

GCSE History

Improving the student
experience: 2026 content
changes



Objectives



- Find out more about amendments to the Edexcel GCSE History specification content for first teaching September 2024, first assessment Summer 2026.
- Understand the rationale for these amendments to specification content.
- Consider how they impact upon teaching and learning.
- Find out more about the support available to help you understand the changes and to implement any necessary amendments to your taught course.

Review of our GCSE History qualification

- Following the feedback we received in Summer 2023 we undertook a thorough and comprehensive review of our assessments and specification content.
- We sought the views of hundreds of students and teachers through post-exam series surveys and interviews. We are very grateful to everyone who provided feedback.
- We carried out detailed analysis into how different question types have performed since 2018 and identified areas for improvement.
- We've already announced a series of changes to our assessment model which will improve the student experience in exams from 2025 onwards.
- We are now moving on to the next stage of improvements which focus on changes to the specification content.
- These content changes will come into effect for **first teaching September 2024, first exam Summer 2026**.
- As with the changes to assessment, our intention is to minimise disruption to teachers and avoid any significant 'knock-on issues' arising with published resources which schools have invested in.

Improving the student experience



Pearson Edexcel GCSE History Improvements

In response to your feedback, we are making improvements to our GCSE History qualification. We are confident that these small changes will make a big difference.

Summer 2024	Summer 2025	Summer 2026	Next reform
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Additional review of all 17 papers:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• clarity of questions• stimulus points that are accessible to a wider range of students.➤ Removal of Level 2 stimulus points cap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Improvements to the assessment model:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• better ramping on opening questions• adding choice to Paper 3• extra time on each paper• minimising disruption for teachers and students.➤ Language amendments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Review of content:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing research with teachers• Minor amendments to improve the way topics can be taught• For first teaching September 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Making GCSE History more accessible to a wider range of students.➤ Making our qualification more diverse and inclusive.



Existing support for Summer 2025 changes

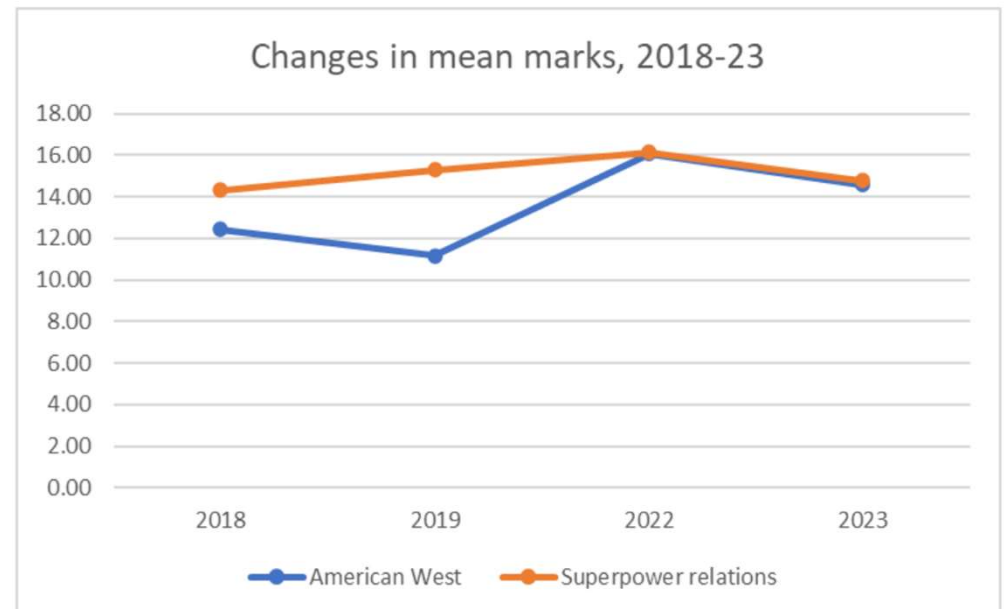
- **Guidance document** on 2025 assessment changes:
<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/Teaching-and-learning-materials/gcse-history-2025-assessment-changes-guide.pdf>
- **FAQs** on 2025 assessment changes:
<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/Teaching-and-learning-materials/gcse-history-2025-assessment-changes-faqs.pdf>
- **Sample assessment materials** updated for 2025:
<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/specification-and-sample-assessments/question-paper-and-mark-scheme-for-each-option-issue-5.zip>
- **Training event** recording on assessment changes:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOnOcSS1X7E>
- **Language changes** guidance and rationale:
<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/specification-and-sample-assessments/gcse-history-specification-language-changes-rationale-july-2023.pdf>

