



GCSE History

**Strengthened
specification for first
award in 2015**

Strengthened WJEC GCSE History

We informed you last year that the examination regulator required all awarding organisations in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland to strengthen the assessment of GCSE History.

We are now pleased to inform you that WJEC's strengthened specification for first award in 2015 has been accredited. The amended specification and sample assessment materials may be found on the [GCSE History page of our website](#).

What remains the same?

The following aspects of the current specification are largely unchanged:

- Candidates must still study four units; three via external assessment and one via internal assessment;
- The content of most options (see below);
- Weightings of controlled assessment (25%) and examination units (75%);
- The format of the Unit 3 examination papers are only slightly changed;
- The controlled assessment tasks are only slightly changed;
- The assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar remains in the examined units;
- 1 hour 15 minutes is allowed for each paper.

How has the structure of the course changed?

There are three main structural changes:

- The style of the examination papers for Unit 1 and Unit 2 is now different. This affects both Route A and Route B and is further explained below.
- The change in style of the examination papers for Unit 1 and Unit 2 has meant that the studies in depth for Route A have been split into two columns, which will, in some cases, require centres to reconsider their choice of topic.
- It is no longer possible to teach the study in depth on the USA 1910-1929 with the outline study on the USA 1930-2000. This ensures comparability of demand across all combinations of options on the specification.

How has content changed?

Unit 1 (Route A)	
Option	Changes to content
Popular movements in Wales and England, 1815-1848	None
Wales and England in the early twentieth century, 1890-1919	The start date has been moved to allow consideration of the impact of the Boer War on the need for social reform
The USA: a nation of contrasts, 1910-1929	None
Germany in transition, 1919-1947	The start date has been moved to allow consideration of the effects of the economic problems of the 1920s
China under Mao Zedong, 1949-1976	None

Unit 2 (Route A)	
Option	Changes to content
The Elizabethan Age, 1558-1603	None
Depression, war and recovery in Wales and England, 1930-1951	None
Russia in transition, 1905-1924	The start date has been moved to allow consideration of the longer term causes of the 1917 revolution namely the impact of the 1905 revolution and the growth of opposition groups
Changes in South Africa, 1948-1994	None
Austerity, Affluence and Discontent in the United Kingdom, 1951-1979	This is a new study in depth with completely new content

Unit 3 (Route A)	
Option	Changes to content
The development of Germany, 1919-1991	None
Developing relations in Palestine, Israel and the Middle East, 1919-2000	None
The development of the USA, 1930-2000	The start date has moved avoid overlap.
The development of Wales, 1900-2000	None

Units 1, 2 and Route B

There are no changes to the content of Route B other than the change shown to the option on Germany in transition above (Unit 1, Route A).

Unit 4 Controlled assessment

Question (a) has not changed. Question (b) has been altered to focus more on the issue of explaining how and why historical interpretations differ. Here is an example:

Some historians argue that the British generals in World War I were completely incompetent. How valid is this interpretation of the British generals during World War I?

The mark schemes for both parts have been amended slightly although the weighting of assessment objectives remains the same.

Examples of tasks may be found in the specification. The complete controlled assessment tasks for 2015 and 2016 are on the [GCSE History page of our website](#). Centres may amend tasks using the WJEC examples as a guide but please remember that the question set must follow the same style and have the same level of challenge.

As at present, teachers must make it clear how much support, if any, has been given to pupils for the Unit 4 controlled assessment. There is now a specific instruction to this effect on the cover sheet, and such support must clearly be taken into account in the assessment.

Assessment

There is considerable change to the structure of the assessment of each examination in each unit. This change affects **both** Route A and Route B. The examination papers for Units 1 and 2 are now written in a style which enables WJEC to assess different aspects of candidate performance. This is detailed below.

