



Guidance on assessment changes for 2025

Introduction

This guidance is to support teachers with understanding the changes being made to Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History. The main focus of the guidance is on the **changes being made for first assessment June 2025**, but it also includes a reminder about the change for 2024.

The guidance outlines the changes, provides examples from the question papers and mark schemes in the updated Sample Assessment Materials, and then shares links to further support available on the Edexcel website.

Making changes mid-cycle

The main opportunity for making changes to a specification and how it's assessed comes at reform, but it is possible to make changes mid-cycle. In 2021, we introduced the new Migrants in Britain thematic study, alongside some amendments to the American West period study.

The lifecycle of a specification is usually about 7–8 years. The current specification was for first teaching September 2016, and typically would be approaching the end of its lifecycle. However, we don't know when the next major reform of GCSE History will take place and we want to implement some changes as soon as possible to improve students' experience of our assessments.

Making changes to the assessment model: 2025

Following the June 2023 exam series, we undertook a thorough and comprehensive review of our assessments. We sought the views of hundreds of students and teachers through our post-exam series surveys, and we are very grateful to everyone who provided feedback. We also carried out detailed analysis into how our different question types have performed since 2018 to identify areas for improvement.

We drafted a list of proposed changes and shared these with several teachers and subject leads for comment. In addition, over 900 teachers responded to our survey on paper timings. A big thank you to everyone we spoke to for your help in developing and refining these proposals!

As a result of our research, we are now introducing some small changes which we feel will benefit all students and improve the overall exam experience. In order to implement these changes as soon as possible we have not made significant amendments to the structure of question papers or assessment types.

Our intention consequently is to minimise any potential disruption to teachers, and to avoid any significant 'knock-on' issues arising with the published resources that schools have invested in. For example, moving question types between papers or making significant amendments to question types would have caused problems with how existing resources such as textbooks are used.

We are, however, confident these minor changes can make a big difference to students.

Addressing the volume of content: 2026

We are reviewing the specification content.

We are aware that students find the volume of content in the current GCSE History specification challenging. This is a consequence of the rationale behind the GCSE (9–1) reforms, which were designed to make GCSE qualifications more demanding.

Making changes to specification content requires more lead-in time than the assessment changes we are introducing for June 2025. We cannot amend content once students have started the course; for example, students sitting their GCSEs in June 2025 started a two-year course in September 2023.



Feedback from teachers has been clear and consistent in stating that the main challenge with the volume of content lies with the number of components that students have to cover.

We cannot make any substantial changes to content in the lifetime of the current specification, because of the DfE subject content requirements, such as that the specification include a thematic study, two depth studies, a period study and a historic environment.

We are exploring some small content amendments for June 2026 (or possibly 2027). At present we are carrying out research with teachers to see if we can make minor amendments to topics to improve the way they can be taught. We are looking, for example, at areas where bullet points could be made less specific, where teachers could take a lighter-touch approach to teaching the content. We are also looking at making amendments that will make the content structure more logical, which in turn will enable examiners to ask more accessible questions.

These changes won't be substantial, but we will provide updated guidance to help teachers manage the content within the available teaching time. From initial research, we think the changes will be welcomed and will help address teacher concerns to some degree.

We will notify teachers of any changes to content in advance of two years' full teaching, so that there is time for the changes to be incorporated into planning documents and schemes of work.

Next reform

The opportunity to make significant changes can only come at next reform, because these require changes to the [GCSE History subject-level conditions and requirements](#).

As we move towards next reform, we will work with teachers and the History teaching community more widely to develop a GCSE History qualification that is more accessible to a wider range of students, more diverse and inclusive, and may in some form include onscreen and on-demand assessment. We will keep you informed of any developments. If you wish to be involved in our research as we prepare for reform, please contact Mark Battye, teachinghistory@pearson.com.

This infographic outlines our timeline as we work towards next reform.

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 (tbc)	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.

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Implementing the changes

The changes to the assessment model have been approved by Ofqual and take effect for **first teaching September 2023** and **first assessment June 2025**. This is at the same time as the specification language changes announced in September 2023. These changes therefore affect the current Year 10 at the time of writing this guidance (March 2024).

We are introducing these changes at the earliest possible opportunity. There was not enough time to design the changes, obtain Ofqual approval and apply these changes to the June 2024 exam series.

This table outlines the progression of specification Issues. Issue 4 applies to the June 2024 exam series. Issue 5 will apply to the June 2025 series, and Issue 6 (tbc) will then apply from June 2026 onwards.

The current version of the Specification and Sample Assessment Materials are always available for download from the Edexcel website [here](#).

