



Pearson  
Edexcel

# GCE History



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Coursework guide

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## An overview of the coursework unit

This document is intended to act as a guide for teaching and assessing the Pearson Edexcel GCE A Level History coursework unit. It collects together the guidance that has been produced in different support documents by Pearson so that you can find all the information that you require in one place.

The [Specification](#) document remains the essential reference point for Pearson Edexcel A level History, including the coursework unit. Therefore, you should always use this and any other support documents or resources in conjunction with the latest edition of the Specification.

## Where can I find the requirements of the coursework?

You can find information about the A Level coursework unit in the *Specification*, on pages 113–26, 130–31 and 149–51.

The *Specification* document covers the requirements of the coursework unit, including research and writing, assessment, and administration.

## How does the coursework fit within the A Level course?

The coursework is a fourth component for the A Level History course. It makes up 20% of the assessment value of the total qualification. The coursework assesses AO1 (5%) and AO3 (15%). It provides the largest contribution to the AO3 element of the qualification out of the four components that comprise the complete assessment. There are no marks awarded in the coursework component for AO2.

See *Specification*  
page 131

Students must:		% in GCE
<b>AO1</b>	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	<b>55</b>
<b>AO2</b>	Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within its historical context	<b>20</b>
<b>AO3</b>	Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Paper/component	Assessment Objectives			Total for all Assessment Objectives
	AO1	AO2	AO3	
Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations	20%	–	10%	<b>30%</b>
Paper 2: Depth study	10%	10%	–	<b>20%</b>
Paper 3: Themes in breadth with aspects in depth	20%	10%	–	<b>30%</b>
Coursework	5%	–	15%	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total for this qualification</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Unlike the other three components, which are assessed by means of external exams, this unit is entirely assessed internally by the centre.

The choice of topic lies with the centre. It is entirely permissible to cover a new topic area question, problem or issue, dependent on the interests of the students and provided there is a range of suitable interpretations available. This means that it is the ideal way to introduce a topic that is not covered elsewhere in the course content.

See *Specification*  
page 114

It is also permissible to cover interpretations of a question, problem or issue related to content covered in the examined components. However, the coursework task **must not duplicate coverage of the *historical interpretations* section studied for Paper 1**. Moderators will check centres' compliance with this requirement.

## What is the A Level history coursework?

In the Pearson Edexcel A Level History coursework, students are required to investigate a historical problem, question or issue to form a critical view based on relevant reading on the topic. As part of their research, they are specifically required to analyse, explain and evaluate the interpretations of three historians on the topic.

In the process of producing the coursework, students will recognise that the interpretations are representations and constructions of the past and recognise how the interpretations relate to the question that they seek to answer. They will analyse and comprehend the defining elements of particular interpretations and explain why historians arrive at their interpretations. They will also be able to evaluate differing interpretations against appropriate and relevant criteria, and understand that differences in interpretation can be legitimate.

As a result of the research, students produce a written assignment, submitted via the Learner Work Portal (see below), with a recommended word count of between 3,000 and 4,000 words. The assignment should include a bibliography as well as any references for quotations and citations. The assignment should analyse, explain and evaluate the interpretations in the three chosen works and reach an overall judgement on the view, making use of supplementary reading.

The coursework unit is assessed and moderated within the centre, with an external moderation process to ensure consistency with national standards.

## How might the coursework unit be taught?

Teachers should provide students with a short skills-based course of study that covers the work of historians in creating interpretations and approaches to the analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations. The course should also help students to develop enquiry skills. Additionally, if the centre has chosen a topic that does not relate to the content of the other three assessment components, it would be permissible to deliver a short course to provide students with the contextual background.

See *Specification*  
page 114

There is no specific model for the teaching of the coursework unit and each centre has freedom to make choices about how to organise the teaching. The total time spent on the whole coursework component should not amount to more than 20% of curriculum time to be in line with the 20% weighting.

Support for your students might translate into the following scheme of work:

c.6 hours	Optional taught short course on content (if new topic)	Contextual background: key issues and events, etc.
c.6 hours	Taught skills course  Practice for small group or whole class in the development of writing within the theme of the coursework programme, e.g. analysis and evaluation of works	Research skills: selecting and identifying arguments
		Research skills: note taking
		Analysing and evaluating historical interpretations, for example: a) method /focus/purpose b) questions asked c) evidence and argument d) judgements
c.6 hours	Getting the assignments under way	How to use the resource record
		Selecting three historical works – similarities and differences
		Selecting supplementary works
		Proposal
c.6 hours	Support for individual progress and discussion of findings	Student analysis and evaluation of selected interpretations of history

## What is the word count?

It is recommended that students write between 3,000 and 4,000 words for their assignment.

- Footnotes may be used. These are not included in the word count but they must not be used to develop the student's line of argument.
- Appendices may be included, containing material to which the student has made reference in their assignment, for example extended quotations or extracts. These are not included in the word count.
- Students should be advised that if they exceed the word count, it is less likely that they will be able to satisfy the requirement of production of a concise response.

Teachers should use their professional judgement if students go under/above the word count, and apply the mark scheme accordingly, taking into account the qualities of the level being met/or not, as well as the need for concision. Assignments which are more than c.10% of the word count over the maximum of 4,000 words should be judged as not having met the requirement for concision that is contained in the level descriptors. This will prevent the award of the top mark band in a level even if the other qualities are displayed.

## Choosing an appropriate assignment topic

### What would be an appropriate assignment topic area?

Centres have the freedom to choose a topic that they would like to cover. This could include exploring a new area of history that is of interest to the students or taking the time to look in more depth at an issue covered during the teaching of one of the other three units.

See *Specification*  
page 114

- The coursework may cover interpretations of a question, problem or issue related to content covered in the examined components. However, the coursework task **must not duplicate coverage of the *historical interpretations* section studied for Paper 1**. Moderators will check centres' compliance with this requirement.
- The coursework may cover a new topic area question, problem or issue, dependent on the interests of the students and provided there is a range of suitable interpretations available.
- There is no minimum or maximum length of time-period for the coursework. The appropriate length will depend on the topic chosen, which could be a single key event or a period of decades or longer. Of course, it should have sufficient scope to allow students to engage with the chosen topic, whilst overly long time periods can make it harder for students to focus on the topic.