Summer 2026 content changes (first teaching September 2024)



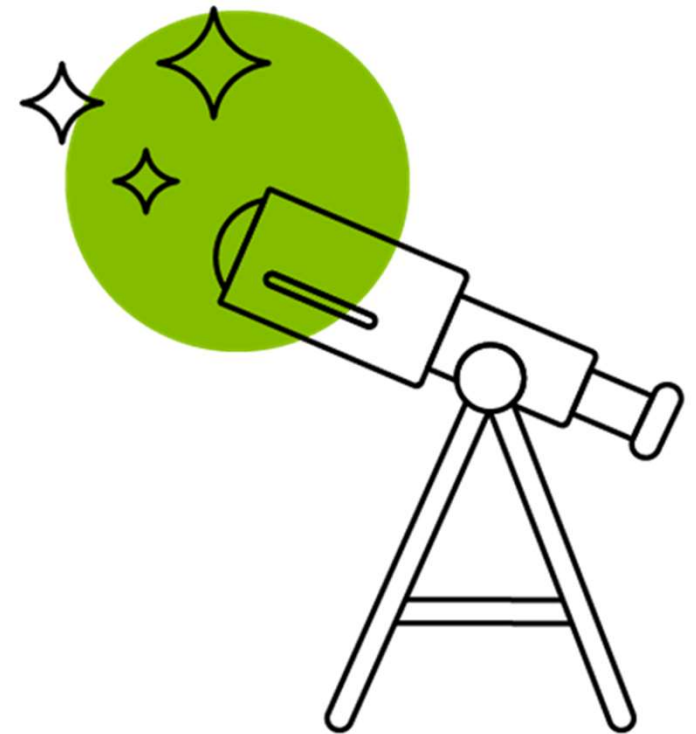
Feedback on the amount of content

- We are aware that GCSE History teachers feel there is too much content.
- The GCSE 9-1 specifications were designed to be more demanding in terms of content and assessment.
- **Significant changes must therefore wait until reform!**
- We have carried out research with teachers to see where it was possible to make **minor amendments** to topics to improve the way they can be taught.
- We did this successfully with **American West** in 2021, and whilst the disruption caused was minimal, we have seen improved student performance on this option.
- We are now ready to announce details of minor content changes to a range of topics which will apply for **first teaching September 2024, first assessment Summer 2026.**



Research with teachers

- In making these changes we have worked closely with our team of Senior Examiners as well as a number of Edexcel GCSE History teachers.
- We have carried out interviews with over 20 schools and large trusts to get detailed feedback on the proposed amendments.
- There was a general understanding that it is not possible to make significant content changes prior to reform.
- The majority of teachers interviewed felt the changes we proposed made sense and they agreed with the rationale behind them.
- We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has taken the time to help us with this research.
- We have created a survey to capture teachers' views on the 2026 content changes and we'd welcome your views.



