

# A level History

Sources and Interpretations  
in the A Level Specification





# Aims of the network

- Look at how sources and interpretations are assessed
- Talk through some marked exemplar work
- Discuss both common barriers and what makes a high-level response



# Key features of external assessment

AO1	AO2	AO3
<p><b>5 essays</b> in the examinations; each worth 20 marks and marked to a common generic mark scheme. Choice of one question from two in each section</p> <p><b>Paper 1</b> 2 essays on themes in breadth</p> <p><b>Paper 2</b> 1 essay on a topic in depth</p> <p><b>Paper 3</b> 1 essay on a topic in depth 1 essay on a theme in breadth</p>	<p>2 compulsory questions in the examinations, each worth 20 marks and based on unseen source material</p> <p>Paper 2 Evaluating the usefulness of two sources for a single enquiry</p> <p>Paper 3 Evaluating the usefulness of one source for two enquiries</p>	<p>1 compulsory question in the external examinations, worth 20 marks and based on unseen extracts.</p> <p>Paper 1 section C Evaluating a view relating to a nominated controversy, using extracts containing differences of view.</p>

# Sources (AO2)





# Planning for source use and evaluation

How have you developed your teaching to help students to handle sources?

Have you changed the way you ask students to consider evaluation/ criteria for evaluation?

What strategies do you plan to use in the future to continue to develop this?



## Why candidates did well: summer 2018

- Clear comprehension of the source and analysis developed by drawing out key points relevant for the enquiry; valid inferences developed with support from the source material and meanings explained.
- Relevant knowledge of the historical context used effectively to explain the inferences, not just to expand on details.
- Valid criteria established to consider 'weight', taking into account relevant considerations such as the context, the nature and purpose of the source and/or the position of the author.



# Pitfalls and weaknesses: summer 2018

- Focus on answering the enquiry rather than on the value of the source *for* the enquiry
- Source material used only for information and quoted or paraphrased with no attempt at inference
- Knowledge free-standing and/or lacked relevance to the enquiry
- Consideration of both sources (P2)/ both enquiries (P3) seriously unbalanced.
- Evaluation of the source asserted with no explanation or development from the sources
- Substantial time spent on content limitations which the source could not be expected to provide.



## Paper 2: AO2 mark scheme

The mark scheme has three elements:

- interpretation and analysis of source material
- deployment of knowledge of historical context in relation to the sources
- evaluation of source material

For a mark high in any level, the defined qualities of all three of them must be present.





## Criteria as part of AO2

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.

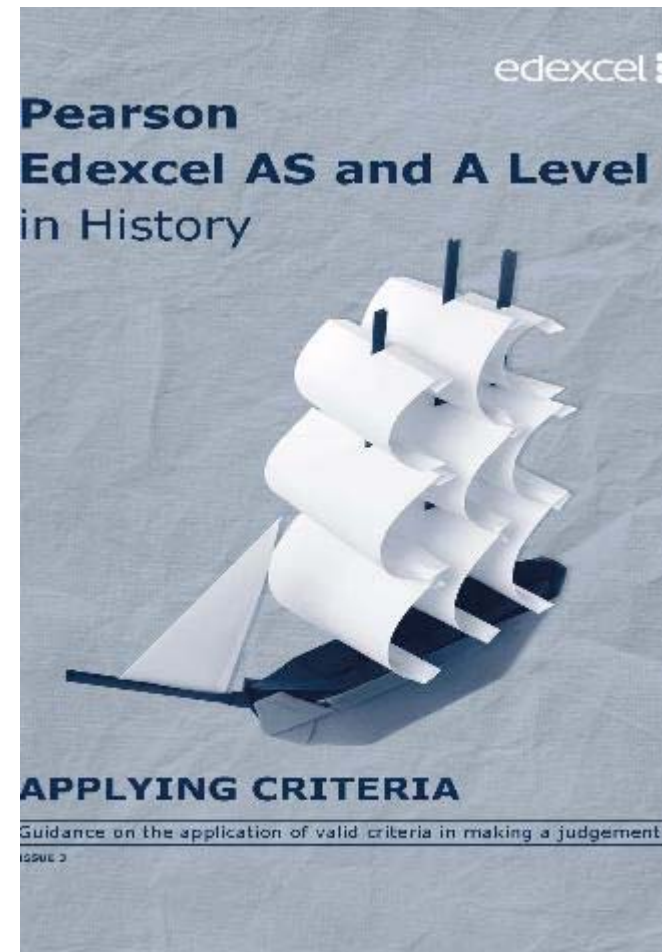
Students could consider, for example, the accuracy, reliability, limitations, knowledge of the author, special insights or valuable information provided by the sources.



# Guidance on criteria

[Edexcel AS and A level History > Course materials > Teaching and learning materials > Guidance](#)

This booklet gives guidance and exemplification for teachers. It is relevant to AO2 source evaluation and AO3 coursework evaluation of interpretations.