### What sort of question, problem or issue should be chosen?

The breadth and depth of the question, problem or issue is not specified by Pearson, and centres have a great degree of freedom in choosing a topic. However, it is important to note that the topic should be sufficiently complex and interesting enough to have generated disagreement between historians. Unfortunately, many 'popular history' topics such as 'who was Jack the Ripper?' or 'who shot JFK' do not have the necessary range of different interpretations by academic historians to meet the requirements of the coursework, nor do they lend themselves to answers where the student can produce a critical judgement of the topic.

See *Specification*  
page 115

The question, problem or issue could concern any of the following perspectives: aesthetic, cultural, economic, ethnic, political, religious, scientific, social or technological, and could include debates on change, continuity, causation, consequence, similarity, difference, significance or the key features of societies and periods.

Any historical period of study can be appropriate, providing that the question meets the requirements of being sufficiently complex and interesting enough to have generated disagreement between historians, and that there are sufficient published resources available for students to exercise individual judgement. It is therefore possible, for example, for students to consider an ancient historical issue; however, they should avoid using ancient historians to ensure the interpretations are sufficiently scholarly in nature and based on research.

The problems or issues debated by historians are varied and this will be reflected in the question formulation. Some examples are given below, but any formulation which reflects the nature of the debate is permitted. Historians have disagreed about:

- the consequences of ...
- the nature of...
- the extent of change in ...
- the extent to which ... improved ...
- how far ... succeeded
- how far ... was responsible for ...
- whether ... can be seen as a turning point in ...

## How should the coursework question be set?

Although centres choose the topic and the question, the wording of the question must follow the standard template which is below. Replace the words in square brackets with the chosen question, problem or issue.

See Specification  
page 115

Historians have disagreed about *[the chosen question, problem or issue]*.

What is your view about *[the chosen question, problem or issue]*?

With reference to three chosen works:

- analyse the ways in which interpretations of the question, problem or issue differ
- explain the differences you have identified
- evaluate the arguments, indicating which you found most persuasive and explaining your judgements.

Students may choose to divide their assignment into sections or complete it as a continuous essay, and should make use of supplementary reading as appropriate.

There are examples of what an appropriate question might look like in the resources listed in [Appendix 1](#).

## Should centres use the same title for students in the cohort?

It is up to the centre to decide whether the students will use the same assignment title, or if they will have different titles. Both options are permitted within the specification. Students may also study different topics, if the centre chooses.

See Specification  
page 115

Using the same title can make the administration and moderation of the coursework unit easier for teachers. For example, it simplifies the planning and teaching of the introductory course in terms of the contextual knowledge. On the other hand, offering a choice of title can help with student engagement.

Teachers should ensure that assignments are relevant and appropriate to their students' course of learning. Students should have the opportunity to choose works relevant to the chosen question, problem or issue. Provided these requirements are met, the same assignment title could be submitted for all students in the cohort.

Teachers may re-use assignment questions across cohorts provided students have access to sufficient works to enable them to make a choice as to which ones they compare. It is the responsibility of centres to ensure that there exists a suitable range of works for the cohort to enable students to produce individual responses. Where all students are following the same topic area, they should not all be evaluating the same three chapters, articles, etc. Students must exercise their own judgement in selecting which resources to use and deciding how to use them. Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide what constitutes a sufficiently wide range to ensure an appropriately diverse selection of works which will enable students to carry out independent research and exercise independent judgement when choosing historians' works. It is not acceptable for all students in the same cohort to use the same three works. It may be that individual students within a cohort end up choosing the same three works; however, we would expect to see evidence in the student's resource record sheet that a range of resources has been consulted and that the students have independently selected their historians' works.



### How can the exemplar coursework assignments help?

Although each centre sets its own topic and questions, Edexcel has published a number of exemplar coursework assignments. These can be used to exemplify the types of questions, issues or problems that are appropriate for the coursework. You can find exemplar coursework assignments in the resources listed in [Appendix 1](#).

### Do I need to get questions checked or approved?

There is no need to submit coursework proposals for approval. However, an [advisory service](#) is provided for guidance only. There is no deadline for using our coursework advisory service.

Once you have submitted a question for us to check and you are happy with the feedback there is no need to submit the question again in future years.

## Interpretations

### What are interpretations?

Students must use interpretations in their coursework. Interpretations are the works of historians who have produced academic works that are relevant to the topic. These should be substantial works where a distinct scholarly interpretation is presented. Generally speaking, these works will use evidence and the work of other historians in advancing arguments and reaching conclusions about the topic.

### What interpretations do students need for the coursework?

Students must refer, in their assignment, to three main works relevant to the chosen question, problem or issue. The three works should meet the following criteria:

See *Specification*  
page 116

- They should be substantial enough to support the assignment, and it is recommended that they are of article or chapter length. A work may include more than one chapter from a historian's book if appropriate. There is no maximum length, though choosing very long academic works can make it much more challenging for students to get to grips with the historians' arguments.
- They can be in hard copy, electronic or audio-visual format, but must be created by historians (each work must be by a different historian).
- The works may be from different time periods or may be contemporary to each other.
- The works should contain interpretations that together contain a range of views or emphases. These may differ in focus, methodology and/or perspective, but must be sufficiently different for the student to be able to make valid comparisons and judgements.

Additionally, it is not permitted for any of the three works to be passages used by the teacher in the skills-based course of study.

### Who checks that the student has chosen appropriate works to use as interpretations?

It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that the works that students choose will meet the requirements and provide sufficient evidence for them to make a satisfactory response to the question. This should be checked before students begin the writing phase of the coursework.

Although teachers are responsible for ensuring that the choice of works is appropriate for the coursework, students are required to exercise individual judgement over the choice of works. The teacher is also responsible for ensuring compliance with this requirement.