Our approach to the content review

The following **broad principles** were applied to the content review:

- All of the options were reviewed – except Migration (new 2021) and American West (amended 2021) – changes have been made to 14 of the 17 options.
- Some options are subject to more change than others, and Paper 1 changes are largely to be found in the historic environments.
- There are three main types of amendment:
 - rewording to clarify the focus of the content and/or to flag where too much detail is not required
 - movement of content to make the structure and flow of ideas more logical
 - simplification of content, by removing unnecessary detail.
- No changes could be made which would affect the subject conditions.
- We were not able to remove significant chunks of content from any of the options – these could undermine the coherence of an option's structure / focus and could prove more disruptive than beneficial for schools.
- **No new content added, and no published resources are made obsolete!**

Updated GCSE History specification

Available now on our website:

- Issue 6 of the Edexcel **GCSE History specification** is now available to download in our website.
- We have provided a series of **detailed guidance documents**, one for each topic, which show details of the amendments and provide a rationale.
- We have created an **FAQs document** which will be updated in time to reflect any additional questions we are asked about the content changes.
- We have updated the **Getting Started teachers guide** to reflect the 2026 content changes, as well as assessment changes for 2025.

Available in the Autumn term on our website:

- We will provide updated **Schemes of Work** which will reflect the content amendments.
- We will update the **classroom topic booklets** to reflect any amendments and provide additional clarity where necessary.

Summary of topics amended

The following tables contain a summary of the number of changes on each topic:

Paper 1	Content changes
10: Crime and punishment in Britain, c1000–present, and Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the inner city	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No changes to thematic study• Updates to historic environment
11: Medicine in Britain, c1250–present, and The British sector of the Western Front, 1914–18: injuries, treatment and the trenches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to thematic study, periods 1–3• Updates to historic environment
12: Warfare and British society, c1250–present, and London and the Second World War, 1939–45	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No changes to thematic study• Update to historic environment
13: Migrants in Britain, c800–present, and Notting Hill, c1948–c1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No changes to content of thematic study or historic environment

Summary of topics amended

Paper 2	Content changes
B1: Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, c1060–88	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3
B2: The reigns of King Richard I & John, 1189–1216	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3
B3: Henry VIII and his ministers, 1509–40	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3
B4: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3
P1: Spain and the 'New World', c1490–c1555	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3
P2: British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3
P3: The American West, c1835–c1895	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No changes to content – updates made in 2021
P4: Superpower relations & the Cold War, 1941–91	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT2, KT3
P5: Conflict in the Middle East, 1945–95	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No changes to content

Summary of topics amended

Paper 3	Content changes
30: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–41	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT3
31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3, KT4
32: Mao's China, 1945–76	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3, KT4
33: The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3, KT4

Clarification of changes to content

Changes fall into one of three categories:

- To clarify the content, ensuring the teaching focus is clear and/or to flag where less detail is required.
- To re-organise content, making structure more logical – this can improve teaching and learning.
- To simplify content, by removing unnecessary detail.

How to use guidance documents:

- Content that has been removed, or moved (old position) is shown in red with a strikethrough the text.
- Any new words or content that has been moved (new position) is show in in green.
- All changes are explained in blue text underneath each key topic.

Option 31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

Key topic 1: The Weimar Republic 1918–29	
1 The origins of the Republic, 1918–19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The legacy of the First World War; The abdication of the Kaiser; the armistice and revolution; 1918–19; The situation in Germany at the end of the War; political unrest; abdication of the Kaiser; armistice and new republic.• The setting up of the Weimar Republic; The strengths and weaknesses of the new Weimar Constitution.
2 The early challenges to the Weimar Republic, 1919–23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasons for the early unpopularity of the Republic, including the 'stab in the back' theory and the key terms of the Treaty of Versailles.• Challenges to the Republic from Left and Right: Spartacists, Freikorps, the Kapp Putsch.• The challenges of 1923: hyperinflation; the reasons for, and effects of, the French occupation of the Ruhr.
3 The 'Golden Years': the recovery of the Republic, 1924–29	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasons for economic recovery, including the work of Stresemann, the Rentenmark, the Dawes and Young Plans and American loans and investment.• The impact on domestic policies of Stresemann's achievements in gaining international acceptance of Germany abroad; through the Locarno Pact and joining the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.
4 Changes in society, 1924–29	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in the standard of living; including wages; housing; unemployment insurance.• Changes in the position of women in work, politics and leisure.• Cultural changes: developments in architecture, art and the cinema.

