



GCSE History changes for 2025 and 2026: summary guidance

Summary of the changes, when they take effect and key support available

Specification Issue	Exam series	Changes covered	Release date	Key support
Issue 4 <i>(no longer live – all included in later issues)</i>	June 2024	Removal of Level 2 stimulus points cap	Sept 2023	Subject advisor update (15 Sept 2023)
	June 2025	Specification language changes to address outdated/problematic terms		Subject advisor update (10 July 2023) Track changes on Rationale FAQs Slides from PD event (5 Sept 2023)
Issue 5	June 2025	Changes to assessment model	June 2024	Subject advisor update (26 Feb 2024) Guide FAQs Recorded PD event (14 March 2024)
Issue 6	June 2026 onwards	Specification content changes	June 2024	Subject advisor update (14 June 2024) Topic guidance FAQs Recorded PD event (June 2024)

Specific summaries of the language, assessment and content changes are on the following pages.



Summary of the language changes, first assessment June 2025

We reviewed our GCSE History specification for sensitivity of language and identified a number of terms which are now considered outdated and problematic. In updating the language, **no content changes** have been made.

The most significant amendments affect options P1, P2 and P3, and concern the terms **slave**, **Plains Indians** and **Native Americans**. Other changes are being made as well; the impact of these changes in other options is very minor, but important principles lie behind them.

Please refer to the [Rationale](#) for more detailed guidance, including glossing of Plains Indians in live series.

Options with changes	
10: Crime and punishment in Britain, c1000–present	<i>minor impact</i>
13: Migrants in Britain, c800–present	<i>very minor impact</i>
B2: The reigns of King Richard I & John, 1189–1216	<i>very minor impact</i>
B4: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88	<i>very minor impact</i>
P1: Spain and the 'New World', c1490–c1555	e.g., 'New World', native, Indians
P2: British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution	e.g., slaves, Native Americans
P3: The American West, c1835–c1895	e.g., Plains Indians
31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39	<i>very minor impact</i>
33: The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad	<i>very minor impact</i>



Summary of the assessment model changes, first assessment June 2025

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 1 assessment overview (from 2025)

	Total marks	AO	Question description	Example question stem
Section A: historic environment				
1(a)	2	AO1	Description of a feature	Describe one feature of...
1(b)	2	AO1	Description of a feature	Describe one feature of...
2(a)	8	AO3	Analysis and evaluation of source utility	How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into...?
2(b)	4	AO3	Framing historical questions	How could you follow up Source [A/B] to find out more about...?
Section B: thematic study				
3	4	AO1/ AO2	Comparison of similarity and/or difference (over time)	Explain one way in which xxxx was similar to yyyy
4	12	AO1/ AO2	Explanation of the process of change	Explain why... <i>+ two stimulus points</i>
5/6	16 + 4 SPaG	AO1/ AO2	Judgement relating to one of the following: the extent of change; patterns of change; process of change; impact of change	'[Statement.]' How far do you agree? Explain your answer. <i>+ two stimulus points</i>



Paper 2 assessment overview (from 2025)

	Total marks	AO	Question description	Example question stem
Booklet P: period study				
1(a)	4	AO1 AO2	Explanation of consequence	Explain one consequence of...
1(b)	4	AO1 AO2	Explanation of consequence	Explain one consequence of...
2	8	AO1 AO2	Writing an analytical narrative	Write a narrative account analysing... <i>+ two stimulus points</i>
3	16	AO1 AO2	Explanation of importance	Explain two of the following: The importance of...
Booklet B: British depth study				
1(a)	2	AO1	Description of key feature	Describe one feature of...
1(b)	2	AO1	Description of key feature	Describe one feature of...
2	12	AO1 AO2	Explanation of causation	Explain why... <i>+ two stimulus points</i>
3/4	16	AO1 AO2	Judgement relating to one of the following: causation, consequence, change, continuity, significance, similarity and difference	['Statement.'] How far do you agree? Explain your answer. <i>+ two stimulus points</i>

Paper 3 assessment overview (from 2025)

	Total marks	AO	Question description	Example question stem
Section A				
1	4	AO3	Making inferences from sources	Give two things you can infer from Source A about...
2(a) or (b)	12	AO1 AO2	Explanation of causation	Explain why... <i>+ two stimulus points</i>
Section B				
3(a)	8	AO3	Evaluation of source utility	How useful are Sources B and C for an enquiry into...?
3(b)	4	AO4	Analysis of interpretations for difference of view	What is the main difference between the views?
3(c)	4	AO4	Explanation of a reason for a difference of view	Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about...
3(d)	16 + 4 SPaG	AO4	Evaluation of a historical interpretation	How far do you agree with Interpretation 2 about...?



Summary of the content changes by topic, first assessment June 2026

The ‘Summary of key changes’ column below is an attempt to pick out the more notable changes in each option for easy reference, but you **must** refer to the specification and the content guidance documents for the full lists of changes and the rationales behind them.