### Who counts as a historian?

Students' chosen works must be substantial enough to support the assignment, and it is recommended that they are of article or chapter length. They may be in hard copy, electronic or audio-visual format but the specification indicates that they must be created by historians. For example, an interpretation created for television by a historian recognised in the relevant field and with the historian given in the writing credits may be used. An article by an historian for a sixth-form publication may be used, as well as one published in a scholarly journal, but a school textbook, distilling the views of historians, may not.

Historians such as Andrew Marr *may* be suitable if they present a distinct scholarly interpretation – as additional works rather than one of the three main works – but if you are unsure, it is best to contact the [advisory service](#). One test is whether the work is appropriately referenced and draws on the work of other historians in advancing arguments and reaching conclusions rather than being a personal account.

If the chapter of a book is jointly written and both the authors are recognised historians, then this would count as a single 'work' for coursework purposes.

If students wish to use multiple works by the same author for their coursework this would not count as more than one 'work'. We do advise that students use three different historians for their main three works. Strictly, the coursework requires a 'work' to be the view contained in a single published piece, rather than the historian's view overall, so we'd advise just using whichever of the publications is most contrastive with the other two main works. It would still be possible to refer to their other publications as supplementary reading if they offer additional significant comment.

Students could use a book review as an interpretation, provided that it is written by an historian, and it contains an argument that can clearly be attributed to the review author. However, it's probably better to use as a supplementary work, as the author's own argument is unlikely to be dominant within the work.

Journalists, policy experts, military experts etc are more likely to be sources of evidence than interpretations of history. The chosen works must enable students to explore the views of historians. It's not an exercise in exploring the views of figures who lived through, and have their opinions on or were themselves involved and influential in, the event being investigated. The key thing to consider is what opportunity the work provides students to explore the views of historians. For example, if they evaluate a work by calling into question its findings and arguments, when the work itself was a personal view, or was never an appropriate scholarly work, then that undermines the purpose of the coursework and their opportunities to get to grips with the basis of differing views amongst historians.

It may be appropriate for students to use historians who are writing in a foreign language; however, we'd suggest that no more than two (and desirably only one) should be in a foreign tongue. It's difficult for the teacher and the moderator to get a sense of the debate otherwise. Any citations from the works should be translated and students should be reminded of their responsibility to represent the views contained within them accurately. Teachers should only permit the use of foreign-language works if they are confident that it will not disadvantage the student, since teachers may not be able to discern any misconceptions in any preliminary discussion of the suitability of the chosen works to present different views.

### What about historians writing about the time period they are from?

Historians writing around the time would normally be used as sources contemporary to the period, rather than as the work of a historian. A nineteenth-century historian reflecting on the medieval period would of course be appropriate; they do not have to be twentieth- or twenty-first-century writers. The key is whether the work is appropriately referenced and draws on the work of other historians in advancing arguments and reaching conclusions, rather than being a personal account. In the case of more modern topics, from the late twentieth century, for example, the historian should be writing sufficiently long afterwards to be sure the work is primarily the product of historical research rather than of personal experience. As a rule of thumb, at least a decade might be thought appropriate for some hindsight to be applied.

### Is it enough to read just the three interpretations?

Although the three interpretations form the basis of the coursework, students must undertake supplementary reading of **at least** two further works. This is to assist in their evaluation of the main works and in forming their own view about the interpretation under discussion. Supplementary reading will also help with choosing the three works to focus on for detailed analysis and evaluation. In practice, it is a good idea to look at the work of five to six authors before narrowing down the choice to the three which will form the focus of the coursework. The supplementary reading, along with the three interpretations, should be logged in the coursework documentation.

## Do students need to learn historiography or schools of history to be able to analyse and evaluate the interpretations?

It is not necessary for students to name or understand schools of history as part of their analysis and evaluation of the interpretations. The taught course element of the coursework should focus on building students' confidence in evaluating scholarly works, as well as developing research skills such as selection of information and note taking. When writing their response, students should focus their analysis of the views in the chosen works and the differences between them, rather than in trying to link them to a particular school. A common mistake is that students sometimes link historians' works to a school of history, for example in identifying that a historian has a revisionist perspective, but without explaining why this affects the validity of their interpretation. Whilst a considered evaluation of the significance of the historiographical perspective of a work to the argument being made could be valid to the enquiry, and therefore could be awarded marks within the mark scheme, focusing on the views within the works and the differences between them is generally a better approach for most students.

## Do students need to discuss historians' methodology in the coursework?

It is not necessary for students to discuss a historian's methodology as part of the evaluation of interpretations. The coursework question asks students to analyse the ways interpretations differ, to explain these differences and evaluate the arguments as well as presenting their own view.

Methodology may be a useful criterion by which to judge the interpretations, but this will depend on the works chosen and it is not a requirement. It may be useful to discuss methodology and why accounts differ as part of the taught skills course in order to develop students' general understanding of historical interpretations.

## Coursework – the role of the teacher

### Teaching the skills course

Teachers should provide students with a short skills-based course of study that covers the work of historians in creating interpretations and approaches to the analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations, for example to develop understanding of:

See *Specification*  
page 114

- the range of methods used by historians in their work
- the diverse range of focuses and purposes that historians have
- the different perspectives of historians.

The course should also help students to develop enquiry skills, for example:

- effective record keeping and referencing
- planning skills
- effective use of a library and the internet.

It is anticipated that students will be building on the work they have already completed for Paper 1, and will be familiar with the process of analysis of passages of writing by historians. If this is not the case, the teacher may include examples of how to tease an interpretation from a narrative or analytic text, but students may not then use these passages for analysis in their assignment. Another topic area from Paper 1, 2 or 3 could be used by the teacher for this purpose so as not to constrain students' choice of work for the assignment.

If the topic chosen for the coursework is different from the topics covered in the other three assessment components, it would be permissible to deliver a short course to provide students with the contextual background.

### Checking that the assignment and interpretations are correct

Whether the cohort uses one question, or students have different questions, the teacher is responsible for checking that the assignment wording is correct. This includes ensuring that the problem or issue in the question is one which lends itself to the student being able to form a critical view on the topic, rather than a question which would generate a more descriptive answer.