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	June 2025	Changes to assessment model	Summer 2024
<i>Issue 6 (tbc)</i>	<i>June 2026 onwards</i>	<i>Specification content changes</i>	<i>Summer 2024</i>



Assessment model change for 2024: stimulus points cap

There is one change being implemented to the assessment model for first assessment June 2024. This concerns the **stimulus points** which are used in the following question types:

- Explain why (12 marks) – Paper 1 Q4, Paper 2B Q1b, Paper 3 Q2
- Judgement essay (16 marks) – Paper 1 Q5/6, Paper 2B Q1ci/ii
- Narrative analysis (8 marks) – Paper 2P Q2.

2 Explain why the Throckmorton Plot (1583) was a threat to Queen Elizabeth. (12)

You **may** use the following in your answer:

- Mary, Queen of Scots
- foreign threat

You **must** also use information of your own.

Removal of the Level 2 stimulus cap

In questions with stimulus points, students are required to address **three aspects of content** in order to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

In previous exam series, students in Level 2 who did not go beyond the stimulus were limited by the following 'cap' at the top of the level. For example, in the 12-mark explain why question:

2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given, showing limited analysis and with implicit or unsustainable links to the conceptual focus of the question. It shows some development and organisation of material, but a line of reasoning is not sustained. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing some knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1] <p><i>Maximum 5 marks for Level 2 answers that do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points.</i></p>
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The intention of the stimulus cap is to ensure higher-attaining students are rewarded for using wider contextual knowledge. The Level 2 cap is not supporting this intention and so we have decided to remove it at Level 2.

From Summer 2024, the **Level 2 cap will no longer exist on any question.**

This means that Level 2 students can now achieve the top of the level without going beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus. For example, looking again at the 12-mark explain why question:

2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given, showing limited analysis and with implicit or unsustainable links to the conceptual focus of the question. It shows some development and organisation of material, but a line of reasoning is not sustained. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing some knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1] <p><i>Maximum 5 marks for Level 2 answers that do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points.</i></p>
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The stimulus cap remains unchanged for higher levels (Level 3 and 4).

This should not affect how you prepare students for Summer 2024 exams: students should still aim to provide three aspects of content in questions with stimulus to access the top of Level 3 or get into Level 4 [for the causation and judgement essay questions], or to access Level 3 [for the narrative analysis questions].

The Sample Assessment Materials mark schemes were updated in September 2023 to reflect this change.

Level 3 and Level 4 stimulus cap rephrased

We have updated the wording of the stimulus cap in Level 3 and Level 4 of the mark scheme to make the requirement clearer to students.

This does **not** affect how teachers prepare students for exams in Summer 2024.

For example, this is the 12-mark causation question wording in the mark scheme:

Wording up to 2023	Wording from 2024 onwards
<i>Maximum 8 marks for Level 3 answers that do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points.</i>	<i>Maximum 8 marks for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i>
<i>No access to Level 4 for answers that do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points.</i>	<i>No access to Level 4 for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i>



Generic mark schemes – updated wording for Level 3 and Level 4 cap

Explain why – Paper 1 Q4, Paper 2B Q1b, Paper 3 Q2

Question		
4		<p>Explain why there were changes in the prison system in the period c1700–c1900.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>You may use the following in your answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Howard • hard labour <p>You must also use information of your own.</p> </div> <p>Target: Analysis of second order concepts: causation/change [AO2]; Knowledge and understanding of features and characteristics [AO1].</p> <p>AO2: 6 marks. AO1: 6 marks.</p>
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple or generalised answer is given, lacking development and organisation. [AO2] • Limited knowledge and understanding of the topic is shown. [AO1]
2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given, showing limited analysis and with implicit or unsustainable links to the conceptual focus of the question. It shows some development and organisation of material, but a line of reasoning is not sustained. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing some knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1]
3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given, showing some analysis, which is mainly directed at the conceptual focus of the question. It shows a line of reasoning that is generally sustained, although some passages may lack coherence and organisation. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing good knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1] <p><i>Maximum 8 marks for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>
4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analytical explanation is given which is directed consistently at the conceptual focus of the question, showing a line of reasoning that is coherent, sustained and logically structured. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is precisely selected to address the question directly, showing wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1] <p><i>No access to Level 4 for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>



