

GCE History coursework guidance document  
Suggested approaches to part A and part B questions

This guidance is provided in addition to that already published in Getting Started. It should be emphasised that these are examples of suggested approaches which may be adopted, not a model which must be adopted.

Part A

In Part A students need to assess the significance of a chosen event or individual or factor in the short-term.

By short-term we mean a period of less than 20% of the total period ie usually 20 years or less. Part A questions could cover a very short period if there is a lot going on, for example in Russia in 1917.

Part A is not intended to be an exercise in relative significance although this approach, if done successfully, may also enable students to meet the assessment objectives, BUT the emphasis must remain on the chosen aspect and the short-term.

In Part A students focus on **one** individual, event or factor in the period that interests them and attempt to assess the significance of their chosen example.

In order to investigate significance students could consider their chosen aspect in terms of a range of concepts:

its impact  
its consequences  
the difference it made  
what it brought about.

Students could be introduced to the concepts required through an everyday example, eg:

*What was the significance of their move from primary to secondary school?*

They will need to apply criteria by which to measure it's significance:

- For example, did it **make new demands** on them in terms of travel and the length of the school day?
- Did it **provide new opportunities** to make friends?
- Was its **consequence** that they lost touch with former friends?
- Did it **result in a change of direction** in terms of the school subjects they favoured?
- Was its **impact** in the short term to make them more confident or more hesitant about learning?

Two important points emerge from this:

Significance can only be measured against clear criteria (eg those emboldened above). There is no requirement to consider relative significance here (eg in answering the question students are not being asked to consider whether the move from primary to secondary school was more significant than the move from nursery to primary school). Instead, in assessing significance in the short term, students could think in terms of forming a judgement eg mainly significant in... / chiefly significant in...(eg in enabling new friendships to be formed).

## Sources in part A

The generic mark scheme for part A can be found on pages 96-102 of the specification.

There are two mark schemes for part A:

One mark scheme for AO1 - knowledge and understanding

*Do students know it and can they shape it (ie focus their information on the question)?*

One mark scheme for AO2 - source analysis and evaluation

*Students will be very familiar with the skills involved from AS Unit 2*

In Part A students need to use both secondary sources and sources contemporary to the period to support their answers.

Students should use around 4-5 contemporary sources and 3-4 secondary sources in Part A.

The sources should be used with own knowledge and integrated into a sustained and focussed assessment of the significance of the chosen factor. Essentially this exercise combines the skills students will have already developed in unit 2. They are asked to combine the skills of cross-referencing and evaluation of sources contemporary to the period required in unit 2(question a), with skills of examining and integrating secondary sources in the process of discussing claims required in 2(question b).

A key part of the assessment criteria for part A is selection (see generic mark scheme level descriptors). This is an enquiry and as such, students are expected to select material which is appropriate to their answer.

In practice teachers can provide students with resource packs provided they contain a wide range of sources from which students can select. We also recommend that teachers provide students with guidance on websites and other publications to encourage them to do further reading and find sources of their own.

There are no restrictions on students doing the same question in part A. But teachers should note that unit 4 should not be turned into a taught course which restricts the opportunities for students to pursue independent enquiries.

An example of a Level 4 part A response can be found in Getting Started page 73.

In this extract the student is using sources with discrimination, considering the evidence in the light of the values and assumptions of the society from which it is drawn. Note for example the observations on the Hunter Commission's findings.

*Dyer's own report, as one would expect, alone defends the massacre because of the threat to order. He focuses on the problems of public disorder and protest against the Rowlatt Acts, whilst at the same time ignoring the fact that the powers granted under the Act were quickly found to be unnecessary and the Acts were repealed. His report is partially supported by Jan Morris, who suggests the crowd at Amritsar was potentially dangerous. Rosemary Rees disagrees, emphasising the relaxed nature of the crowds, who were playing cards, throwing dice and generally relaxing in the warm sun. She points out that the crowd, although large, was certainly unarmed. Churchill and the Hunter Commission both condemn the actions of Dyer, but clearly separate them from the British government. This suggests they believe that until this incident, British rule had been beneficial. This reflects a narrow focus on events. The Hunter Commission blames Dyer, thus legitimising British rule by making Dyer take personal responsibility. In doing so, it ignores the context of the massacre: specifically the 1919 Government of India Act which caused protest throughout the Punjab where hopes had been high, in the wake of the Chelmsford-Montagu reforms, that Home Rule would follow.*

More guidance and exemplification can be found in Getting Started on page 51 onwards.