Papers for Unit 1 will focus mainly on the evaluation of historical sources and interpretations of the past. All questions must be answered:

Unit 1		
Question	New style of question	Mark
1 (a)	Selection of information from two sources	4
1 (b)	Use of source material and own knowledge to explain a development	6
1 (c)	Utility of two sources	8
2 (a)	Deployment of knowledge of an historical event	4
2 (b)	Purpose of creation of a primary source	6
2 (c)	Discussion of different historical interpretations	10
3	Evaluative essay with additional marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar	12 + 3
Total		53

Papers for Unit 2 will focus mainly on key features and key concepts of history. All questions must be answered:

Unit 2		
Question	New style of question	Mark
1 (a)	Use of source material and own knowledge to describe an aspect of history	3
1 (b)	Explanation of an historical development	6
1 (c)	Discussion of different viewpoints of an historical development	8
2 (a)	Deployment of knowledge of an historical event	4
2 (b)	Explanation of an historical development	6

2 (c)	Evaluation of an historical concept including cause / consequence / change / importance / significance	8
3 (a)	Outline of main features of an historical development	4
3 (b)	Evaluative essay with additional marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar	12 + 3
Total		54

Papers for Unit 3 will continue to focus mainly on change and development over time. The same choice will remain on the paper as at present – two from questions 1 / 2 / 3 and one from questions 4 / 5 / 6.

Unit 3		
Question	Proposed style	Mark
1 / 2 / 3 (a)	Deployment of knowledge of an historical event	5 x 2
1 / 2 / 3 (b)	Extent of change in an issue	7 x 2
1 / 2 / 3 (c)	Conceptual question focusing on issues such as turning points or significance	8 x 2
4 / 5 / 6	Synoptic essay with additional marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar	12 + 3
Total		55

Availability of assessment

For schools in England, all assessments for the strengthened specification will be sat for the first time at the end of the course in summer 2015.

For schools in Wales, an element of staged assessment is available in 2014. Unit 3 is the only assessments that will be available in the summer of 2014. Examination papers for the strengthened Unit 1 and Unit 2 will not be offered until the summer of 2015 to schools in Wales.

In 2015, there will be a separate examination slot for each unit examination.

Resources

WJEC appreciates that the changes that some centres will have to make to teaching from September will have resource implications. Preparatory work has begun to produce electronic resources on the following options:

- Depression, war and recovery in Wales and England, 1930-1951
- Changes in South Africa, 1948-1994
- Austerity, Affluence and Discontent in the United Kingdom, 1951-1979
- The Elizabethan Age, 1558-1603
- The development of Germany, 1919-1991

It is anticipated that these resources will be available in the spring of 2014. They will be available bilingually.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When should we start teaching the strengthened specification?

A. The new specification is for first teaching in September 2013 (two year courses) and September 2014 (one year courses). The first award is summer 2015.

Q. When will the current specification be assessed for the last time?

A. The last assessment opportunity for the current specification will be in summer 2014.

Q. We want to teach the history course in one year starting in 2013. Which specification should we use?

A. The current specification should be followed for pupils certificating in summer 2014. Pupils certificating in 2015 must follow the revised strengthened specification.

Q. How long will the strengthened specification be available?

A. For two years only for centres in England. Ofqual have recently published draft criteria for GCSE History courses for first teaching in September 2015 with first award in 2017. These will affect centres in England only. The position in Wales is less clear. Welsh Government are also consulting on provision in regard to GCSE History but the timetable for change has not yet been announced.

Q. Has the weighting of controlled assessment changed?

A. No. The weighting of controlled assessment is still 25%. The remaining 75% is covered by the externally assessed Units 1, 2 and 3.

Q. When can we complete the controlled assessment task?

A. As now, this can be completed at any point during the course. Please ensure that tasks are valid for the year of submission. Exemplar tasks for 2015-2016 certification can be found on the [History pages of the WJEC website](#).

Contacts

Please visit [the WJEC website](#) to view the full specification, specimen assessment materials and past papers.

Contact a member of the team should you have any questions or wish to start teaching the course:

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