Judgement essay – Paper 1 Q5/6, Paper 2B Q1ci/ii

Question		
1 (c) (i)		<p>'The threat of invasion was Elizabeth's main problem when she became queen in 1558.'</p> <p>How far do you agree? Explain your answer.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>You may use the following in your answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France • Elizabeth's legitimacy <p>You must also use information of your own.</p> </div> <p>Target: Analysis and evaluation of second order concepts: significance [AO2]; Knowledge and understanding of features and characteristics [AO1].</p> <p>AO2: 10 marks.</p> <p>AO1: 6 marks.</p>
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple or generalised answer is given, lacking development and organisation. [AO2] • Limited knowledge and understanding of the topic is shown. [AO1] • The overall judgement is missing or asserted. [AO2]
2	5–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given showing limited analysis and with implicit or unsustained links to the conceptual focus of the question. It shows some development and organisation of material, but a line of reasoning is not sustained. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing some knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1] • The overall judgement is given but its justification is asserted or insecure. [AO1]
3	9–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given, showing some analysis, which is mainly directed at the conceptual focus of the question. It shows a line of reasoning that is generally sustained, although some passages may lack coherence and organisation. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing good knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1] • The overall judgement is given with some justification, but some criteria selected for the required judgement are left implicit or not validly applied. [AO2] <p><i>Maximum 11 marks for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>
4	13–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analytical explanation is given which is directed consistently at the conceptual focus of the question, showing a line of reasoning that is coherent, sustained and logically structured. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is precisely selected to address the question directly, showing wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1] • Criteria for the required judgement are justified and applied in the process of reaching the overall judgement. [AO2] <p><i>No access to Level 4 for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>



Narrative analysis – Paper 2P Q2

Question		
2		<p>Write a narrative account analysing the ways in which the cattle industry grew in the years 1865–74.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>You may use the following in your answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Goodnight-Loving Trail (1866) • the introduction of barbed wire (1874) <p>You must also use information of your own.</p> </div> <p>Target: Analytical narrative (i.e. analysis of causation/consequence/change [AO2]; Knowledge and understanding of features and characteristics) [AO1]. AO2: 4 marks. AO1: 4 marks.</p>
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple or generalised narrative is provided; the account shows limited analysis and organisation of the events included. [AO2] • Limited knowledge and understanding of the events is shown. [AO1]
2	3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrative is given, showing some organisation of material into a sequence of events leading to an outcome. The account of events shows some analysis of the linkage between them, but some passages of the narrative may lack coherence and organisation. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is added, showing some knowledge and understanding of the events. [AO1]
3	6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrative is given which organises material into a clear sequence of events leading to an outcome. The account of events analyses the linkage between them and is coherent and logically structured. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing good knowledge and understanding of the key features or characteristics of the events. [AO1] <p><i>No access to Level 3 for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>

Review of stimulus points

We have successfully used stimulus in GCSE History questions since 2001.

We commissioned an independent report – following feedback from teachers – on how stimulus points have been used in previous exam series.

This report, together with statistical data such as mean marks and mark distributions, was discussed in depth with our senior examining team and they are committed to making improvements in the way we use stimulus.

We’re aware that many lower-attaining students fail to attempt essay questions and the main purpose of the stimulus should be to give such students more confidence to attempt these questions.

As part of our review of the Summer 2024 exam papers we asked reviewers and examiners to focus on the stimulus provided to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of students, and we will continue with this emphasis in future exam series.



Changes for 2025

Summary

This table summarises the key changes. These changes can be seen in Issue 5 of the Sample Assessment Materials, which will be released in summer 2024.

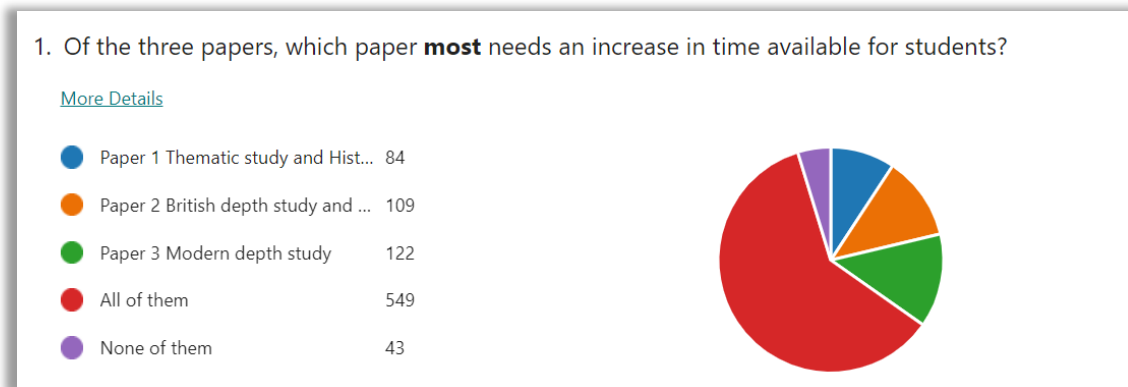
Paper/Question	Exams up to 2024	Exams from 2025 onwards
Paper 1 timing	1 hr 15 mins	1 hr 20 mins (+5 mins)
Paper 2 timing	1 hr 45 mins	1 hr 50 mins (+5 mins)
Paper 3 timing	1 hr 20 mins	1 hr 30 mins (+10 mins)
Paper 1 Q1	Q1 Describe two features of... (4)	Q1a Describe one feature of... (2) Q1b Describe one feature of... (2)
Paper 1 Q5/6	Covering at least 200 years	Covering either a complete period or at least 200 years
Paper 2B Q1	Q1 Describe two features of... (4)	Q1a Describe one feature of... (2) Q1b Describe one feature of... (2)
Paper 2B numbering	1a, 1b, 1c(i) or (ii)	1a, 1b, 2, 3 or 4
Paper 2P Q1	Q1 Explain two consequences of... (8)	Q1a Explain one consequence of... (4) Q1b Explain one consequence of... (4)
Paper 3 Q2	Q2 Explain why... (12)	Q2a or Q2b Explain why... (12)