See *Specification*  
page 115

Teachers **must** also check that the works selected by students meet the requirements of the coursework, including that they are the appropriate type and length of work, and that they will enable the student to complete the assignment. The teacher must also exercise sufficient supervision to be satisfied that the research is being undertaken independently and that students remain focused on the assignment.

See *Specification*  
page 117

As an example, teachers might find a table like the one below useful in checking the assignment and choice of three works:

Approving an appropriate enquiry focus	Yes	No
Is there a suitable range of published/other resources for the topic? Has the student identified at least five works in total?		
Does the question follow the question framework in the specification?		
Does the question require analysis and evaluation of an issue about which there are differences of interpretation?		
Approving an appropriate proposal	Yes	No
Has the student listed three relevant published resources for detailed analysis?		
Are three historians named?		
Are differences of view identified? Does the summary suggest that the proposal is focused on issues which give sufficient scope for discussion of interpretations?		
Does the task appear manageable within 3,000–4,000 words? Has the student identified appropriate sections, chapters or articles?		

## Reviewing the first draft of the coursework

Teachers **must** review the student's first complete draft. The guidance may indicate to students if any element of the task requirements is absent or given insufficient attention. Guidance must remain 'general', which is defined as guidance that enables students to use their initiative in making amendments and improvements independently.

## Ensuring that requirements are followed

Teachers **must** ensure that the requirements of the coursework are being met by students. This includes:

- checking that the three main works selected by students will enable each student to complete the assignment
- ensuring that students have equal access to IT resources
- ensuring that student have access to a sufficient range of resources, including a range of works to enable them to make choices about the interpretations that they will use
- taking steps to satisfy themselves that the submitted work is the student's own, and along with the student, sign the *Coursework authentication sheet*
- advise students about the word count requirement
- ensure that students and teachers complete the relevant documentation, including the resource record.

See Specification  
pages 117–18 &  
149–51

Resource records are a good method for checking individual responses to works. The record can be continuously updated throughout coursework planning and writing and will enable you to make judgements about the quality of work.

## What else may teachers do?

During the research phase, teachers **may**:

- provide students with a range of works, such as in a resource bank, providing that it is sufficiently large that students may exercise judgement in choosing the works they will use
- help students to understand the rubrics and assessment criteria.

See *Specification*  
pages 117–18

During the writing phase, teachers **may**:

- help students to understand the rubrics, assessment criteria and controls.

## What must teachers not do?

During the writing phase, teachers **must not**:

- give detailed feedback to individual students about how to improve work to meet the assessment criteria. The guidance provided prior to final submission should only enable students to take the initiative in making amendments, rather than detailing what amendments should be made. This means that teachers cannot provide templates and model answers.
- mark work provisionally with a view to sharing that mark with students so that they may then improve it.
- return work to students to make changes after it has been marked.

See *Specification*  
page 118

## May centres provide a resource collection for students?

Because students must use at least three substantial works of article or chapter length from three different historians, plus carry out supplementary reading from at least two further works, it is understandable that a school may not be able to provide equal access to enough books for a whole cohort to use. In such cases, it is acceptable for teachers to produce a bank of resources for students to select from. However, teachers should be aware that the History subject criteria require students to carry out a historical enquiry that is independently researched.

Any bank of resources provided by the teacher must therefore contain a sufficiently wide range of resources to ensure that students are able to exercise individual judgement over their choice of works and historians. The purpose of such a resource bank must therefore be to make enough resources available to all students in a cohort, rather than to do the research for the students.

Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide what constitutes a sufficiently wide range to ensure an appropriately diverse selection of works which will enable students to carry out independent research and exercise their own judgement when choosing historians' works. It is not acceptable for all students in the same cohort to use the same three works. It may be that individual students within a cohort end up choosing the same three works; however, we would expect to see evidence in the student's resource record sheet that a range of resources has been consulted and that the students have independently selected the historians' works.

If a resource collection is produced, it should **not** be divided into categories. Students should be selecting their work on an individual basis and the purpose of a resource collection is only to provide students with a range of works from which to choose, not to direct them to categories or groups of resources.

Any works used in the taught skills course cannot be used as one of the three works or the required supplementary reading. Therefore, any resource collection that is produced should **not** be used as part of the taught skills course. However, chapters from other sections of a text in the resource collection **may** be used as a work for the taught skills course.

## Coursework – the role of the student

### Carrying out research and choosing interpretations

Students are expected to carry out research and reading about their coursework topic. Beyond the initial short skills course where the teacher provides students with the core skills needed to carry out effective research and analysis of historical interpretations, students work independently. They are required to exercise individual judgement over the choice of works which they will use to address the coursework topic. Although the teacher may provide a collection of works from which students choose, the students are individually responsible for selecting and analysing the selected three.

See *Specification*  
page 116

### Doing further supplementary reading

As well as selecting three main works which will be analysed in the process of writing the coursework, students must also undertake supplementary reading. This is necessary to assist in their evaluation of the main works and in forming of a view about the interpretation under discussion and their choosing of works to focus on for detailed analysis and evaluation.

### Keeping a resource record

While carrying out their research, students must complete a *Resource record*. This can be found in Appendix 5 of the *Specification*. This must list all the resources used and be checked regularly by the teacher. This will allow the teacher to validate the research process and verify the independence of the research undertaken.

See *Specification*  
page 151

The *Resource record* will also provide evidence to support teacher judgements about the quality of the work and provide evidence for moderators that students have exercised choice of which resources to use. In the 'comments' column of the resource record, students should provide evidence of why they have selected their three chosen works, including a short summary of the main differences between them.

The exemplar answers in the resources listed in [Appendix 1](#) include examples of *Resource records*.

### Structuring the response

Students are required to present their own view and to analyse and evaluate three main relevant works. There is no required structure for the assignment, and all valid answers will be credited. Students may divide the assignment into sections or complete it as a continuous essay. The use of subheadings is permitted.

Students may find it helpful to complete the assignment in two sections, devoting the first part to the presentation of their view and the second part to the analysis, explanation and evaluation of the differing interpretations in their three chosen works. Alternatively, students may prefer to divide the essay into four sections, with one for the presentation of their view and the following three sections for each of the three bullet points in the question.

