respond fully to its demands. • Valid criteria by which the question can be judged are established and applied and their relative significance evaluated in the process of reaching and substantiating the overall judgement. • The answer is well organised. The argument is logical and coherent throughout and is communicated with clarity and precision.
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The selection of the criteria used in the response will be dependent upon the nature of the question being asked: the second-order concept being targeted, the content area of the specification being targeted, and the specific judgement that is required.

‘Valid criteria’ refers to the criteria that would be valid for the specific question asked and not a set of predetermined criteria.

When students answer a question that requires a judgement they need to decide which criteria they will use to measure issues in questions such as:

- To what extent?
- How far do you agree?
- How significant?
- How accurate is it to say?

For example, a ‘main consequence’ question would probably require criteria that determine the relative importance of effects, and a ‘significance’ question would require a discussion of criteria related to impact.

It may be helpful for students to think in terms of the criteria for judgement they apply when making decisions [judgements] in everyday life – to buy clothes (fit, fashion and price) or prefer a certain TV programme or film (artists, characters, special effects, storyline). For example:

‘I chose this pair of trousers. It was the best.’	A judgement given, with justification asserted.
‘I chose this pair of trousers because it suited me best.’	A judgement with some justification, but without the evidence of valid criteria being applied.
‘I chose this pair of trousers because, although others were a better fit or better price [+ comparative details], this pair was the best combination of a good fit round the waist and the right length at a price of which I could afford.’	Exemplifies the use of criteria for overall judgement and with justification.

The indicative content included in the mark scheme gives an indication of the criteria that might be used.

For example, see the indicative content for the following question (sample assessment Paper 1F Section A), which has been copied below.

3 How significant was the post-Second World War population boom in the creation of a consumer society in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s?

Question	Indicative content
3	<p>Answers will be credited according to candidates' deployment of material in relation to the qualities outlined in the generic mark scheme. The indicative content below is not prescriptive and candidates are not required to include all the material which is indicated as relevant.</p> <p>Candidates are expected to reach a judgement on the significance of the post-Second World War population boom in the creation of a consumer society in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s.</p> <p>The contribution of the post-war population boom to the creation of a consumer society should be analysed and evaluated. Relevant points may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rapid increase in the birth rate led to an almost immediate demand for more housing and the consumer goods • The majority of the new housing was suburban, e.g. Levittown, which fuelled a further increase in car ownership • The baby boom created a new consumer market for children which advertisers exploited, e.g. the sale of toys made \$1.5 billion in 1953 • The 'baby boomers' drove further consumption in the later 1950s and 60s as producers catered for the new phenomenon of the 'teenage' market • An increased population led to increased food consumption and new products such as fast food • By the late 1960s, the children of the baby boom expected greater choice and readily responded to technological innovations by buying new products, e.g. transistor radios, stereo record players. <p>To establish extent, evidence limiting the significance of the population boom and/or other significant factors should be analysed and evaluated. Relevant points may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the late 1960s, many young 'baby boomers' began to question the culture of consumerism and actively rejected consumption, e.g. the growth of environmentalism and the 'hippy' lifestyle • Involvement in the Second World War led to the population boom and the wealth required to kick-start investment in consumer-led industries, e.g. domestic appliances • The development of a car-owning culture encouraged consumption and new products, e.g. drive-in food restaurants and cinemas • Technology increased purchases of televisions and also stimulated the advertising industry, which sponsored television programmes • The advertising industry created a desire for new products and more choice • The psychological effects of the victory in the Second World War and the emergence of the US as a Cold War power encouraged society to justify consumerism as the 'American way'. <p>Other relevant material must be credited.</p>

Note: There is not an expectation that this number of points must be covered. There are different ways of achieving high-level marks, for example, answers dealing with few points but backed up with detailed knowledge and developed reasoning; or answers reasoning from the use of more points but with less detailed knowledge.