Paper timing

Recent student and teacher surveys have raised this as a key issue.

61% of teachers (total: 912 responses) supported an increase in time on all three papers.



Total assessment time

The total assessment time is being increased from 4 hrs 20 mins to **4 hrs 40 minutes**. We continue to offer the most minutes per mark across GCSE History specifications.

When making these changes we have been mindful of the assessment burden on students in what is a congested exam timetable, and these changes reflect the majority of teacher views in our feedback.

By adding in this extra time, we do not expect students to write longer responses than they currently do.

Paper 1

The extra 5 minutes is intended to give students more reading time for the source question and/or for students to spend more time thinking / planning their extended writing responses.

Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname		Other names	
Centre Number		Candidate Number	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)			
Sample assessment materials for first teaching September 2016			
Time 1 hour 20 minutes	Paper reference	1HI0/10	
History			
PAPER 1: Thematic study and historic environment			
Option 10: Crime and punishment in Britain, c1000–present and Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the inner city			
You must have: Sources Booklet (enclosed)			Total Marks



Paper 2

The extra 5 minutes is intended to provide a better split between the two components of 55 minutes each. The total time is given on both booklet cover pages, and also on the cover sheet accompanying the two booklets; the American West example is given below.

NB students can choose to divide their time however they wish on Paper 2; our recommendation is that students divide their time equally because each component is worth the same number of marks.

Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information	
Candidate surname	Other names
Centre Number	Candidate Number
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)	
Sample assessment materials	
Afternoon (Time: 1 hour 50 minutes) (Total time for both booklets)	Paper reference 1H10/P3
History BOOKLET P3: The American West, c1835–c1895	
You must have: The corresponding booklet B	Total Marks

Paper 3

The extra 10 minutes is intended to give students more reading time for source and interpretations questions, and/or for students to spend more time thinking/planning their extended writing responses. The rationale is the same as on Paper 1, but with slightly more time because there is more material to read.

Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information	
Candidate surname	Other names
Centre Number	Candidate Number
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)	
Sample assessment materials for first teaching September 2016	
Time 1 hour 30 minutes	Paper reference 1H10/31
History PAPER 3: Modern depth study Option 31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39	
You must have: Sources/Interpretations Booklet (enclosed)	Total Marks



Opening questions

Teacher feedback and performance data suggest the opening questions on Papers 1 and 2 are not consistently accessible to a wide range of students. This is something we are keen to address to improve the accessibility of our papers.

We are splitting both the key features and consequences questions into two separate parts. This will improve the ramping on these papers and provide students with more opportunities to show their knowledge.

The changes to these opening questions do **not** require students to write any more in their responses – the space available is unchanged for each question.

Paper 1 Q1 – key features

Instead of being asked to describe two features of one aspect of content, students will be asked to describe one feature each of two separate aspects of content.

SECTION A

Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the inner city

Answer Questions 1 and 2.

1 (a) Describe **one** feature of life in the Whitechapel workhouses. (2)

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(b) Describe **one** feature of the Peabody Estate in Whitechapel. (2)

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(Total for Question 1 = 4 marks)



The mark scheme still awards one mark for a feature and one mark for supporting knowledge, but is now separated out into two question parts.

