



NEA further guidance: administration and question setting

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This resource provides further guidance on the non-examination assessment (NEA) requirements for A-level History and should be read in conjunction with the NEA requirements set out in the specification and the NEA guidance document. It develops and exemplifies the requirements, but is wholly consistent with them.

Centre Administration

The NEA Question Approval Form

Following a change in September 2018, schools are only required to submit a Question Approval Form. This must be submitted to your NEA Advisor no later than 20 October in the year before the intended completion of the course. This form ensures the validity of the precise question(s) and that the requirements of the overall qualification are met. There are a number of factors that determine the suitability of a question and the use of an adviser is therefore seen as good practice.

The Question Approval Form for all NEAs must be submitted with the sample of finished work sent to the moderator.

Teacher Advice and Feedback to Students

It is entirely reasonable for teachers to offer guidance and advice at a general level to students as a whole group, not individually, when setting out the requirements of the NEA.

Such advice might include:

- where to locate primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period
- where to locate historical interpretations
- general advice on how to analyse and evaluate sources and interpretations
- general advice on how a good response might be structured
- how to write a bibliography and use footnotes effectively
- a review of students' work, providing oral and written advice at a general level

However, it is not permissible to:

- provide detailed specific advice on how to improve drafts to meet the assessment criteria
- give detailed feedback on errors and omissions which limits students' opportunities to show initiative themselves.
- intervene personally to improve the presentation or content of work.

Further guidance is provided in the JCQ document, [Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments](#).

Formulating an Appropriate NEA Question

A simple four-step process might be used.

1. Establish an appropriate topic that conforms to the overall requirements of the specification.

- Ensure that the topic chosen does not have any overlap in content with the two examined components. Chronological overlap is, however, allowed.
- Ensure that the three components combined cover a chronological range of at least 200 years.
- Ensure that the topic chosen covers a context of approximately 100 years.
- Ensure that the topic chosen is detailed enough to give an indication of the content to be covered. Hence, *Class Conflict* is not sufficiently detailed but, *Class and the Ancient Regime in France 1685 to 1789*, is more indicative of the content to be covered.

2. Establish the areas of historical debate within the chosen topic.

- Is it possible to provide explicit analysis and evaluation of two differing interpretations by academic historians? It is not expected that absolutely opposite interpretations are selected, and they may, in any case, be difficult to find. Much of the difference between interpretations may in fact be quite subtle.
- Can students demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which the context in which the historians were writing may have influenced the interpretation? In addition to evaluating the differences between the interpretations, students must also explain the significance of the time and/or context in which the historians were writing. There is no need for the interpretations to have been written in different times and/or contexts, but students should be able to comment upon these aspects.
- The interpretations selected may focus on one part of the 100-year context, or may consider the period as a whole.

3. Establish a range of primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period that can easily be accessed by students.

- Access to at least three primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period should be established. In addition, two of these sources must be of different types. Students should establish that this is possible before attempting to finalise a precise NEA question.

4. Write a question that covers a context of approximately 100 years and to which an answer can reasonably be arrived at within 3500–4500 words.

- The question should be placed within a context of approximately 100 years. This context is absolutely central to the NEA and should not be perfunctory or contrived.
- It is not necessary however for the context to be exactly 100 years. A question on the Tudors might run from 1503 to 1603, but is likely to be more historically sound running from 1485 to 1603.
- There are broadly two types of question:

(i) tracing a development over approximately 100 years:

Eg In the context of the years 1485 to 1603, to what extent did the role and authority of Parliament change?

(ii) assessing the significance of an issue or development within the context of approximately 100 years:

Eg 'The financial problems of the French Monarchy in the years 1685 to 1789, proved to be the most important cause of the French Revolution.' Assess the validity of this view.

- The dates set in the question must be historically valid.

Eg In the context of the years 1861 to 1964, how far was the Russian Revolution of 1917 caused by the impact of war?

This question is plainly invalid as it is impossible to assess the causes of an event after it has occurred.

- The question should present a genuine area of debate and be an issue to which a conclusion can be reached within approximately 3500 to 4500 words.
- Questions should be framed as such and might utilise the stems commonly used in the examined components.

- Questions that invite a purely narrative approach should be avoided.

Eg *Examine the development of women's rights in Twentieth Century Britain.*

This invites a narrative response and fails to provide a genuine question for students to answer.

- Questions should focus on historical debate and not on historiography. A question that only examines how a particular issue has been interpreted over time will not allow students to demonstrate the skills and techniques required by AO1 and AO2.

Eg *In the context of the years 1916 to 2015, in what ways have interpretations of Haig as the 'Butcher of the Somme' changed over time?*

Here, the focus is on examining the varying interpretations to the exclusion of the other demands of the NEA.