The indicative content offers six relevant points (fewer points are indicated for AS level) which could help to form criteria establishing the significance (impact) of the population boom, including:

- a rapid birth increase led to increased demand
- the baby boom created new markets
- the baby boom created demand across the whole period.

It then suggests six relevant points that could help to form the criteria to establish limitations to the significance of the population boom, including:

- the Second World War kick-started the creation of a consumer society
- car-ownership encouraged greater consumerism
- technology and advertising stimulated demand and consumption.

The criteria for judgement on significance here might relate to the relative importance of:

- factors *increasing demand* (e.g. those stemming from population increases)
- factors *affecting attitudes* to consumption e.g. advertising (fuelling increased consumption)
- factors *increasing opportunities* for consumption (e.g. technology – new car-owning culture).

For example, a student's response could conclude that those factors creating a disposition to consume – factors creating consumerist attitudes - had greater overall significance since they would, in effect, have had an impact independent of the population boom – increasing demand in the existing population – and would also intensify the impact of population boom itself. The criteria applied for judging their greater relative significance would be 'disposition to consume', 'independent of' and 'intensifying the impact of' the population boom.

Exemplar extracts

In the following extract from an AS response, the student is exploring the question:

How far was popular discontent over food shortages responsible for the collapse of the Tsarist regime in 1917?

There is a valid criterion for a judgement on the significance of food shortages but it is only partially substantiated. The attempt to establish its relationship with long term discontent and the relative significance of the two factors is not convincingly established.

The student concluded:

On balance, the evidence suggests that the view expressed in the question is partially correct. This is clear because popular discontent with food shortages **did add fuel to** the revolutionary fire but it was more the long-term discontent with the Tsarist regime and the rule of an ignorant leader that were **truly responsible for the revolution**. However, this prolonged anger would probably not have led to the collapse of the Tsarist regime in 1917 if it hadn't been for the devastating effects of the war (such as food shortages).

criterion

no criterion
advanced for
this judgement

In this A Level response the reasoning and criteria for judgement are more soundly argued. The response is to the question:

To what extent does the emergence of an industrial middle class explain the increasing demand for parliamentary reform in the years 1785-1832?

Another reason why the industrial middle class can explain the increasing demand for parliamentary reform is because they were able to win over the support of some Whigs who then voiced that demand in Parliament. ... The power of the industrial middle class was evident following the 'Days of May' whereby, in response to the king asking Wellington to form a Tory government, industrialists withdrew approximately £1.8 million from British banks with the slogan 'To stop the Duke, go for gold' the situation was dangerous since it threatened to cause bankruptcy which would likely cripple the economy. The influence of the industrial middle class was undeniable and shows why there was a growing demand for parliamentary reform. It was in the best interests of Whig politicians to support the demands of the industrial middle class rather than alienate so powerful a group....

criterion

criterion

To conclude, it is evident that to large extent the emerging middle class can explain the increasing demand for parliamentary reform. This is largely due to the influence they possessed which was able to sway Whig politicians to support their demands. The government recognised this new social class as a genuine threat to their power and authority because of the thought-out pragmatic approach to the issue of reform which was entirely in contrast to the working class who tended to take a more direct and violent approach. On the other hand, the industrial middle class were able to organise themselves as was displayed in the Day of May which highlighted the huge threat they posed. Clearly other factors such a fear of revolution strengthened the demand for reform, although ultimately the industrial middle class had the most influence.

criterion

criterion for judgement of most significance

criterion for relatively greater significance

Clear judgement of relative significance consistent with the criteria advanced in conclusion and argued in the body of the essay.

AO2: Making judgements and applying criteria

For AO2, the requirement for applying valid criteria is found in the mark scheme element that is related to evaluation of source material (bullet point 3). The criteria selected and applied should be those that relate to source evaluation. Students could consider, for example, the accuracy, reliability, limitations, knowledge of the author, special insights or valuable information provided by the sources.