Question	
1 (a)	Describe one feature of life in the Whitechapel workhouses. Target: knowledge of key features and characteristics of the period. AO1: 4 marks.
Marking instructions	
Award 1 mark for a valid feature identified. The second mark should be awarded for supporting information. e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Families were separated (1). There were separate sections for men, women and children (1).</i>• <i>Food was basic (1). Meals consisted of gruel, bread and cheese (1).</i> Accept other appropriate features and supporting information.	

Question	
1 (b)	Describe one feature of the way the Peabody Estate helped to improve housing in the Whitechapel area. Target: knowledge of key features and characteristics of the period. AO1: 4 marks.
Marking instructions	
Award 1 mark for a valid feature identified. The second mark should be awarded for supporting information. e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Flats were available varying in size from one room to three rooms (1). The rents were reasonable, depending on how many rooms the flat had (1).</i>• <i>The Estate consisted of 11 blocks of flats, built to replace courtyard slums (1). This was a model housing estate paid for by the American, George Peabody (1).</i> Accept other appropriate features and supporting information.	



Paper 2B Q1 – key features

This is an identical change to Paper 1 Q1 above.

Answer Question 1(a), 1(b), 2 and EITHER Question 3 OR Question 4.

1 (a) Describe **one** feature of the attempts to colonise Virginia in the 1580s.

(2)

(b) Describe **one** feature of the role of the Church of England in Early Elizabethan society.

(2)

(Total for Question 1 = 4 marks)



Question	
1 (a)	Describe one feature of the attempts to colonise Virginia in the 1580s. Target: Knowledge of key features and characteristics of the period. AO1: 2 marks.
Marking instructions	
Award one mark for a valid feature identified. The second mark should be awarded for supporting information. e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Queen Elizabeth granted Raleigh permission to establish colonies (1) and Raleigh called the land Virginia after Elizabeth (1).</i>• <i>The colonists had problems with the local people (1) and it is thought that the settlers in the second attempt disappeared without trace because of conflict with the local peoples (1).</i>• <i>Colonies would challenge Spain in the Americas (1) and Raleigh hoped to be able to use the local minerals to assist his military expedition if there were conflicts with Spain (1).</i> Accept other appropriate features and supporting information.	

Question	
1 (b)	Describe one feature of the role of the Church of England in Early Elizabethan society. Target: Knowledge of key features and characteristics of the period. AO1: 2 marks.
Marking instructions	
Award one mark for a valid feature identified. The second mark should be awarded for supporting information. e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The Church of England promoted loyalty to the Queen (1), by repeating prayers of obedience and thanks for her reign in their services (1).</i>• <i>Churches organised festivals for their parishioners (1), such as May Day and Easter celebrations (1).</i>• <i>The parish church played a central role in all aspects of people's lives (1), providing religious services such as baptisms, marriages and funerals (1).</i> Accept other appropriate features and supporting information.	



Each consequence is marked separately, with unchanged mark scheme level descriptors.

Question		
1 (a)		Explain one consequence of the first Fort Laramie Treaty (1851). Target: Analysis of second order concepts: consequence [AO2]; Knowledge and understanding of features and characteristics [AO1]. AO2: 2 marks. AO1: 2 marks.
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple or generalised comment is offered about a consequence. [AO2] • Generalised information about the topic is included, showing limited knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1]
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of the period are analysed to explain a consequence. [AO2] • Specific information about the topic is added to support the explanation, showing good knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1]
<p>Marking instructions</p> <p>Markers must apply the descriptors above in line with the general marking guidance (page 3). Performance in AO1 and AO2 is interdependent. An answer displaying no qualities of AO2 cannot be awarded more than the top of Level 1, no matter how strong performance is in AO1; markers should note that the expectation for AO1 is that candidates demonstrate both knowledge <i>and</i> understanding.</p> <p>Indicative content guidance</p> <p>Answers must be credited according to candidates' deployment of material in relation to the qualities outlined in the mark scheme. While specific references are made in the indicative content below, this does not imply that these must be included; other relevant material must also be credited.</p> <p>Relevant points may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It meant that settlers on the Oregon Trail were guaranteed safety in return for a 50-year annuity, so it helped increase settlement. • It allowed roads and houses to be built, which meant that Indigenous ways of life were undermined. • It reinforced the US government belief that the West could be won by a series of laws and treaties and so paved the way for further 'agreements'. • The failure to ensure that the treaty was adhered to led to resentment among Indigenous peoples (many of whom did not agree with it) and further displacement in the face of mass immigration into the area as a result of, for example, the gold rush, so it embittered relations. 		



