



Department  
for Education

# History

**GCSE subject content and assessment  
objectives**

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## Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for progression to A level.

## Subject aims and learning outcomes

GCSE specifications in history should support students in learning more about the history of Britain and that of the wider world. The study of history at GCSE should inspire students to deepen their understanding of the people, periods and events studied and enable them to think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, make informed decisions and develop perspective and judgement. This, in turn, will prepare them for a role as informed, thoughtful and active citizens.

GCSE specifications in history should enable students to:

- develop and extend their knowledge and understanding of: specified key events periods and societies in the history of their locality, Britain, and the wider world; and of the wide diversity of human experience
- engage in historical enquiry to develop as independent learners and as critical and reflective thinkers
- develop the ability to ask relevant questions about the past, to investigate issues critically and to make valid historical claims by using a range of sources in their historical context
- develop an awareness of how and why different interpretations have been constructed about people, events and developments from the past and why they may have been accorded significance
- organise and communicate their historical knowledge and understanding in different ways and reach substantiated conclusions
- recognise that the discipline of history and a knowledge and understanding of the past helps them to understand their own identity and significant aspects of the world in which they live, and provides them with the basis for further wider learning and study.

## Subject content

GCSE specifications in history must reflect the aims and learning outcomes. GCSE specifications in history should build on the national curriculum programmes of study for history at key stage 3.

This content sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in history. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

## Scope of study

GCSE specifications in history should require students to study:

- a substantial and coherent element of British history and/or the history of England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland (minimum 40%). This must include at least one depth study chosen from the Medieval (500-1500), Early Modern (1450-1750) or Modern (1700-present day) periods. A depth study must require the investigation of different aspects of an historical situation across a period of between 25 and 50 years. The British element may also include a study of the historic environment (e.g. studies of local sites, museums or galleries) related to a chosen depth study
- a substantial and coherent element of the study of the history of the wider world (minimum 25%). This must include at least one depth study chosen from the Medieval (500-1500), Early Modern (1450-1750) or Modern (1700-present day) periods. This must cover a period of between 25 and 50 years and might focus on different aspects of the history of one nation or group or on international relations between several nations.

British and wider world depth studies may not be taken from the same period of history or from any overlapping fifty-year period.

- one comparative or thematic study to demonstrate an understanding of change and continuity (minimum 25%). This must involve the study of people, events and developments drawn from all three of the Medieval (500-1500), Early Modern (1450-1750) and Modern (1700-present day) periods. These studies, whether comparative or thematic, should take either a political, military, cultural, economic, social or religious theme.

While some overlap is likely, the comparative or thematic study must differ significantly in focus from the people, issues and events covered in the selected depth studies.

## Historical knowledge, understanding and method

GCSE specifications should, through these studies, require students to develop and demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the chronology, key features, individuals, events, developments and issues in the specified content
- understanding of the historical concepts of continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity and difference, and significance by making connections, drawing contrasts, analysing trends and framing historical questions
- understanding of the connections between different aspects of the periods and themes studied; between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, social, political, religious and military history; and between short and long term timescales
- understanding of how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, discerning how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- the ability to create their own structured accounts, including written narratives, descriptions and analyses.

## Assessment objectives

	<b>Assessment objectives</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
AO1	Recall, select and communicate knowledge and understanding of history.	30-40 %
AO2	Demonstrate understanding of the past through explanation and analysis of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ key concepts: causation, consequence, continuity, change, similarity, difference and significance within an historical context</li><li>▪ key features and characteristics of the periods studied and the relationships between them.</li></ul>	30-40%
AO3	Understand, analyse and make valid historical claims from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ a range of source material, including written historical sources whose precise provenance is given, as part of an historical enquiry</li><li>▪ a range of representations and interpretations of the past as part of an historical enquiry.</li></ul>	20-30%

GCSE specifications should be assessed through external assessment that:

- includes requirements for both extended writing (essays) and short answer responses
- includes the assessment of source analysis in the context of constructing valid responses to a significant historical question or hypothesis.





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