The key to a high-level response is that criteria relevant to an evaluation of the specific source are selected and applied with valid reasoning and not simply asserted and that content, provenance and context of the sources are considered together. For example, AS level Paper 2 Section A (a) will require the use of relevant criteria appropriate to determining usefulness. The AS level Paper 2 Section A (b) requires the additional use of criteria to determine reliability in order to determine how useful is the source material (Level 4 – the weight the evidence will bear as part of coming to a judgement).

At A level, with the increased demand to consider two sources together in Paper 2 and a single source for two enquiries in Paper 3, the highest level response (Level 5) should be able to use the relevant criteria to distinguish, where appropriate, the degree of certainty with which judgement can be made. For example, references to reliability, accuracy and limitations, which add an element of caution to the judgement.

Exemplar extract

The extract on the following page is the conclusion from a high-level response to Question 2 option 35.2: The British experience of warfare, c1790-1918.

- 2** Assess the value of the source for revealing the problems in supplying the troops in the Crimea, and the attitudes of those in command and control. Explain your answer, using the source, the information given about its origin and your own knowledge about the historical context.

Source 2: From a letter written by Captain W P Richards to his sister Caroline. It was written on 12 January 1855 from a camp outside Sebastopol. Captain Richards was an officer in the Royal Artillery and had been fighting in the Crimea since mid-1854.

I see in a leading article of *The Times* of the 23rd of last month that you at home are beginning to find out the true state of things here. It would make the people of England's blood boil, to see even one half of the miseries the Army are being made to suffer. Added to this is the horrible waste, mismanagement, and culpable neglect of the stores sent out for us so generously by the public. 5
The soldiers are most thankful for them, that is for the intention, but as to the things themselves, they never get them. The stores are either left on board the transports to rot, or carried into some of the deserted houses at Balaklava, which have been converted into what they call stores. There they are piled in heaps, in an undesirable state of confusion. When anything is applied for, you find 10
Mr. Commissary Jones, Smith or Robinson smoking a cigar (which most likely has been sent out for the soldiers), who tells you that really he is very sorry, he believes that the article is somewhere in one of the stores, but where he has not the slightest idea, and at present he has no time to look for it.

Consequently, the poor soldier is obliged to go to a shop and pay double for an article. If the affairs were carried on as they ought to be, these would have been 15
received from the Government, or our Country, for nothing, or at the worst, what they cost in England. If the soldier does not do this, he must starve from hunger or cold, as the case may be. Now this is – on my honour – the true state of things.

Lord Raglan does not care the least about us. He has a good house, stabling for his horses, good coal fires, good grub, and his things washed and starched just 20
as if he was in England. There he remains, scarcely ever seen except about once a week when he takes a ride through the Army, when it is a fine day. He does not see any of the miseries. He does not see the hundreds of sick in hospital with only one blanket to cover them. He does not see men carried out of the trenches these 25
cold nights frozen to death.

In conclusion, Source 2 is valuable for revealing the perception by a junior officer to the problems of supply and the attitudes of those in command and control. The value of Source 2's evidence in regard to supply is greater due to the location of the writer. Richards is well informed about the plight of the ordinary soldiers and can therefore write a valuable assessment of the problems in supplying them. Despite this, his testimony is limited somewhat by his narrow view of the campaign and his attitude towards those in a position to supply him who he sees as failing in that task. However, the value of Source 2 for revealing the attitudes of those in command and control in the higher echelons of command is severely limited by Richards's lack of a general perspective on the campaign or any real insight into the actions of Lord Raglan, the command-in-chief. Overall, Source 2 does therefore provide some valuable insight into answering the question, but this is limited to some extent due to the position and role of the writer.

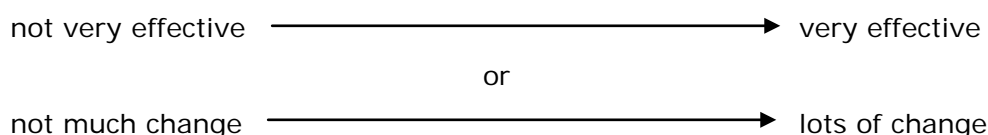
Note that the student comments on the greater value of the source for some aspects of the enquiry than others – and the student's reasoning (giving clear criteria for ascribing value) is made clear. This can be seen in the use of 'well informed'; 'limited by narrow view of campaign and his attitude...'; lack of general perspective ... any real insight...' all these are valid criteria being used in this particular instance for the purposes of considering this particular source in relation to specified enquiries.