## Part B

In part B students are required to focus on the whole period. Part B questions can focus on either:

**The causes of change  
(the factors bringing about change)**

Key question: Why did it change?

Key features: Considering a range of key factors that bring about change and deciding on their relative significance.

OR

**The nature of change  
(patterns of change/key turning points/extent of change)**

Key question: What changed? What was different? What were the key turning points?

Key features: Describing patterns of change and spotlighting key moments of change in the chronology and deciding on their relative significance.

In order to produce focussed responses which directly address the question, students should be clear which of the above tasks they are undertaking.

Are students explaining why something changed? (ie factors)

Or

Are students exploring how much something changed? (ie patterns/extent)

## Are students explaining why something changed? (ie factors)

Examples from everyday life may be helpful in clarifying for students the concepts with which they are dealing and providing some approaches to focused analysis.

In dealing with the causes of change they should identify some clear **factors** which are the **drivers** of change:

For example in the theme of an individual's independence of action, the following factors could be identified as limiting independence at different times to different degrees.

- State of health
- Personal wealth
- Responsibility for dependants

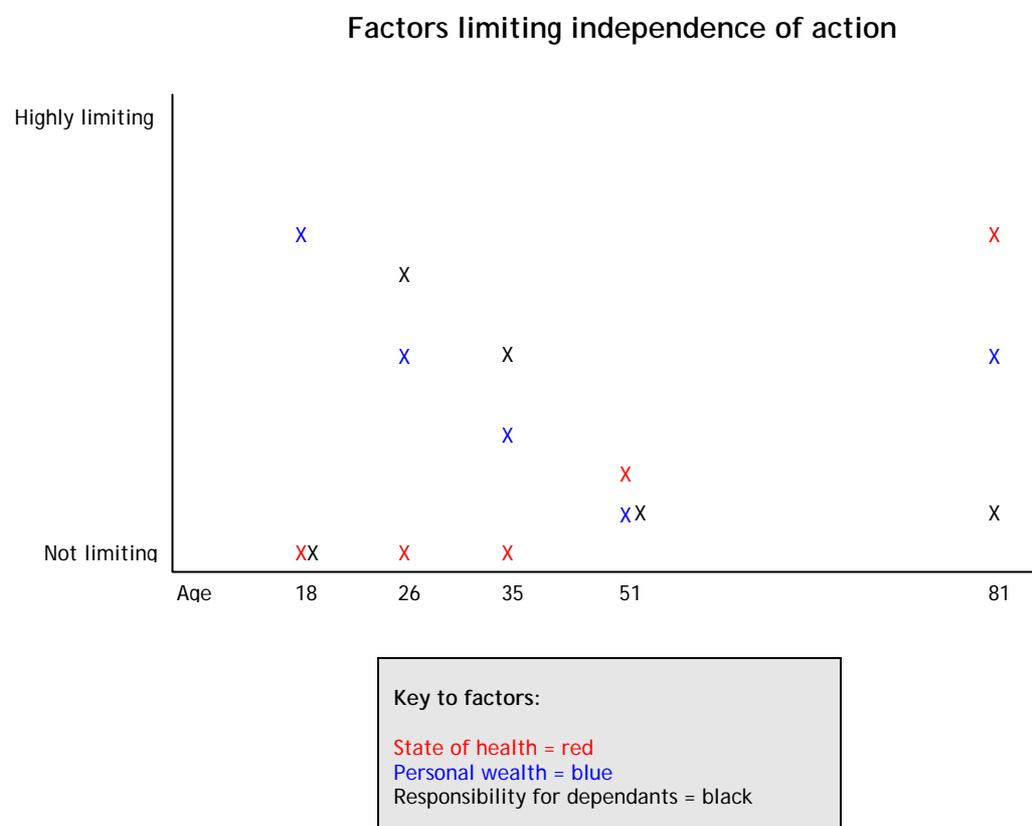
It may be helpful for students to see these issues visually in the form of a simple diagram in which different factors are highlighted in different colours.