Question		
1 (b)		Explain one consequence of the Homestead Act (1862). Target: Analysis of second order concepts: consequence [AO2]; Knowledge and understanding of features and characteristics [AO1]. AO2: 2 marks. AO1: 2 marks.
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple or generalised comment is offered about a consequence. [AO2] • Generalised information about the topic is included, showing limited knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1]
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of the period are analysed to explain a consequence. [AO2] • Specific information about the topic is added to support the explanation, showing good knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1]
Marking instructions Markers must apply the descriptors above in line with the general marking guidance (page 3). Performance in AO1 and AO2 is interdependent. An answer displaying no qualities of AO2 cannot be awarded more than the top of Level 1, no matter how strong performance is in AO1; markers should note that the expectation for AO1 is that candidates demonstrate both knowledge <i>and</i> understanding.		
Indicative content guidance Answers must be credited according to candidates' deployment of material in relation to the qualities outlined in the mark scheme. While specific references are made in the indicative content below, this does not imply that these must be included; other relevant material must also be credited.		
Relevant points may include:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thousands of settlers moved to the West to gain access to plots of 160 acres of land as promised in the Homestead Act. • Areas of the Great Plains were farmed for the first time due to the increase in the number of settlers in areas that had not previously been settled. • The number of European immigrants increased as they could claim the land if they intended to become a US citizen. • Despite the design of the Act being to encourage small farmers taking the land, the land was often sold for profit after homesteaders had lived on it for six months. 		



We recognise that some students find the consequences question a challenging opening question on the Period study. We are exploring if we can further improve the accessibility and ‘ramping’ on this paper: the addition of some extra supporting text may help students recognise the focus of the question.

More work and research need to be done, and we are not at a point yet to reach a final decision about implementing this change. If we can proceed, we will update the SAMs and confirm its introduction date accordingly. This will **not** be introduced as early as the Summer 2025 exam series but it may still be possible to introduce from a later date for the remainder of the specification’s lifecycle.

Below are examples of what this **may** look like, subject to further research and testing.

- 1** (a) The first Fort Laramie Treaty was signed in 1851 by the US government and a council of Indigenous peoples (Plains Indians).

Explain **one** consequence of the first Fort Laramie Treaty (1851).

(4)

- (b) The Homestead Act was passed by the US government in 1862.

Explain **one** consequence of the Homestead Act (1862).

(4)



Paper 1 Q5/6

Judgement essay questions must currently cover at least 200 years: any question covering more recent events must therefore start in c1800, which can potentially make questions on the modern period more challenging compared to other periods.

From 2025, judgement essay questions must cover **either** a complete period **or** at least 200 years. This will make it possible to ask questions about the modern period only (1900–present), enabling examiners to set a broader range of accessible questions.

The first three periods are all at least 200 years long, and so unaffected.

Below is an example question and mark scheme from the updated Sample Assessment Materials.

- 6 'The main purpose of punishment during the period c1900–present was to deter people from committing crimes.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

(16)

You **may** use the following in your answer:

- capital punishment
- the introduction of borstals

You **must** also use information of your own.

(Total for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology = 4 marks)

(Total for Question 6 = 20 marks)



Question		
6		<p>'The main purpose of punishment during the period c1900-present was to deter people from committing crimes.'</p> <p>How far do you agree? Explain your answer.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>You may use the following in your answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capital punishment • the introduction of borstals <p>You must also use information of your own.</p> </div> <p>Target: Analysis and evaluation of second order concepts: change and continuity [AO2]; Knowledge and understanding of features and characteristics [AO1]. AO2: 10 marks. AO1: 6 marks. Spelling, punctuation, grammar and the use of specialist terminology (SPaG): up to 4 additional marks.</p>
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple or generalised answer is given, lacking development and organisation. [AO2] • Limited knowledge and understanding of the topic is shown. [AO1] • The overall judgement is missing or asserted. [AO2]
2	5–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given showing limited analysis and with implicit or unsustained links to the conceptual focus of the question. It shows some development and organisation of material, but a line of reasoning is not sustained. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing some knowledge and understanding of the period. [AO1] • The overall judgement is given but its justification is asserted or insecure. [AO2]
3	9–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation is given, showing some analysis, which is mainly directed at the conceptual focus of the question. It shows a line of reasoning that is generally sustained, although some passages may lack coherence and organisation. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing good knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1] • The overall judgement is given with some justification, but some criteria selected for the required judgement are left implicit or not validly applied. [AO2] <p><i>Maximum 11 marks for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>
4	13–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analytical explanation is given which is directed consistently at the conceptual focus of the question, showing a line of reasoning that is coherent, sustained and logically structured. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is precisely selected to address the question directly, showing wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1] • Criteria for the required judgement are justified and applied in the process of reaching the overall judgement. [AO2] <p><i>No access to Level 4 for answers that do not address three or more aspects of content.</i></p>