Planning an AO1 essay response

Many questions are multi-factor questions, they ask for analysis of the role these factors played in bringing about an outcome (as in the case of questions above) and students need to employ criteria for making judgements about their significance (e.g. underpinning cause, trigger, fatal combination etc.). Questions that are not multi-factorial require a different planning approach. Rather than 'why' questions, these are 'whether' questions – i.e. relating to effectiveness, success, extent of change, etc. Here students are not analysing causal factors, they are analysing 'measures' (e.g. criteria for judging effectiveness) and they then also need to employ criteria for making judgements about their overall significance.

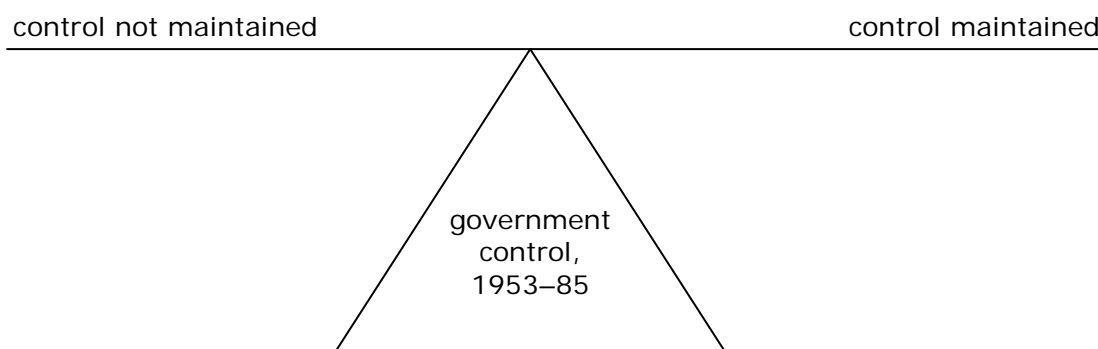
If it is confusing for students to use the term 'criteria' in two ways in these 'whether' essays, they could be encouraged always to use 'measures' (e.g. of success, change, effectiveness) for their analysis and then think in terms of their own criteria (justifications) for their judgements.

One way to plan such an essay is to create a scale for example:



Students then need to identify their measures of success or change. It might help if they think of a set of scales and the focus of the question at the centre of the scale.

e.g. How far was government control over the lives of the people maintained in the years 1953–85? (Paper 1E Russia, 1917-91 Question 1)



Students can then place evidence either side of the pivotal point, depending on whether it supports or challenges 'maintained control'. These should be measures by which control can be analysed and judged (for example extent of media control, extent of dissidence). Students also need to decide how much weight to give the evidence in order to justify an overall decision about how much something changed or how effective or successful something or someone was – where on the line it is placed, and then which way does balance-line tip? One way to do this could be to complete a pivot-point diagram for each of their measures (e.g. extent of media control) before placing it on one side or other of the pivot point above to contribute to an overall judgement.

It is clarity about the basis for (i.e. criteria for) the overall judgement as well as each interim judgement which a high level response requires – and this can only be achieved if each of the judgements leading to it is also sound.

Note that the response should not, in a formulaic fashion, assert that criteria are being used (for example, I will use criterion x in my judgement) or assert that the criteria used are valid. Instead, as part of the reasoning and argument, the answer should use appropriate criteria for determining the significance of causes, changes etc. The validity of the criteria will be determined by the effectiveness with which a judgement can be reached, and at, A Level, the evaluation of the relative significance of those criteria.