In reaching a judgement on the view, students must refer to their three chosen works and should make use of supplementary reading. Their own judgement should essentially be a consideration of which of the views they find most convincing and why. If the assignment is divided into sections, it would seem appropriate for approximately one-third of the words used be devoted to the first section on the presentation of their view.

The exemplar answers in the resources listed in [Appendix 1](#) include examples of how assignments have been structured.



## How much context do students need to include in their response?

At Level 5 it is noted in the mark scheme that ‘Contextual knowledge of the issues is fully integrated into the discussion of the debate.’ Contextual knowledge will be a good measure for challenging or agreeing with interpretations and is therefore important to the overall discussion. Note, however, that the assessment objective weighting for coursework is split 5% AO1 and 15% AO3. Therefore, the focus is primarily on using contextual knowledge in the process of evaluating interpretations and forming judgements in response to the question, rather than in simply presenting extensive own knowledge on the topic.

## What criteria should students use for making a judgement about their three works?

The mark scheme uses the word ‘criteria’ in relation to strand 4 – Evaluation of, and judgement on, historians’ arguments. Criteria are standards by which something may be judged or decided. They are not the factors being used or the issues being discussed in the question, but the basis on which the students will reach their judgement.

The relevant criteria for judging the three works in the coursework will depend on the specific works chosen. The analysis of the works should focus on the arguments being presented by the authors. When assessing the arguments used by historians in relation to specific issues, students should use the same approach as they would to the evaluation of their own arguments. Additionally, they might give other reasons for judgement that relate to more general criteria related to the nature of historical writing – for example a historian’s perspective, focus, purpose, methodology or choice of evidence etc., but whether these are relevant will depend on the issue investigated and the nature of the chosen works.

Students should **avoid**:

- attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, for example by making assertions about reliability or purpose
- just selecting quotations, paraphrasing or describing, without proper reasoning
- relying on the works as if they were simply sources of information, rather than analysing the arguments being presented in them
- making assertions of the inferiority of one extract on the basis that it offers less factual evidence than another, without genuinely analysing the arguments offered
- drifting away from the specific demands of the question to the wider topic
- expecting the works to be polar opposites, instead of recognising that there may be degrees of difference or even common ground.

For further guidance, please see the support guide [Applying Criteria](#), which provides examples of how criteria can be used effectively in an answer.

## The first draft and final submission

Students submit a first complete draft to the teacher. This is reviewed by the teacher. General guidance may be given to the student to indicate if any element of the task requirements (i.e. to analyse, explain and evaluate the interpretations in the three chosen works and to reach an overall judgement on the view, making use of supplementary reading) is absent or given insufficient attention. The guidance will not be detailed individual feedback, nor will it detail what amendments should be made, rather it will be sufficient to enable students to take the initiative in making amendments. The feedback will also not give a provisional mark.

On the basis of this general feedback, students may have the opportunity to amend their work ready for the final submission. Once the work is submitted in final format and marked, it cannot be returned to students for further amendments.

See Specification  
page 118

## Submitting the final assignment

The final submission should include the following:

- the **assignment**, which must include a bibliography listing the resources used. The bibliography should distinguish clearly between the main three works that are referred to and any supplementary reading. All quotations and citations in the assignment must be referenced using an established referencing system, such as Harvard; the student should use their chosen referencing system consistently.
- the **Coursework authentication sheet**. This verifies the work as the student's own, lists the examined options taken and provides an accurate word count. The Pearson template must be used (see Appendix 4 of the *Specification*).
- the **Resource record** (see Appendix 5 of the *Specification*). The *Resource record* sheet must be submitted in addition to a bibliography because it is important in validating that students have carried out an enquiry process and will demonstrate that they have read widely and selected works independently. Students should also indicate their three selected works with an asterisk.

See *Specification*  
pages 119 &  
149–51

The final submission to Pearson Edexcel must now be digitally, by means of the Learner Work Transfer (LWT) Portal. You can find out more about submitting work on the LWT Portal [here](#). We provide guidance to teachers on the submission of coursework each Spring via the History subject page.

The marks are submitted via Edexcel Online.

## What formats of digital submission are acceptable?

As noted above, the coursework is submitted digitally through the LWT Portal. There are three ways to submit digitally:

Scan a hard copy into a digital copy	Students can submit work in hard copy, and this can be marked before being scanned to digital format. Most photocopiers and many printers have the facility to do this; there are also various apps available on tablets and other digital technology.
Submit a digital copy with separate marking notes	Students can submit their final draft in an uneditable digital format (a PDF or read-only Word document). The marking and moderation is captured using the marker/moderator comments sheet which is then uploaded with the student's coursework, coursework resource record and coursework authentication sheet. You can edit the marker/moderator comments sheet or create your own version, providing it is clear.
End-to-end digital submission	Centres can use a digital submission with digital in-text annotation using a digital marking platform.

The LWT Portal will accept read-only Word documents and PDFs.

Files should be named in the format:

[centre #]\_[candidate number #]\_[surname]\_[first letter of first name]

For example, centre 12345 would enter the work of Jane Smith, candidate number 7890, as:

12345\_7890\_Smith\_J

Where the coursework is being uploaded in multiple documents, please use the following naming approach:

Document	Format	Example for Jane Smith, candidate number 7890, from centre 12345
Coursework	[centre #]_[candidate number #]_[surname]_[first letter of first name]	12345_7890_Smith_J
Coursework resource record	[centre #]_[candidate number #]_[surname]_[first letter of first name]_resource	12345_7890_Smith_J_resource
Coursework authentication sheet	[centre #]_[candidate number #]_[surname]_[first letter of first name]_CAS	12345_7890_Smith_J_CAS
Marker/moderator comments sheet (if submitting separate marking notes)	[centre #]_[candidate number #]_[surname]_[first letter of first name]_marking	12345_7890_Smith_J_marking

Please note that files should be uploaded individually. The LWT Portal will accept zip files, but you should not zip files together for submission. Zip files should only be used if you are unable to provide documentation in the supported file types (read-only Word documents and PDFs).