The influence of these factors will be different at different points in life and could be plotted on a graph for example at age 18, 26, 51, 81. They will also be interdependent to some extent and the plotting exercise can elicit discussion which draws this out.

Other factors and age points could be added.

The graph might look something like this, though it will of course be different for different individuals; this is a hypothetical case.

Diagram A



The same exercise can then be carried out using historical examples.

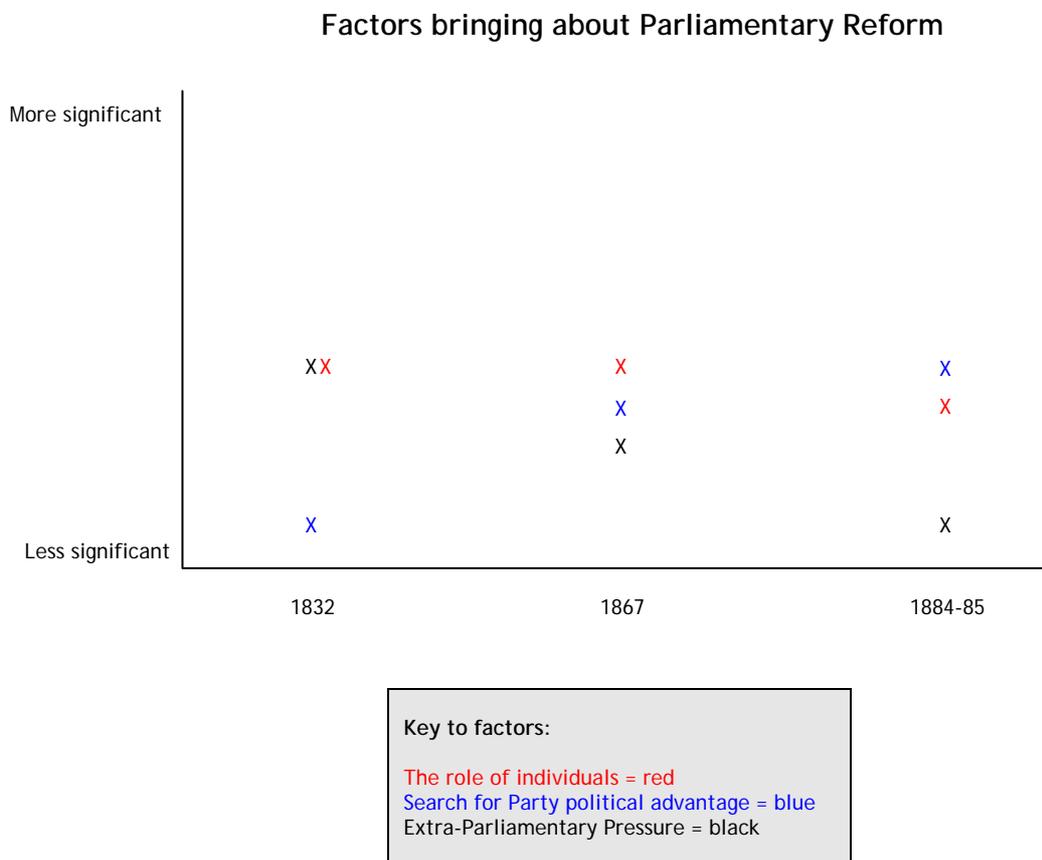
The challenge of positioning the X (exploring the influence of a factor) prompts students to provide the evidence to justify their decisions, and hence to select purposefully as part of their enquiry.

For example in the case of Representation and Democracy in Britain 1830-1930, students could be challenged to consider the validity of the following graphs drawn to show...

The causes of change: the relative significance of the following three factors in bringing about parliamentary reform.

- Extra-parliamentary pressure
- The search for party-political advantage
- The role of individuals

### Diagram B



Of course - the significance of key factors in bringing about key changes and their relative positioning is a matter of debate and the evidence should be examined. It is this debate which good assignments will explore.