Teaching tip

One method of getting students to practise evaluation and reaching a judgement, for example about the most important factor, is through the cup final competition. The aim of this exercise is to encourage students to explain the importance of various factors, supporting their explanation with some well-chosen evidence.

Get them to draw up a random list of reasons/factors e.g. for the fall of the provisional Government in 1917, such as:

- Dual power
- Middle class politicians
- Continued the war
- No land reform
- The Milyukov crisis
- Lenin's return
- The June Offensive
- The Kornilov affair.

These reasons can then be paired off and students then have to decide which of each pair is more important in explaining the fall of the Provisional Government, giving reasons for their answer. These reasons are their criteria for judgement.

Dual power OR middle class politicians... is/are more important because...
 Continued the war OR no land reform... is more important because...
 The Milyukov crisis OR Lenin's return... is more important because...
 The June offensive OR the Kornilov affair... is more important because...

The winning factor from each pair goes through to the next round and the same process is then applied until only two factors are left standing. Then students have to repeat the process for a final time to leave one winner which should be what they think is the most important reason for the fall of the Provisional Government. If students feel the outcome is not what they wanted or expected they can return to the first round to fix the outcome they are looking for.

This exercise can work with any number of relevant factors; in the exam students will not have time to assess so many factors so you may feel four or six factors is a more manageable number. You could try doing it as a class exercise and get students to debate the importance of different factors before allowing the class to vote.

AO3: Making judgements and applying criteria in coursework

Students' experience of writing their own essays and the advice given above regarding the use of criteria for judgement should inform their reading for coursework. They should be alive to the basis of historians' argument in the works they read, the criteria historians themselves use for making judgements and the relationship of these to any differences they encounter in their chosen works. This point is exemplified in guidance material written by Dr Arthur Chapman. 'Are they [historians] defining concepts in different ways (if we disagree about whether a 'revolution' has occurred, for example, it may be because we are using different criteria to define the concept 'revolution')?'¹

Analysing and evaluating the criteria used by historians

The skills and understandings required for AO3 in the new Paper 4 have been present in different assessment approaches in previous specifications. In the extract below, written under examination conditions for the legacy Unit 3, the student is considering the view that 'the New Deal delivered limited economic improvement'. The response is analysing the arguments used by historians in provided extracts². It shows that their differing views are based on the use of different criteria and evaluates their use.

Example 1

Whilst source 10 uses unemployment to impress the ND's inability to effect economic recovery 'as late as 1941, the unemployed numbered six million' source 12 counters this, instead citing that the ND essentially 'checked the downwards deflationary spiral 'through numerous public works expenditure'....

The sources furthermore comment on the invisible dividend of 'hope for ultimate orderly recovery' (12) that the ND through expanding the role of government was able to bring, which is difficult to quantify but vital to appreciate when considering the 'paralysing fear' the Depression had brought to the country whose economic confidence had been severely depleted. Hence perhaps it is somewhat reductive to solely consider unemployment figures ('numbered six million' 10) to appreciate the extent to which the ND, a fundamentally socio-economic and political programme brought about recovery, as the programme seemingly necessitates a more qualitative analysis...

Thus, whilst the ND due to the scale of the intractable Depression ... [was] unable to bring full economic recovery, one must consider [that] it crucially, 'having left many problems unsolved' (10) in terms of the main economy, mitigated the psychological Depression.

It is clear that in this example the student has proceeded on the basis of weighing up what counts as 'economic improvement' when a judgement is made about the recovery brought about by the New Deal – i.e. what criteria for judgement are to be used.

¹ Arthur Chapman *Developing students' understanding of historical interpretations (Abridged Version)* 2016, p8 http://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/History/2015/teaching-and-learning-materials/A_level_History_interpretations_guidance_abridged.pdf

² Edexcel History (2008) 6HI03C 2016 https://secure.qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/secure/silver/all-uk-and-international/a-level/history/2013/exam-materials/6HI03_C_que_20160610.pdf.