# Exemplar scripts

Read the two exemplar responses in your pack:

Option 2E.2 The German Democratic Republic,  
1949–90 (pp.4–9)

Option 2E.1 Mao's China, 1949–76 (pp.12–17)

What are the main differences in quality as shown in  
the Levels rewarded?



## Paper 3: AO2 mark scheme

Largely the same as Paper 2, apart from first bullet:

Interrogates the evidence of the **source in relation to both enquiries** with confidence and discrimination, making reasoned inferences and showing a range of ways the material can be used, for example by distinguishing between information and claim or opinion,



# Exemplar scripts

Read the two responses in your pack:

Option 35.2 The British experience of warfare,  
c1790–1918 (p.19–24)

Option 34.1 Industrialisation and social change in  
Britain, 1759–1928 (pp.26–30)

What are the main differences in quality as shown in  
the Levels rewarded?

# Interpretations (AO3)

## Paper 1 Section C





# Planning and teaching interpretations

How have you developed your teaching to help students to use interpretations?

What strategies do you plan to use in the future to continue to develop this?



# Key elements of good responses: summer 2018

- **Interpreted** the provided extracts by **analysing** the issues raised
- **Integrated own knowledge** with the issues raised in the analysis
- **Demonstrated** a clear **understanding** of the **arguments** offered in **both extracts** and how arguments were established
- **Constructed** a response which considered the **given view**, the **counter-evidence** in the **other extract** and **own historical knowledge**
- **Reached a judgement** about the view, **taking account of the views of both extracts** in the process





## Pitfalls and weaknesses: summer 2018

- Wrote **rehearsed answers** to the **key topic question** rather than the **view expressed** in the **question** itself
- Wrote about the **historiography of the key topic question** rather than the view expressed in the question itself
- Answered almost **wholly** through **comprehension of the extracts** or **own knowledge**
- Deployed **AO2 source evaluation skills** to address the extracts – candidates should discuss the views within the extract boxes not evaluate the historians



# Paper 1 Section C: exemplars

Read both responses in your pack:

Option 1F In search of the American Dream  
(pp.33–34)

Option 1G Germany and West Germany, 1918–89  
(pp.36–39)

How do the responses handle the interpretations  
and contextual knowledge differently?



# Using contextual knowledge

called 'Reaganomics'. This approach by Reagan attempted to lower taxes, increase the defence budget, ~~and~~ and destroy 'Big Government'. As a result, to achieve these goals, Reagan cut the ~~most~~ number of staff in the White House and also cut federal aid as he believed help from the government was only acceptable if at least one parent in the family was working. Therefore, it is convincing that the Reagan administration's policies were an attack on the disadvantaged which increased social division due to Reagan's presidency resulting in the gap between rich and

There is some relevant contextual knowledge here but its links to the extracts are weak. There is no reward for A01 in Paper 1, Section C, thus Bullet Point 2 of the generic mark scheme requires linkage to the material in the extracts.

There is some support given for a judgement here but its linkage to the extracts is limited.



# Difference between interpretations

Extract 1 contrasts extract 2 because Bracher argues that Hitler was confident and "optimistic" in "appeasement" whereas Craig argues that "Hitler was not surprised", which implies that Hitler was ready for war with the West. However both extracts agree that Hitler ~~would~~ had planned for an invasion of Poland in 1939 as "he ordered the plans for the attack on Poland" (extract 1) and that the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact meant that "Hitler's preparations for the next phase of his eastern plan were complete" (extract 2).

The difference in interpretation are highlighted by analysis of the two extracts here together with some similarity but there is little discussion of the issues

# June 2018 Coursework (AO3 and AO1)





# Coursework: celebrating achievement

- The coursework requirements are helping students to engage with the subject and the nature of history
- Teachers are managing the coursework well – it's helping them to give their course an identity and tailor it to their own and their students' interests
- Free choice has allowed interesting topics and impressive work by candidates
- Progression from GCSE (9-1) and student engagement with interpretations
- Coursework is well marked – very low number of centres had their coursework marks changed



# Coursework: points to note

- Students should be using works of history – chapters of books, articles etc. (not A Level textbooks)
- Coursework Advisory Service (CAS) – NB this does not need to be used for every student every year. Consider timing as summer is busy
- Coursework marking training – exemplars available [online](#) as well
- Latest coursework training pack available



# Coursework exemplars

Study one of the marked coursework examples in your pack (p.40ff. Coursework descriptors, then Hitler, then Elizabeth I):

- How does it fulfil the criteria of the mark scheme?
- How is this represented in the marking?

Share these ideas with someone else.





# Further support

- History subject advisor
  - Mark Battye
    - 020 7010 2186
    - [TeachingHistory@pearson.com](mailto:TeachingHistory@pearson.com)
    - Sign up to Mark's regular email updates



Any questions?