## Assessing the coursework

### How is the coursework marked?

The coursework is marked by teachers. The assignment may be annotated to indicate where the work shows the characteristics of the level awarded, but comments should be included on the *Coursework authentication sheet* (in appendix 4 of the *Specification*) to justify the marks awarded.

See *Specification*  
pages 120,  
123–25 & 149

The coursework is always marked using the generic mark scheme which is found on pages 123–125 of the *Specification*. This mark scheme has five levels, and each one contains the bullet points that identify the key assessment traits that progress through the levels. Markers should decide which level descriptor the answer matches for each of the five bullet points, and then select the ‘best-fit’ level and mark for the answer.

The ‘best-fit’ approach to marking is explained on page 120 of the *Specification*.

### How should internal standardisation be carried out?

Where more than one teacher in a centre has carried out marking, there must be a process of internal standardisation. The intention of this process is to ensure that there has been a consistent application of the assessment criteria. The process may be decided by the centre. It may involve sampling, dual marking, etc, but the submitted assignment must show evidence that a process of moderation has taken place.

See *Specification*  
page 121

### How are marks submitted?

Whilst the work is submitted via LWT Portal, the marks are submitted via Edexcel Online. The marks should be submitted as a raw mark out of 40. Please do not double the marks or convert them into a percentage. You can read more about submitting coursework assignments and marks [here](#).

### How will Pearson moderate the cohort of coursework assignments?

The marks awarded by the centre will be subject to external moderation by Pearson. The aim of this process is to ensure that the marks are consistent with national standards and to review assignments to ensure that the assignment-setting rules have been correctly applied by centres. Pearson will select the students whose work will be moderated; the number selected will take cohort size into account. If the moderation indicates that centre assessment does not reflect national standards, an adjustment will be made to students’ final marks to compensate. The adjustment could be to increase or decrease the marks.

### Should students be told their marks?

Centres have, for many years, been required to have a written internal appeals procedure relating to internal assessment decisions. As part of this procedure, candidates must be told the mark given by their centre for a centre-assessed component/unit. This applies to the A Level History coursework. You can read the [Joint Council guidance](#) about this process for more information.

## Resitting coursework

Students who are resitting their A level History qualification may not simply re-work their original coursework assignment. They must write to a new question; however, it can be on the same issue with a different focus, or it can be on a brand-new topic.

If students are happy with their original coursework mark, they can choose to transfer their coursework mark across from the previous sitting and simply re-sit the exams. There are special 'Transfer' entry codes available in the Exams Officer Information Manual for this purpose.

## Appendix 1: Useful links

### General specification documents

#### [A Level History page](#)

- The webpage for the A Level History course, including links for all resources and training materials.

#### [Specification](#)

- The main *Specification* document – the document that establishes the requirements for Pearson A Level History.

#### [Getting Started guide](#)

- A general support document which covers the entire specification, including the coursework element.

### Coursework support documents

#### [A Level History coursework artificial intelligence \(AI\) guidance](#)

- Guidance that clarifies the rules about the use of artificial intelligence in Edexcel A level History coursework.

#### [A Level History coursework word count guidance](#)

- Guidance that reiterates and clarifies the word count on the coursework.

#### [A Level History example coursework questions](#)

- A collection of exemplar coursework titles. These include examples of the different interpretations that students could look for, as well as examples of appropriate works. We are looking to add a few new exemplars in summer 2024.

#### [Applying criteria guidance](#)

- This gives additional support on the application of valid criteria in making a judgement. It covers Paper 1 as well as the coursework.

#### [Advisory service](#)

- This guide explains how to seek assistance from the advisory service, which is useful if you want to check whether a coursework assignment topic or choice of interpretation is appropriate.

#### [Coursework FAQs](#)

- A document containing some common questions which are asked about the coursework.

#### [A Level Interpretations guidance](#)

- A conceptual guide aimed at considering the nature of interpretations in history. Includes some ideas for activities and questions which might be useful in class discussion about the nature of interpretations and how to analyse them.

#### [Training/PD](#)

- [Coursework marking training](#) – self-paced training, developed from the modular training.
- [Coursework network event](#) (2024) – including ideas on planning and delivering coursework and supporting your students; a recording of the event can be viewed [here](#).
- [Paper 1 network event](#) (2022) – Paper 1 Breadth study with historical interpretations, which includes some useful ideas on teaching interpretations.
- [Coursework marking training](#) (2024) – three recorded modules on YouTube, with exemplar scripts (see below). The recordings can also be accessed [here](#).

## Exemplar coursework assignments

- These examples are from previous sessions.
- They include annotations from the centres. In many instances, there are also examples of the *Resource record* and also the teachers' comments.
- Teachers may show students examples of coursework provided it is for a different topic to their own assignments.

[Salem witch trials](#) – A low Level 5 example

[Coursework live FAQs session](#) – November 2022 (9HI0-22O1) –new exemplars from the 2022 series

Script A – 1789–92 French constitutional monarchy – 40 marks (centre gave 40 originally)

Script B – origins of the Cold War – 21 marks (centre gave 26 originally)

Script C – nature of Chartism – 28 marks (centre gave 32 originally)

Script D – why Germany lost WW2 – 13 marks (centre gave 13 originally)

[Coursework pre-recorded sessions](#)

*NB The exemplars in the pre-records below also appear in earlier versions of the coursework marking training – the pre-records were created by converting these earlier sessions into on-demand recordings.*

### Coursework pre-record session 2

Script 1 – Cromwell as Lord Protector – 40 marks (centre gave 40 originally)

Script 2 – Haig's leadership on the Western Front – 19–21 marks (centre gave 7 originally)

### Coursework pre-record session 3

Script A – causes of the Russian Revolution – 11–13 marks (centre gave 17 originally)

Script B – causes of the Russian Revolution – 19–21 marks (centre gave 24 originally)

Script C – Spanish civil war – 27–29 marks (centre gave 23 originally)

Script D – use of terror in Nazi Germany – 27–29 marks (centre gave 32 originally)

Script E – Gandhi and Indian independence – 35–37 marks (centre gave 37 originally)

[June 2017 PM report](#)

1 – Holocaust long-term plan – 16 marks (centre gave 9 originally)