The use of criteria – ‘What counts?’ – can be seen to be at the heart of many well-known debates. For example:

- The early nineteenth standard of living: what criteria are being used to measure quality of life of the industrial workforce – for example, what weight should be given to higher income versus reductions in freedom of action
- The verdict on Haig’s conduct of the campaign on the Western Front: what criteria are being used to judge his leadership – for example how much weight should be given to the extent of casualties sustained during the process versus overall outcome of the campaign?
- The extent of popular support for / opposition to the Nazi regime: what measures are being used to gauge support? Is lack of overt opposition the same as consent?

In the extract below, Example 2, from a coursework essay on the extent to which Cromwell was responsible for a Tudor Revolution in Government, the student is analysing the criteria used by historians to consider what counts as a ‘revolution’ in government. The student is also analysing the basis of the historian’s arguments by considering the timeframe the historian has used.

Example 2

One major change administered by Cromwell that led to a ‘revolution’ in Tudor government according to Geoffrey Elton is the creation of governmental ‘departments’. He claims that a bureaucratic system was set up in which ‘properly trained officials operated... within specialist departments’, this was an attempt by Cromwell to separate the work of the government from the monarch so that administration would ‘not depend on the vigour of the Crown’ thus allowing government to operate as a more efficient system as each bureaucrat would operate in their area of expertise only in order to ensure that the highest quality of work was consistently generated in each department. This view is challenged by John Guy who states that Wolsey held greater responsibility for the split in government and formation of departments for he ‘began to appoint specific councillors as deputies to perform the Council’s judicial function’. Although there was no formal split under Wolsey, Guy clarifies that the minister laid the grounds for an ‘essential distinction between executive work and justice’ and thus Cromwell’s responsibility for a ‘revolution’ in this aspect of government is limited as his actions were arguably only a continuation of the ingenious plans for administrative reform under Wolsey. Guy’s view can be supported by Wolsey’s creation of the Eltham Ordinance in 1526 which acted as a blueprint for the changes to government, this major act of administration detailed a reform of the royal household to ensure Wolsey’s political supremacy – thus this evidence is strengthened as Wolsey’s known desire for power would forge the assumption that the intended reforms were in no way minor and would introduce as much of a revolution as would be had under

Historian’s view of what constitutes revolution

The historian’s criterion

The historian’s criterion

Criterion for alternative view

Criterion for alternative view

the modernised system of government departments. This factual detail exposes the reformist mind-set of the former minister and highlights how in the context of Wolsey's time in power, the ideas proposed were far more revolutionary than under Cromwell thus reducing his responsibility for the revolution as his role was reduced through the knowledge that reorganisation of the household was a concept clearly detailed by Wolsey, not Cromwell. Additionally, Elton's view can be undermined through his approach to his investigation of Cromwell's work in Tudor government. A noticeably narrow time span is referenced by Elton to support his claims for Cromwell's creation of a 'revolution', making his actions seem far more reformist and omitting any major reference to Wolsey which would greatly reduce the significance of Cromwell's work.

Student's criterion for judgement

Second criterion for student's judgement

The use of 'generic' criteria

The discussion above identifies the historians' use of substantive criteria for judgement – those that arise specifically from the discussion of the subject matter of the enquiry. Students also look to explain and evaluate differences between historians using generic criteria such as purpose, methodology, schools of thought, etc. While these clearly can have a key bearing on differences of view and nature of conclusions reached in some enquiries, it is not necessary to use them and students should not strain to do so where the subject matter or the content of the works they have chosen does not lend itself to such a discussion. It also follows that it is not necessary, when initially choosing an enquiry, to strive to find works where the methodology, purpose, or schools of thought have a bearing. At this level, students may not be able to engage with issues of methodology, for instance – unless these are readily apparent (for example, if students can engage with the differences of view emerging from in-depth local studies compared with national surveys). It is sufficient for students to be able to show (as the student exemplified above has) the basis for differences from the substance of the arguments – that difference can result from the criteria used to select evidence (e.g. timeframe) and to form judgements.