This simple format could then be applied to any of the following questions and help form the basis of the taught overview course, highlighting the key factors that were the drivers of change over the period:

#### Some examples

**How significant was the role of individuals in the making of modern Russia in the years 1856-1964?**

This question is asking why something changed - it is not asking how much it changed. In this case students will explore **why Russia changed** over the period and consider the extent to which 'individuals' as an overall factor were influential vs other factors for example economic factors, social factors, war, technology, ideology etc... students should consider at least two other factors.

**Assess the significance of the development of new technology in influencing warfare throughout the years c1845-1991.**

This question is asking why something changed - it is not asking how much it changed. In this question students will explore **why warfare changed** over the period and consider the extent to which new technology was influential vs other factors for example individuals, government policy, social attitudes, economic factors, industrialisation etc... students should consider at least two other factors.

**Assess the significance of economic factors in contributing to the growth of the United States as a powerful, federal nation state in the period 1877-1981.**

This question is asking why something changed - it is not asking how much it changed. In this question students will explore **why the United States changed** over the period and consider the extent to which economic factors were influential vs other factors for example individuals, government policy, war, social change, industrialisation etc... students should consider at least two other factors.

## Are students exploring how much something changed? (ie patterns/extent)

### Patterns of change

In the case of the patterns of change, using an everyday example, students could identify threads which can be traced through an individuals lifespan and identify key points which marked change. These are in effect criteria by which change is measured.

For example, they could take the threads of:

- personal independence of action, and
- personal fulfilment.

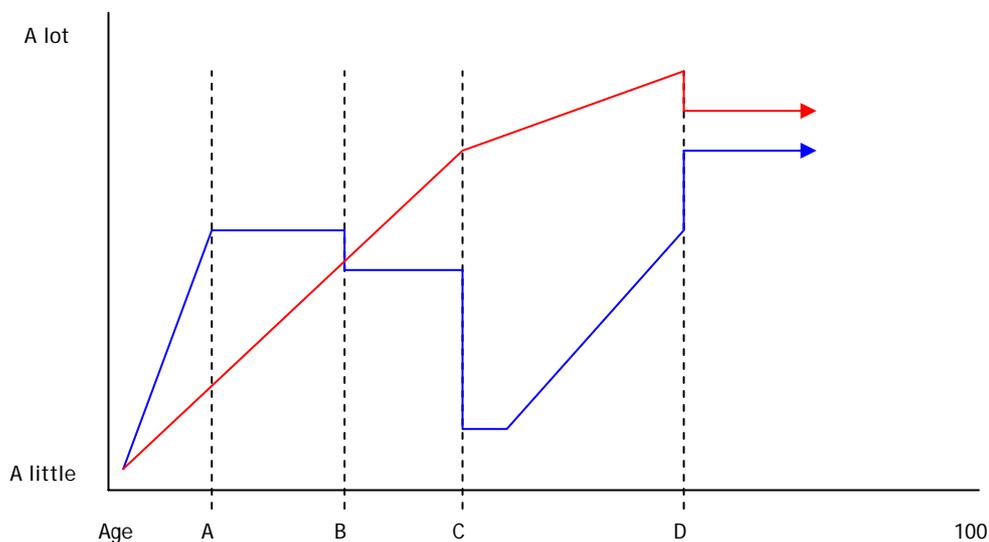
The position of these threads will change at key moments in a life. They will sometimes move in different directions. The extent to which the pattern changes will indicate the significance of the key point in time.

It may be helpful for students to see these issues visually in the form of a simple diagram in which different threads are highlighted in different colours.

The graph might look something like this though it will of course be different for different individuals; this is a hypothetical case.

### Diagram C

#### Key turning points in everyday life



#### Key to criteria:

Changes in the thread of personal independence = blue  
Changes in the thread of sense of personal fulfilment = red

#### Key to turning points:

A = leaving home age 18  
B = wedding age 24  
C = birth of first child age 26  
D = retirement age 65

The same exercise can then be carried out using historical examples. The challenge of moving the thread (tracing the patterns and turning points) prompts students to provide the evidence to justify their decisions, and hence to select purposefully as part of their enquiry.