Subtopic 1

1. We have amended bps1 and 2 to make it clear this Subtopic sets the scene for this option and that the events don't need to be studied in depth; rather it's about understanding the situation out of which Weimar came about.]

2. Added 'Weimar' into bp2 for clarity.

Subtopic 3

1. Subtopic heading amended to include the phrase 'the golden years'. This does not imply a change in teaching but it is a phrase the students should be familiar with.

2. reference to 'the impact on domestic policies' removed from bp2 to simplify teaching and focus on how Germans viewed his achievements, not their impact on domestic policies.

3. 'Kellogg Briand Pact' removed from bp2 to simplify teaching.

To clarify content...

- Some changes have been made to help teachers to better understand what was intended by the content.
- These changes are intended to avoid confusion or teaching unnecessary content.

Example: Weimar and Nazi Germany, key topic 1, sub-topic 1:

1 The origins of the Republic, 1918–19

- ~~The legacy of the First World War. The abdication of the Kaiser, the armistice and revolution, 1918–19.~~ The situation in Germany at the end of the War: political unrest, abdication of the Kaiser, armistice and new republic.
- ~~The setting up of the Weimar Republic.~~ The strengths and weaknesses of the new Weimar Constitution.

- We have amended bullet points 1 and 2 to make it clear this sub-topic sets the scene for this option and that the events don't need to be studied in depth; rather it's about understanding the situation out of which Weimar came about.
- Added 'Weimar' into bullet point 2 for clarity.

To re-organise content...

- Some changes have been made to re-group the content so that teachers may find it easier to teach and students may find it easier to revise.

Example: Weimar and Nazi Germany, key topic 3, sub-topics 2 and 3:

2 The police state	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role of the Gestapo, the SS, the SD and concentration camps.• Nazi control of the legal system, judges and law courts.• Nazi policies towards the Catholic and Protestant Churches, including the Reich Church and the Concordat.
3 Controlling and influencing attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goebbels and the Ministry of Propaganda: censorship, Nazi use of media, rallies and sport, including the Berlin Olympics (1936).• Nazi control of culture and the arts, including art, architecture, literature and film.• <u>Nazi attempts to control the Catholic and Protestant Churches: the Concordat and the Reich Church.</u>

We have moved the churches from sub-topic 2 into sub-topic 3 as it fits better as an aspect of controlling/influencing attitudes.

[NB also the simplification of content in the first two bullet points in sub-topic 2.]

To simplify content...

- Some content has been removed since it is of minor significance.
- This will help teachers in focusing on the key information which needs to be taught.

Example: British Sector of Western Front, Medicine historic environment:

1 The British sector of the Western Front, 1914–18: injuries, treatment and the trenches

- The context of the British sector of Western Front and the theatre of war in Flanders and northern France: the Ypres salient, the Somme, Arras and Cambrai. The trench system - its ~~construction and~~ organisation, including frontline and support trenches. ~~The use of mines at Hill 60 near Ypres and the expansion of tunnels, caves and quarries at Arras.~~ Significance for medical treatment of the nature of the terrain and problems of the transport and communications infrastructure.

We have simplified the teaching by removing unnecessary detail:

- We have removed reference to '*construction*' of the trench system.
- We have removed the sentence about the use of mines at Hill 60 and the expansion of tunnels, caves and quarries at Arras.

Implementing the changes: planning

How might these changes affect your planning and teaching of the course?

- Since no brand-new content has been added, all existing resources can be used.
- However, you may want to use the time before the end of the summer term to think about how these changes may affect how you teach the course from September.
- Prioritise the topic you will be teaching first from September, eg for most centres that is likely to be either the Thematic study or British depth study.
- You may want to use this change as a chance to streamline or review how you teach the options.
- You may want to review your schemes of work to ensure they reflect the content changes – do the number of lessons change in any way?
- Think about how these changes will affect your approach to:
 - order of teaching content
 - structure and focus of lessons
 - use of resources.