Marks for SPaG		
Performance	Mark	Descriptor
	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learner writes nothing. The learner's response does not relate to the question. The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, e.g. errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.
Threshold	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy. Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate.
Intermediate	2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy. Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall. Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate.
High	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall. Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.
<p>Marking instructions</p> <p>Markers must apply the descriptors above in line with the general marking guidance (page 3).</p> <p>Performance in AO1 and AO2 is interdependent. An answer displaying no qualities of AO2 cannot be awarded more than the top of Level 1, no matter how strong performance is in AO1; markers should note that the expectation for AO1 is that candidates demonstrate both knowledge <i>and</i> understanding.</p> <p>The first two bullet points [AO1 and AO2] account for 3 of the 4 marks in the level and are equally weighted; the third bullet point [AO2] accounts for the remaining mark. Once the level has been found, there are two steps to follow to determine the mark within the level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markers should consider bullet points 1 and 2 together. Strong performance (for the level) in both would be awarded all 3 marks, while 2 marks may be achieved by stronger performance in either bullet point; weak performance would be awarded 1 mark. The fourth mark in each level is allocated to the bullet point 3 and should be considered independently of the award of the other marks. <p>Indicative content guidance</p> <p>Answers must be credited according to candidates' deployment of material in relation to the qualities outlined in the mark scheme. While specific references are made in the indicative content below, this does not imply that these must be included; other relevant material must also be credited. The grouping of points below does not imply that this is how candidates are expected to structure their answers.</p> <p>Relevant points that support the statement may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital punishment was reported in the national newspapers in order to publicise the punishment and deter criminals from committing capital crimes. At the start of the twentieth century, prisons were deliberately harsh in order to deter people from committing crimes. Electronic tagging is used to restrict a criminal's activities and this can have a deterrent effect on other people. Community service is carried out in public and therefore can act as a deterrent to others. <p>Relevant points to counter the statement may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of capital punishment was reduced and then suspended in 1965 and abolished in 1998, partly because it was felt that it did not have a sufficiently deterrent effect. Borstals were set up specifically for young offenders to reform and rehabilitate them. Rehabilitation programmes in prison are used to provide training and to reform prisoners. Fines on a sliding scale are used to punish offenders but have limited deterrent effect. 		



Paper 2B numbering

The change to the question structure of Paper 2B provided an opportunity to apply more consistent question numbering on this paper.

The original numbering was a hangover from the start of the specification when the Period study and two British depth studies were provided in the same booklet.

Exams up to 2024	Exams from 2025 onwards
Q1a – describe two key features (4 marks)	Q1a and 1b – describe one key feature (2 × 2 marks)
Q1b – explain why (12 marks)	Q2 – explain why (12 marks)
Q1ci/ii – judgement essay (16 marks)	Q3/4 – judgement essay (16 marks)

Paper 3 Q2

On Paper 3 many students have told us they are required to learn and revise a lot of content that is not assessed, due to the skills-based enquiry focus of the assessment.

Students will now be given a choice of two explain why... questions to answer. This is to give them more opportunity to show their knowledge and improve the overall balance of content assessed on this paper.

Answer EITHER Question 2(a) OR Question 2(b).

EITHER

2 (a) Explain why there was opposition in Germany to the Treaty of Versailles (1919). (12)

You **may** use the following in your answer:

- military terms
- territorial terms

You **must** also use information of your own.

OR

(b) Explain why Hitler was able to create a dictatorship in the period February 1933 to August 1934. (12)

You **may** use the following in your answer:

- the Reichstag fire
- the Night of the Long Knives

You **must** also use information of your own.

(Total for Question 2 = 12 marks)

The mark scheme requirements are unchanged: an identical generic mark scheme is simply repeated for Q2a and Q2b.



Our approach to question setting

The changes to our assessment model from 2025 – coupled with the extended length of the current specification lifecycle – provide an opportunity to remind teachers of important elements of how questions are set.

Over the lifetime of the specification, our examiners aim to assess different parts of the specification content to ensure fair and even coverage.

However, we want to remind teachers that examiners can set questions across **all** of the content that is available **each** exam series. They do not set questions only on parts of the content that have not been assessed before.

If examiners were to set questions only on material that had not previously been assessed, there would be an element of predictability about which topics might be covered in exam questions, a predictability that would only grow over time. This would undermine the fairness of assessments.

Questions in future exam series may therefore assess similar content. Depending on the question style, either similar or identical wording may be used. It is also possible that an individual source or interpretation may be used more than once in the lifetime of the specification.