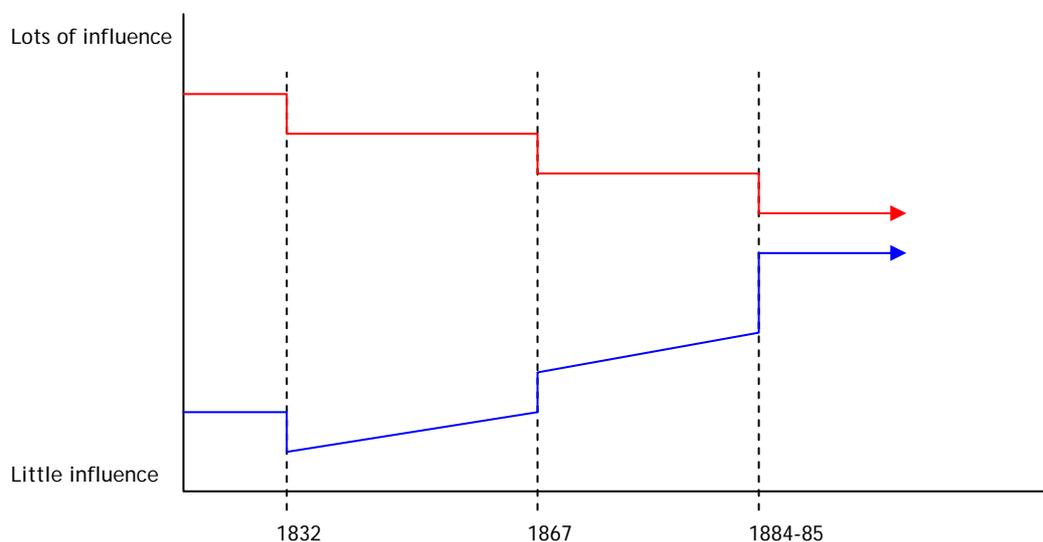
For example in the case of Representation and Democracy in Britain 1830-1930, students could be challenged to consider the validity of the following graph drawn to show...

Key turning points: The patterns of change in the following two threads

- The extent of the political influence of the working-class voter
- The extent of the political influence of the aristocracy.

### Diagram D

#### Key turning points in representation and democracy in Britain



Key to criteria:  
 The extent of political influence of the working class voter = blue  
 The extent of political influence of the aristocracy = red

Of course the extent of change at key points and the relative positioning of the two threads is a matter of debate and the evidence should be examined. It is this debate which good assignments will explore.

How accurate are these suggested patterns?

What evidence is needed to confirm or amend them?

This simple format could then be applied to any of the following questions and help form the basis of the taught overview course, focussing on patterns of change over the period eg How much did it change? How was it different? What might be considered to be the key turning points?

### Some examples

**In considering the process of change in the development of Germany over the period 1880-1991, how far can the emergence of Gorbachev 1985 be seen as the key turning point?**

This question is asking students about patterns of change. In this case students will explore **how Germany changed** over the period and consider the shifts which occurred in the development of Germany as a nation and the extent to which the emergence of Gorbachev marked the most significant change vs other key turning points for example the Treaty of Versailles, World War Two, The Berlin Blockade, the fall of Weimar etc... Students should describe patterns of change, applying criteria by which to measure the extent of change, spotlight key moments of change in the chronology and consider a range of key events, deciding on their relative significance by examining major shifts.

**In considering the process of change in the conduct of warfare in the years c1845-1991, how far can the Battle of the Somme July-November 1916 be seen as a key turning point?**

This question is asking students about patterns of change. In this case students will explore **how warfare changed** over the period and consider the shifts which occurred in the conduct of warfare and the extent to which the Battle of the Somme marked the most significant change vs other key turning points for example the Crimean War, the Boer War, World War Two, the Vietnam War etc... Students should describe patterns of change, applying criteria by which to measure the extent of change, spotlight key moments of change in the chronology and consider a range of key events, deciding on their relative significance by examining major shifts.

**To what extent do you consider the war of Yom Kippur to be a key turning point in the political development of the Middle East across the 20<sup>th</sup> century?**

This question is asking students about patterns of change. In this question students will explore **how the Middle East changed** over the period and consider the shifts which occurred in its political development and the extent to which the war of Yom Kippur marked the most significant change vs other key turning points for example the creation of the state of Israel, the Iranian Revolution 1979, the Six-Day war etc... Students should describe patterns of change, applying criteria by which to measure the extent of change, spotlight key moments of change in the chronology and consider a range of key events, deciding on their relative significance by examining major shifts.