If generic criteria are used, they should be related specifically to the substantive discussion of the enquiry. In this extract below, generic comment is offered, but not applied to the discussion of differing views. It does not raise the attainment of the student and tends to detract from, and weaken, the quality of the response.

Example 3

'Elton's view on the departments within the government would therefore be seen as convincing as no historian of those mentioned have strongly criticised his opinions to a full extent, suggesting his view may be correct and definite. Though some may argue Cromwell's influence may differ in weight for the responsibility of his role in transforming the departments within the Tudor government, they still ultimately agree with Elton in this instance. They may result in different views due to their process of history and the system they used in order to find out the information to answer their initial questions. The first step in the process of history is the enquiry this crucial step is the ultimate reason as to why historians differ in their views and why historians may have disagreed in their views on Cromwell's impact of the revolution of Tudor government. If historians have

Generic statement not shown to apply to this enquiry

conflicting enquires and are starting the process of methodology finding out about different areas and point of views of a particular topic, this will therefore result in their views clashing.'...

Generic statement not applied

The difference in the historians' views may be caused due to their methodology; a step in the process of history. The methodology is a crucial part contributing to the analysis historians make, it will influence their work on specialism, and the use of others work and sources. Some historians may draw economic studies, enquire with specific key individuals to discover a more personal viewpoint. Elton's viewpoint on Cromwell's change in the Privy Council may not be as strong as his opinion on the departments of the government, as this view faced more criticisms. Other historians see Cromwell's role in a more negative light, even to the extent he was not at all responsible for the changes made and should not receive the credit.

Generic statement, not shown to apply to the material in this enquiry

The use of criteria in overall judgement

Students need to use their own criteria to come to an overall judgement. 'Evaluation requires detailed engagement with historians' arguments [and] evaluation is a matter of applying criteria – we cannot make a judgement without them – rather than simply 'checking the facts'.³ In coming to an overall conclusion, students should take account of the differences of view they have encountered and make the grounds for (criteria for) their own judgement clear. The example below (the concluding paragraph to the work of the student in Example 2) shows criteria being employed for the student's own judgement.

Example 4

Judgement

In conclusion, Elton's view that Thomas Cromwell held responsibility for a 'revolution' in Tudor government is overall unconvincing. He appears to restrict the time periods in which he investigates Cromwell's contribution to reform in order to make the minister's actions appear as significant and reformist as possible when in fact they are merely a continuation of ideas implemented before the minister's time in power, an example being Wolsey's plans for a reduced Council to carry out administration as highlighted by Guy as a primary aspect of his argument. Elton's failure to consider Cromwell's actions in the wider context of Tudor government reduces the credibility of his argument significantly and highlights the importance of the points raised by Starkey in regards to the existence of a small, select Council before Cromwell, showing it as a necessity triggered by Henry's careless reign rather than an ingenious attempt at revolutionising government under Cromwell. Additionally, Guy's claim takes a more open approach that explores the actions of Wolsey in beginning the departmentalisation of government, showing how Cromwell's actions were arguably a reflection of following the instructions of a 'blueprint' forged by Wolsey. Although credibility could be given to Elton's view in regards to the revolutionary change to the role of

Criterion

Criterion

³ Arthur Chapman op cit, p 11

Parliament, the fact that both Guy and Starkey offer this same interpretation shows no more reliability in Elton's work as the change to Parliament was indisputable. Overall, it is clear that the balanced interpretation of Guy – in particular – as well as the wider context approach of Starkey **undermine Elton's claim and show that Cromwell held very limited responsibility for a revolution in Tudor government.**

Overall judgement, based on clear criteria and consistent with the reasoning and argument that precedes it

Summary

- Analysis and evaluation of differing views involves an understanding of the criteria historians employ for their own judgements
- Generic criteria, for example related to methodology, purpose, schools of thought, may assist in the process of analysis and evaluation, but are not a requirement and must be applied to the substantive issue before they enhance the standard of work
- High level work will make clear the criteria for judgement when coming to an overall conclusion.