Specification language changes

This is reminder of the language changes being applied (announced last year).

- Language changes only – no changes to content.
- These changes affect certain terms which are now considered outdated.
- The most significant changes concern the terms ‘slaves’ and ‘Plains Indians’, which appear in Period study options P1, P2 and P3.
- The term Indigenous peoples will be glossed in live exam series from 2025.
- In any exam series, students are credited for any relevant and appropriate terms that they use.
- Publishers have been notified and are planning to update resources in due course.

Guidance available

- [Slides](#) from September 2023 event
- [Changes being made](#) (using track changes)
- [Rationale](#) behind the changes
- [FAQs](#)

How these assessment changes may affect teaching

One key aspect of these changes is that we want to minimise potential disruption for teachers and students. Teachers may wish to do some or all of the following to help with applying these changes to their teaching of GCSE History:

- increase paper times for mock papers to match the new timings for live papers from 2025.
- review your guidance for students about how they allocate time on each paper – for example, some students may use the extra time on Papers 1 and 3 for understanding the sources and interpretations, whereas other students may use it to plan their extended writing answers.
- key features questions – students will have more opportunities to show their knowledge, and they will also need to show less knowledge about each aspect of content being assessed.
- consequences questions – as with key features, students will have more opportunities to show their knowledge, and they will also need to show less knowledge about the consequences of each event or development being assessed.



Further support

FAQs

As well as this guidance document, a set of FAQs is available on the website ([here](#)).

Training

We ran a live online event on **Thursday 14 March 2024**, to run through the changes in a bit more detail and for you to ask questions and give us your feedback. A recording of the event, along with the slides, is available on the Edexcel website [here](#).

Free support materials

These are being reviewed and updated, and we will notify you when the changes are complete; we are aiming for April 2024. Materials affected include the getting started guide, the paper guide, and the topic booklets.

We have a useful general guide to finding things on the website [here](#).

Endorsed textbooks

We have kept endorsed publishers notified of these changes and they will be updating their resources in due course. We have also designed changes that will minimise disruption with how the current textbooks are used.

Supporting students

Whilst we have kept the changes to a minimum to avoid disruption, we are aware that introducing changes to assessments in 2025 does carry some risk in terms of ensuring all students are aware of and understand the changes. We will ensure these changes are clearly communicated to all centres and we will create student-focused guidance in due course.

If you have any questions, please contact Mark Battye, our History subject advisor:

[History qualification page](#)

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Sign up to receive monthly subject advisor updates [here](#).

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- > [Access the history community](#) 
- > [Sign up to receive subject advisor updates](#)



Appendix

The Sample Assessment Materials are being updated for all options, and Issue 5 will be available on the website in summer 2024.

Below is a list of the extra questions on each option.

The full set of Sample Assessment Materials for 2025 can be found on the website [here](#).

Paper 1 – new Q1b (second key feature question)	
Crime and punishment	Describe one feature of the Peabody Estate in Whitechapel.
Medicine in Britain	Describe one feature of the effects of poison gas attacks on soldiers.
Warfare and British society	Describe one feature of the V2 attack on Deptford in 1944.
Migrants in Britain	Describe one feature of the British Black Panther movement in Notting Hill.
Paper 2B – new Q1b (second key feature question)	
Anglo-Saxon and Norman England	Describe one feature of Harold Godwinson's embassy to Normandy.
Richard & John	Describe one feature of the role of William Marshal as Protector.
Henry VIII and his ministers	Describe one feature of the Treaty of London (1518).
Early Elizabethan England	Describe one feature of the role of the Church of England in Early Elizabethan society.
Paper 2P – new Q1b (second consequence question)	
Spain and the 'New World'	Explain one consequence of the Spanish settlement in the Caribbean in the years 1496–1512.
British America	Explain one consequence of the introduction of the Sugar Act (1764).
The American West	Explain one consequence of the Homestead Act (1862).
Superpower relations	Explain one consequence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979).
Conflict in the Middle East	Explain one consequence of the Syrian support for Fatah in the years 1964–67.
Paper 3 – new Q2b (second explain why question)	
Russia and the Soviet Union	Explain why ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union were persecuted in the years 1924–41.
Weimar and Nazi Germany	Explain why Hitler was able to create a dictatorship in the period February 1933 to August 1934.
Mao's China	Explain why religion was attacked by the CCP in Mao's China.
The USA, 1954–75	Explain why US involvement in Vietnam increased in the years 1954–64.

NB The following questions have also been amended in the SAMs: Crime Q1a, Q4, Q6; Warfare Q4.