Implementing the changes: resources

Possible impact on lesson resources:

- Could you review your resources to ensure they are hitting the focus you need?
- Is this a chance to trim or re-organise your lesson resources?

Possible impact on published resources:

- No published resources are made obsolete by these changes, but you may want to review books in light of these changes, eg do you need to cover everything included?
- We have shared details of these changes with the major publishers, who will, in time, update their resources to reflect the changes to language, content and assessment.
- Please remember there is no need to purchase brand new resources – in making these changes our intention has been to minimise potential disruption to teachers, and to avoid any significant ‘knock-on’ issues arising with the published resources that schools have invested in.
- We are, however, confident that some minor changes can make a big difference and we are keen to implement these changes now to help improve the student experience.

Supporting you with these changes

We are providing the following support to help you get to grips with these changes:

- **Detailed guidance documents** outlining each change with a detailed rationale – available now on our website
- Updated **getting started guide**, reflecting 2025 and 2026 changes – on website.
- Updated **schemes of work**, reflecting the changes – available early Autumn term.
- Updated **topic booklets** which will help to clarify the specification content and reflect any amendments we have made – available in the early Autumn term.
- We will update other existing support materials, eg knowledge boosters, paper guides.
- We will continue to update our **FAQs** document to reflect any content-specific questions we are asked over the summer.
- We are considering running a **live-online session** in the Autumn term to reflect on these content changes, as well as the 2025 assessment and language changes and offer you an opportunity to ask questions.
- If you do have any questions about any of these changes, please email us at **teachinghistory@pearson.com**

Reminder: timetable of changes

- **First assessment Summer 2024:** removal of Level 2 stimulus points cap
- **First assessment Summer 2025:** changes to assessment model & language changes
- **First assessment Summer 2026:** specification content changes
- This table shows the different versions of the specification and sample assessment materials available to reflect these changes:

Spec and SAMs issues:

NB SAMs Issue 5 – released under padlock in May so that teachers can use for Y10 mocks.

Because the specification content changes aren't assessed until Summer 2026 we will have Issues 5 and 6 of the specification up on the website at the same time until summer 2025.

Specification Issue	Which exam series is it for?	What changes does it cover?	What was/will be the release date?
Issue 4	June 2024	Removal of Level 2 stimulus points cap	September 2023
	June 2025	Specification language changes	
Issue 5 Spec and SAMs	June 2025	Changes to assessment model – primarily SAMs, spec amends are only in terms of assessment refs	June 2024
Issue 6 Spec only	June 2026 onwards	Specification content changes	June 2024

Looking forward: next reform



GCSE specification reform

Date	GCSE reform
2001	Linear GCSE with coursework
2009	Modular GCSE with controlled assessment
2016	Linear (9-1) GCSE – 100% externally assessed

- Specification reform usually takes place every 7–8 years.
- We are not aware of any plans to update the current GCSE 9–1 specifications; we do not expect any news until at least after the general election.
- We are talking to key stakeholders such as the SHP and HA about the current GCSE History subject requirements and how they could be improved at future spec reform.
- Some of the issues likely to be addressed will be:
 - how to make the qualification more diverse and inclusive
 - how to make GCSE History more accessible to a wider range of students
 - how best to implement onscreen / on-demand assessment.
- We will keep you informed of any developments.

GCSE History support


- Mark Batty, your dedicated **History Subject Advisor**, is on hand to help whenever you need any support and advice for teaching our specification.
- You can email Mark directly at teachinghistory@pearson.com or book an appointment for a quick chat via the **History subject page**.
- Mark sends out regular **monthly updates** (sign up [here](#)) which include news and advice for Edexcel History teachers.
- We've also employ a number of **experienced teachers** as Subject Specialists to run training and provide additional support to our teachers.



entry code

GCSE History entry code calculator

The GCSE History entry code calculator has been updated for Summer 2023. Please select your paper choices through the form and your code will be generated automatically at the end.



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