## The extent of change

As well as questions about turning points/patterns of change, teachers may instead wish to adapt the questions as suggested in Getting Started page 55 to explore the nature of change over the period.

For example:

CW16

How far did the aims and methods adopted by those seeking political reform in Ireland change during the years 1815-1922?

CW20

How far did public attitudes towards the police and their role in society change during the years 1830-1965?

CW34

How far did the aims and aspirations of German nationalists change during the years c1800-c1900?

These questions require students to make comparisons to show the nature and extent of change during the period and to make an assessment of the extent of change overall. They do not require an assessment of particular turning points as markers of change. This is a different type of question to those on the previous page which looked at patterns of change. In this last set of questions students need to make comparisons throughout the chronology and assess the extent of change over the period. It does not require the same focus on assessing the relative significance of turning points. Instead responses should consider change in relation to the overall theme, applying criteria by which to measure it. In answering such questions, students should be using words which describe the nature and extent of change.

The criteria will still operate as 'threads' but in this case the emphasis will be on the way in which they 'moved', and the assessment will relate to the overall theme.

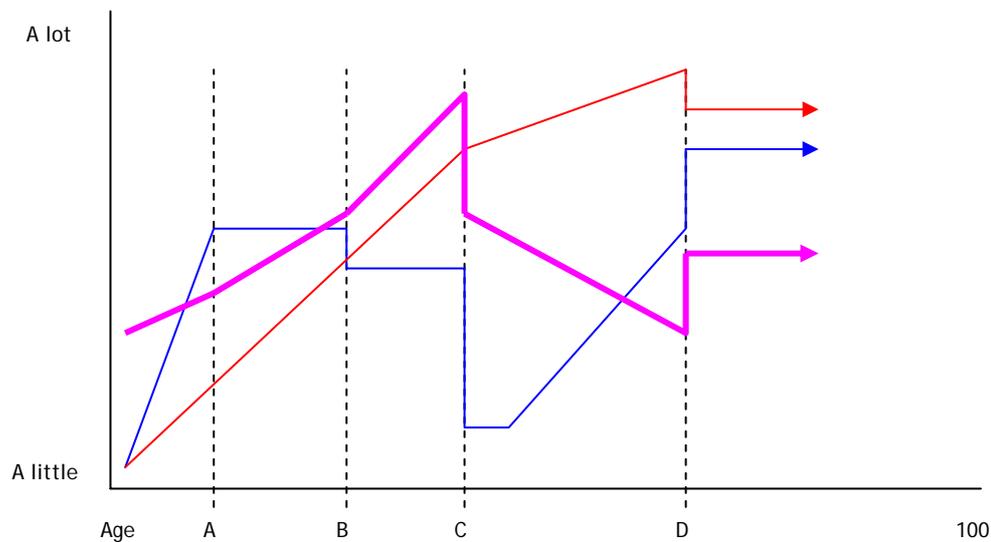
For example, in this everyday example...

To what extent did the individual's quality of life change during the period?

The same analysis can be used, but for a different purpose.

### Diagram C (Amended)

#### Changes in the quality of everyday life



#### Key to criteria:

Changes in the thread of personal independence = blue  
Changes in the thread of sense of personal fulfilment = red  
Overall changes in quality of life = pink

#### Key to turning points:

A = leaving home age 18  
B = wedding age 24  
C = birth of first child age 26  
D = retirement age 65