- [Issue 6 of the specification](#)
- [Content guidance documents \(zipped file\)](#)

NB Where “clarification of wording” appears below, this is where the wording has been edited to clarify the intended focus of the content, and frequently to indicate where too much detail is not required.

Paper 1 Thematic study /HE	Content changes	Summary of key changes
All four thematic studies	Key factors in process of change	Now listed as bullet points to make them more prominent.
10: Crime and punishment in Britain, c1000–present, and Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the inner city	No changes to thematic study	n/a
	Updates to historic environment	Removal of growth of socialism and anarchism Reordering and clarification of content wording
11: Medicine in Britain, c1250–present, and The British sector of the Western Front, 1914–18: injuries, treatment and the trenches	Updates to thematic study, periods 1–3	Removal of Hippocrates Rewording/reordering of medieval treatment and care Influence of Nightingale on nursing and hospitals in Britain only
	Updates to historic environment	Removal of trench construction, Hill 60, and expansion of tunnels, caves and quarries at Arras FANY changed to nurses Rewording of medical treatment bullet point
12: Warfare and British society, c1250–present, and London and the Second World War, 1939–45	No changes to thematic study	n/a
	Update to historic environment	Removal of measures to safeguard art and buildings
13: Migrants in Britain, c800–present, and Notting Hill, c1948–c1970	No changes to content of thematic study or historic environment	Option new in 2021
Paper 2 British depth study	Content changes	Summary of key changes
B1: Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, c1060–88	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3	Clarification of wording, e.g., focus for power of house of Godwin, rising against Tostig, and Stigand and Lanfranc Combination of Anglo-Saxon resistance bullet points – study collectively rather than individually



B2: The reigns of King Richard I & John, 1189–1216	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., on crusades, and focus of outbreak of First Barons' War in 1215
B3: Henry VIII and his ministers, 1509–40	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., over focus of influence of Boleyns, and king's marriages Removal of influence of Seymours (Jane's influence only), and reasons for failure of Pilgrimage of Grace
B4: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., relations with Spain, English involvement in Netherlands, the Armada, and the attempted colonisation in Virginia Removal of consequences of Armada, and universities
Paper 2 Period study	Content changes	Summary of key changes
P1: Spain and the 'New World', c1490–c1555	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3	Removal of discovery of cotton and tobacco, first conflict at Samana, role of Pizarro in Panama, and attacks on Spanish treasure fleets in c1555 Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., Spanish base at Panama, and discovery of silver in Bolivia and Mexico
P2: British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., impact of piracy primarily economic, reference to Great Awakening and revivalist preachers, opposition to British policies 1765–75 Removal of introduction of tea, and British monopoly on supplying enslaved people to Spanish colonies
P3: The American West, c1835–c1895	No changes to content	Updates made in 2021
P4: Superpower relations & the Cold War, 1941–91	Updates to KT2, KT3	Clarification of wording on Cuban revolution Reordering and rewording of Key topic 3 to improve narrative flow, e.g., dates added to headings for sub-topics 1 and 3, amended heading for sub-topic 2, focus of SALT 1, Helsinki Accords and SALT 2, significance of Reagan and Gorbachev in reducing tensions Removal of INF Treaty (1987)
P5: Conflict in the Middle East, 1945–95	No changes to content	



Paper 3 Modern depth study	Content changes	Summary of key changes
30: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–41	Updates to KT1, KT3	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., first two sub-topics on early 1917 and February Revolution, and emergence of Stalin as leader
31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39 NB Minor erratum to Key topic 3 (wording of Nazi policies towards Churches bullet point)	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3, KT4	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., KT1 – origins of Weimar Republic in 1918–19, use of term Golden Years, Stresemann’s achievements abroad KT2 – Mein Kampf, presidential and Reichstag elections 1932, and reasons for Hitler becoming chancellor KT3 – Nazi policies towards Churches Removal of content: KT1 – Kellogg-Briand Pact, specific details of standard of living KT2 – early growth of Nazi Party, failure of successive govts to deal with unemployment 1929–32 KT3 – the SD, judges and law courts
32: Mao’s China, 1945–76	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3, KT4	Reordering and clarification of wording, e.g., Civil War, KT2 (see below), end of the Cultural Revolution, and role of Jiang Qing Most significant changes to improve the flow are in Key topic 2: The communes sub-topic content has been moved into the Great Leap Forward and (new) Economic reform sub-topics
33: The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad	Updates to KT1, KT2, KT3, KT4	Clarification and reordering of wording, e.g., Key topic 1 – Brown v Topeka (reasons for and significance of added), Little Rock High School (reasons for and key events added), Dixiecrats Key topic 2 – Freedom Riders (reasons for, key events and significance of), Johnson and Kennedy and the CRA Key topic 3 – Escalation of the conflict in Vietnam under Johnson Key topic 4 – features of peace talks Removal of Dien Bien Phu and end of French rule in Vietnam



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"> 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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