2 – Holocaust long-term plan – 25 marks (centre gave 27 originally)

3 – German foreign policy and origins of WW1 – 40 marks (centre gave 39 originally)

[June 2018 PM report](#)

1 – Cromwell as Lord Protector – 40 marks (centre gave 40 originally)

2 – Hitler's responsibility for the Final Solution – 23 marks (centre gave 23 originally)

## Published resources

Hodder Education have published a workbook specifically for coursework:

<https://www.hoddereducation.com/subjects/history/products/16-18/edexcel-a-level-history-coursework-workbook>

*You don't have to purchase any resources, including those from Pearson, to deliver our qualifications.*

## Appendix 2: Teaching the coursework – approaches and ideas

In this section, you will find some simple approaches and ideas which may prove useful in preparing students for the coursework unit. These ideas are simply suggestions which would need to be adapted to suit the needs of the students in different cohorts and at different centres, and they do not indicate that these methods and approaches are required for teaching the coursework effectively.

### Planning the taught skills course

The taught skills part of the coursework plays an important role in preparing students to carry out independent research and to select an appropriate range of interpretations. It is recommended that this section is carefully planned. In particular, it is a good idea to focus on different aspects of analysing and evaluating interpretations, for example:

- identifying the argument
- considering the method, focus or purpose of the interpretation, as appropriate
- considering how the historian has supported their interpretation, and what type of evidence they have relied on.

You can see more about the taught skills course on [page 4](#).

By planning this section out, rather than using it as ‘free study time’ or trying to analyse all aspects of an extract at once, students are more easily able to focus on the skills that they will need.

Additionally, it can be useful to allow students to read the extracts before the lesson, so that during the lesson they can focus on the analytical skills, instead of understanding the content.

### The illusion of ‘ultimate’ history

Whilst there is no requirement for students to learn about schools of historiography for this coursework, it might be beneficial early in the teaching of the course to hold a class discussion about the illusion of ‘ultimate’ history.

Despite the focus on interpretations at GCSE history as well as within the externally examined units of A Level history, many students, even at A Level, find it hard to move away from the concept that there is a fundamentally ‘correct’ history that can be discovered. It can be useful to address this again as part of the taught element of the coursework unit, helping students to see that historians present an interpretation of the past, even when they are using factual information.

In the process of discussing the issue of interpretations within history, it is a good opportunity to consider why this happens. Of course, historians themselves are diverse, located in social, cultural, racial, economic, geographic, and ideological spaces. However, whilst considering this, it is important to help students to understand that this does not mean that historians simply create their viewpoint based on a whim, but that it is also affected by the wider influence of peer review, the curation of evidence in libraries, the nature of evidence that is available for study, and other factors.

[Dr Arthur Chapman’s work](#) on this subject is a good way into thinking about this issue.

### Make links with Paper 1

Students are likely familiar with interpretations (AO3) which are assessed in Paper 1. At the start of the taught skills course, extracts of this style and approximate length could be useful in helping students focus on the skill of seek the argument of a historian and see how they contrast.

- In some instances, Paper 1 extracts are lightly adapted to ensure that they are accessible to students at an appropriate reading level under exam conditions. Preparing interpretations from a historian’s work but without adapting the language for accessibility, so that the difficulty reflects that of the types of works the students will study, can help students to make the step toward reading and understanding historian’s interpretations from published works.
- Beginning with interpretations on a topic that is comfortably familiar to all students, even if it is not the topic of the coursework, can help students to focus on the argument being made, rather than trying to understand the events being discussed.



Please note that extracts used in the taught skills course cannot be used as one of the interpretations for the coursework, though other sections of the same works may be used (see [page 14](#)).

### **Effective reading and notetaking**

For many students, the coursework may be one of the first times that they have attempted to read longer extracts, including whole chapters, from books that are not textbooks. Generally, these texts differ from A Level textbooks (which are not a valid choice for the coursework, see [page 9](#)) in style and sometimes in reading level, because textbooks are written to distil the views of historians for students in a readily accessible way. As such, students may need assistance in learning to read the text and focus on the argument.

- A grid with key questions might prove useful in helping students to identify the historian's argument and make notes. For example, the grid could ask questions like 'what is the historian's main argument or opinion on the subject?', 'does the historian agree that...?', or 'how is this argument similar or different to other extracts that you have studied?'
- Depending on the enquiry, it might help to encourage students to highlight extracts in the margin with relevant colours for themes, such as economic, political and social, or agreeing and disagreeing with a particular viewpoint.
- Where students are using articles, they may benefit from being shown how to use the abstract at the start to get a sense of the overall argument to be made before trying to read the main article.

### **Reading a selection of extracts**

Students need to use three extracts as the basis for the coursework. However, as part of their research and study, students should also read a further two to three works to expand their wider knowledge of the debates surrounding the topic (see [page 10](#)).

Students can sometimes tend to read three works and use these as the three extracts, before making a cursory consideration of two other works. This approach can limit students for two main reasons. Firstly, the first three read may not provide sufficiently different viewpoints with which to develop an evaluation, and secondly, without wider understanding of the topic, students will find it harder to write a convincing evaluation.

In order to help students to avoid this tendency, the following suggestion may assist:

- Teach students to summarise, after reading an extract, the main argument or viewpoint in as few words as possible, perhaps with as little as one or a few sentences. Does the historian identify a trend, or a main factor, or a principle consequence? This will help students to see whether extracts are similar, and help them to use the process of research to find three good extracts, rather than the first three to hand. This will also help with completing the Resource Record form.