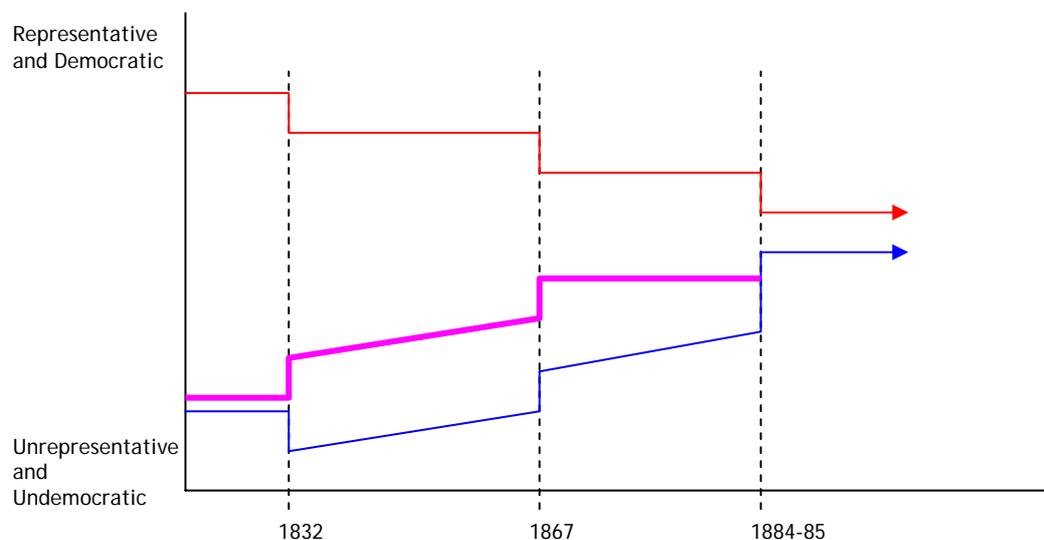
This analysis could now allow the student to reflect on changes in quality of life, perhaps bringing the threads into an overall 'rope' of change. For example, in reflecting on the change brought about by the birth of first child they could conclude that overall, although this brought severe limitations to independence of action, the sense of personal fulfilment generated a huge improvement in the overall quality of life although in very changed circumstances. Alternatively it could be argued that the birth of a first child has such an impact on personal independence that quality of life is reduced. This illustrates that the judgement depends upon the weight given to different criteria and engaging with this debate may help students in the process of thinking about change. The thinking that goes into this exercise is very similar to the turning point exercise but without the requirement for an assessment of the relative significance of the events as turning points.

In the case of Representation and Democracy, the same diagram D can be used this time with the aim of analysing the nature of the changes and arriving at an overall judgment on the extent to which the changes increased representation and democracy during the period.

For example in reflecting on the changes brought about by the First Reform Act, the student might conclude that, in spite of franchise and constituency amendments, because there was little change in aristocratic influence and control, there was change in the pattern of representation, but little change in the extent of democratisation.

### Diagram D (Amended)

Changes in representation and democracy in Britain



**Key to criteria:**

- The extent of political influence of the working class voter = blue
- The extent of political influence of the aristocracy = red
- The overall change in representation and democracy = pink

How valid is this suggested positioning of the thread as the overall 'rope' of change?

## Sources in Part B

Part B does not require the analysis and evaluation of contemporary sources.

There is therefore only one mark scheme for AO1 knowledge and understanding  
*Do students know it and can they shape it (ie focus their information on the question)?*

Students need to use a suitable range of secondary sources to support their answer - the number of sources will depend upon the nature of the task and the chosen topic.

There are no restrictions on students doing the same topic in part B. But teachers should note that unit 4 should not be turned into a taught course which restricts the opportunities for students to pursue independent enquiries.

More guidance and exemplification can be found in Getting Started on page 51 onwards.

## Word limits for part A and B

The total word limit for part A and B together is 4,000 words.

Students are advised to split their assignment roughly 50/50 ie 2000 words in part A and 2000 words in part B.

Students must not exceed the total word limit of 4,000 words. If a student exceeds the word limit by any amount the teacher must stop reading when they reach 4,000 words. Any response which is over the limit can not therefore be rewarded past 4,000 words. Although part A and B can be attempted in any order this rule must be applied to part B, even if part B has been attempted first.

## How should teachers approach the teaching of a 100 year course?

A short overview is recommended in Getting Started as a basis for giving students a framework within which to make their enquiries. This could perhaps focus on building up the diagrams suggested above, with the emphasis on the scope for students enquiry and judgment about the ultimate placing of the 'factors' or positioning of the 'threads'.

Although the order of the enquiries is at teacher discretion, it may help students if, after the overview course, the part B assignments are attempted first.

More Guidance and exemplification can be found in Getting Started on page 51 onwards.