- Remember, you must submit an NEA Question Approval form to your NEA Adviser in order to have your question(s) approved.

Examples of NEA questions

Topic

The Crusading Movement 1100-1200

Question

In the context of the years 1095 to 1192, was religious devotion the main motivation for those from Western Europe setting out for Jerusalem and Outremer?

Advantages

- This is a central question of the topic.
- There has been a great deal of debate amongst historians.
- The question has a valid context and students should be able to identify the extent to which motivation changed over time.

Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to prove motivation in an objective manner.
- Some students might approach this in a narrative style, describing the events across the period.
- The acquisition of primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period might be challenging.

Topic

Tudor Rebellion 1485 to 1603

Question

In the context of the years 1485 to 1603, how effectively did Tudor government deal with rebellion in England?

Advantages

- Invites the student to consider the full period.
- There is a genuine question to answer.
- There has been much debate amongst historians on this issue.
- There are a good range of varied primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period.

Disadvantages

- Could lead to a chronological, narrative approach, weakening the response.
- Presumes that the student will actively engage with the concept of 'how effectively' and also evaluate 'deal with'.

Topic

The nature of Tudor government 1485 to 1603

Question

'The Reformation Parliament was critical to the development of the authority of parliament in the years 1485 to 1603.' How valid is this view?

Advantages

- There is an issue for debate which students will find easy to address and for which they can structure a response.
- It encourages an analytical rather than a primarily chronological response.
- This is a central question of the period for which students should be able to acquire both interpretations and sources.

Disadvantages

- This is a question about the development of parliament across approximately 100 years. It might be easy, however, for a student to focus too much on the Reformation Parliament at the expense of the required context.

Topic

The Spanish Golden Age in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century

Question

'The discovery of the New World was the main reason for the Spanish Golden Age in the years 1492 to 1598.' Assess the validity of this view.

Advantages

- There is a clear question about causation.
- The key event is placed at the opening of the context given.
- The context is an historically valid one about which there has been academic historical debate and for which there will be primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period.

Disadvantages

- Students need to be rigorous in defining the type of Golden Age they are referring to.
- As the Golden Age is not a specific event, students may struggle to adequately cover the full date range set in the question.

Topic

The Enlightenment from the late seventeenth century

Question

'The ideas of the Enlightenment were the main reason for the weakening of royal authority in France in the years 1685 to 1789.' Assess the validity of this view.

Advantages

- This is a central question about causation.
- There is a wide range of differing historical interpretations available.
- Primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period are accessible.

Disadvantages

- The student might adopt a chronological and narrative approach, looking at a series of events in turn.
- Students might focus exclusively on aspects of the French Enlightenment from 1740 and fail to focus on an appropriate 100-year context.

Topic

Nationalism in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe

Question

In the context of the years 1815 to 1914, how far was nationalism the cause of the Great War?

Advantages

- This is accessible as a question.
- The date range is valid and the event for which a cause is sought is placed at the end of the period given.
- Differing interpretations should be readily accessible.
- Primary sources and/or sources contemporary to the period are plentiful.
- The question provides a good contextual approach if students spend enough time considering the whole period appropriately.

Disadvantages

- There is a danger of ignoring the 100-year context. Students might be tempted to focus excessively on the short-term reasons for the war.
- There is a danger of students adopting an episodic approach moving from each event in turn across the 100 year period without linking factors together.

Topic

Anti-semitism in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe

Question

In the context of the years 1848 to 1945, to what extent does racial ideology explain anti-semitism in Europe?

Advantages

- This question allows for a consideration of the whole period set and will steer students away from, for example, simply considering the causes of the Holocaust.
- The context allows students to consider a broader thematic approach.

Disadvantages

- The reference to Europe is ill-defined and unwieldy making it difficult for students to plan and organise effectively.
- Students might adopt a narrow regional approach which would significantly limit performance.

Topic

The status of African-Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth century

Question

'Martin Luther King had the greatest impact of any individual in advancing the position of African-Americans in the USA.' How valid is this view of the years 1865 to 1968?

Advantages

- The question presents a valid 100-year context, assuming that students do not simply focus on the civil rights movement which can only really be considered to be relevant for a narrow chronological period of a couple of decades.
- Students are free to consider the political, social and economic position of African-Americans thus allowing a broader consideration of a range of relevant topics.

Disadvantages

- Students might focus on the role of Martin Luther King within the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and thereby neglect the 100-year context.
- There is a danger of the student only comparing the role of Martin Luther King with a small number of other individuals thus not proving a good contextual awareness.

Get help and support

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