## A level History Coursework – case study

*Dr David Brown is Curriculum Manager History at The Sixth Form College Farnborough and one of the Pearson Edexcel A level History subject specialists. In this case study he tells us a bit about the opportunities and challenges for his students in the coursework component, how he approaches delivering it, and finally some tips for teachers new to coursework. [@DBrownF6History](#)*

*The Pearson Edexcel History subject specialists are experienced teachers and examiners who can offer support on any aspect of planning and delivering our History qualifications. If you would like to talk to one of our subject specialists, including David about coursework or any other aspect of GCE History, please contact our subject advisor, Mark Battye, at [TeachingHistory@pearson.com](mailto:TeachingHistory@pearson.com).*

*Interview by Ben Armstrong*

### What do your students gain from the coursework unit?

They gain a lot from carrying out the coursework properly. One key advantage is that it is a chance to develop proper history skills. They must think about planning out a lengthy essay and developing the ability to write a lengthy essay. They develop the ability to be able to engage with interpretations. They also get to respond to feedback and develop and refine their argument to create a coherent and well-executed piece of writing. The coursework skills that students gain are different to the skills which they need to write under pressure for an unseen question in an exam. The coursework requires them to read the work of academic historians, something which should be done for the externally assessed units, but which is often not because of the pressures of time.

I am often amazed at what my students can produce when they have the time to develop their argument, evaluate their work and develop their explanations, something that they cannot do in the same way with an external exam unit.

### What questions do your students choose?

All the students at our centre carry out a coursework that is based on one broad topic of study – the causes of the First World War. In carrying out their research, students then develop their own enquiry within that topic, for example by focusing on the contribution of a particular country or factor. We find that there is a surprising amount of breadth amongst the enquiry titles that our candidates select.

### What are some of the challenges of the coursework?

For students, there are several challenges. One is simply that the length can seem daunting at first. Another challenge is to understand and set out the debate by selecting an appropriate set of interpretations. This is a new skill for most students, as they are more used to handling shorter interpretations that have been presented for them. Making good choices from the outset is crucial to creating an effective coursework enquiry. There is also a high level of reading and vocabulary required. However, we usually find that with the time to reflect and develop the work, students produce a higher standard of written work than in an exam.

For teachers, there are different challenges. One can be managing many students in a large cohort. We have a cohort of about 180 students, and this means we must work hard to keep on top of things. Another challenge is knowing the topic well and having the resources to support students. If you don't have the resources, it is important to know where you can direct students to find resources. Also, teachers need to understand the mark scheme and how the bullet points relate to the different parts of the coursework, because only by understanding this can they ensure that they are guiding their students effectively. At the same time, teachers have to be able to balance the coursework, which is worth 20% of the qualification, with the other three components, which are worth 80%.

### **How do you meet the requirements of ensuring that students have enough resources to use as interpretations and for research?**

We have collected a large range of resources which are available to our students. These have been arranged into a massive database which students can use when carrying out research. We include a wide range of different types of resources to allow students the opportunity to explore and find appropriate extracts for the coursework.

Amongst our extracts, we have a broad collection of academic books and articles which contain arguments on the causes of the First World War. All of these are suitable for use as interpretations and students have plenty of choice from which they can pick the three they wish to use. We include articles that have conflicting viewpoints within the collection, so that students can support or challenge their arguments.

The resource bank also contains articles which are about historians' arguments, for example book reviews, articles discussing how research was carried out, and reviews of how interpretations have changed over time. Whilst these are less likely to be chosen as extracts as they do not present their own arguments, we include them with our resources because it helps students to think about how historians carry out their work and to look for possible conflicting lines of argument or challenges to historians' arguments.

### **What methods and approaches have you found for teaching the coursework effectively?**

One key method is clearly dividing the coursework into three sections so that students focus on the key areas. They prepare one section comparing the debate issues between their three interpretations, a section which looks at why the interpretations differ, and finally a section evaluating the strength of the interpretations.

However, one thing that helps is the order in which we cover the coursework. We begin in the summer term of Y12. By that point, we have already covered Paper 1, sections A and B, and Paper 2. We then work on the coursework, before returning to Paper 1 for section C and then studying Paper 3. I know some centres teach Paper 1 section C before the coursework, but we find that, by doing it this way, the skills they develop at analysing the interpretations help with learning to approach this exam skill.

We start with some general teaching on the causes of the First World War, including compulsory readings which we have selected to introduce students to the topic as part of the taught element. This is a way to help students to learn how to read and understand historical writing.

We then task students with doing their own reading from the wider resource bank. Because the bank is large enough, students have the opportunity to explore conflicting interpretations. From what they choose to read, they will select their three extracts. We aim to complete this by the end of the summer term. Over the summer holiday, they then write the first section of the coursework, laying out the debate in their selected interpretations.

At the start of Y13, we then approach the third section of the coursework – evaluating the strength of the argument. We do this before considering why the arguments differ, because we have found that it helps to prevent students from falling into the trap of making weak arguments about schools of historiography, or a historian being valid because the argument matches another historian. Instead, students focus on the validity of the evidence and the arguments presented, for example considering whether the key evidence is convincing or not. Then, having evaluated the arguments, we address the middle section of the coursework, by engaging with why the interpretations differ, including the concept of historiography.

Other useful methods that we use include showing an introduction to a historical work that is from Australian history, nothing to do with the First World War. We look at how the historian has indicated their area of research and the argument that they will be presenting. This helps students to see how historians identify the purpose of their work. It also shows how historians link their work to previous research, which gets students started on understanding the concept of historiography and how it forms the basis of historians' arguments. This is useful as a starting point for the skills needed for section 2 of the coursework.

We have also made short videos on key skills like footnoting which are useful to students when they are writing their essay.

**Is there any advice that you would give to teachers who are new to the coursework?**

1. Make sure you know enough about the topic. When students indicate their choice of interpretations, you need to know if they will work or not from the outset. If there are too many shades of grey and overlap between views, it makes it hard to assess the debate and limits students' ability to engage with their argument. If you want to explore new topics, make sure you have resources and understanding to support your students.
2. Key deadlines for each section really help. Not only will this help keep your students on track, but it also picks up on ones who are struggling. You can spot who needs support rather than finding late on that a student has not kept up.
3. When we consider the initial compulsory readings during the taught element of the coursework, we find it helps to have a lesson to discuss what they have read. We ask questions like "What did you understand?", "what did you find hard?", "what vocab did you struggle with?", or "what key quotes did you select?" Students have usually read several English books by the time they finish their GCSEs but are not necessarily 'history literate'. They have likely never read a substantial history book. Once we have supported them in reading the initial extracts, we find that most students become more confident in their engagement with interpretations and they make better choices from the extracts that they read.