



# GCSE History

Your companion  
guide to our new  
specification

Find out more at:  
[aqa.org.uk/history](http://aqa.org.uk/history)

**AQA** 

# GCSE History is changing

We've created this guide to help you understand how the new subject criteria from Ofqual and the Department for Education will affect you and your students.

These changes will apply to all exam boards from summer 2018.

## 100% external assessment

All exams are linear with no controlled assessment or coursework.

## GCSE grades will be in numerical format

The current grading of A\* – G is changing to numerical grading of 9 – 1. Grade 9 will be equivalent to A\*, Grade 4 will be equivalent to Grade C and Grade 1 will be equivalent to a Grade G.

### GCSE History key dates

Download our draft specification from <a href="http://aqa.org.uk">aqa.org.uk</a>	April 2015
Book your place at one of our free launch events (also available online)	May to September 2015
Download our accredited specification from <a href="http://aqa.org.uk">aqa.org.uk</a>	Summer 2015
Download practice papers and mark schemes from the GCSE History page on our website	Autumn 2015
Preparing to teach events begin	From Spring 2016
Start teaching	September 2016
First exams	June 2018

For more information about GCSE changes, visit [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

# A specification for you and your students

We believe in the importance of not just learning history, but learning from history. Understanding past events, people and their significance gives students a better insight into the world around them. That's why we've worked with teachers and subject experts to ensure our new specification features topics for today's world that will resonate with students and give you the choice and flexibility to teach the history you want to teach.

- We're confident you'll find it engaging, interesting and practical to teach.
- We've retained our most popular topics so you'll be familiar with lots of the content.
- We've used the new regulatory requirements as an opportunity to create some exciting new topics to help you create an engaging course for your students.
- Discover free and great value teaching resources to help you plan your lessons, teach and assess your students.
- We're also hosting numerous free preparing to teach and specification launch events, to ensure you're fully prepared to teach the new specification.



## We're here if you need us

Want to speak to someone in the GCSE History team?

T: 0161 958 3861

E: [history@aqa.org.uk](mailto:history@aqa.org.uk)

Explore our draft specifications: [aqa.org.uk/history](http://aqa.org.uk/history)

Find out more about the new GCSE grades: [aqa.org.uk/new-GCSE-grades](http://aqa.org.uk/new-GCSE-grades)

# Reasons you'll enjoy teaching this new AQA specification

## Some familiar topics

- We've retained the most popular topics from our current specifications and added some exciting new ones, giving you and your students plenty of flexibility.
- We're offering a wide choice of depth studies based on modern international relations.
- You can still teach popular and well established periods of German, Russian and American history, including the American West.
- Our popular thematic study of medicine through time will also be updated.

## Our new topics

- A new international relations depth study option looking at conflict in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.
- New thematic studies – one looks at how people's rights have developed in Britain since medieval times, the other looks at migration to and from Britain and how Britain's place in the world has evolved from Viking times to the present day.
- New British depth studies exploring Norman, Medieval, Elizabethan and Restoration history.



## Our approach to assessment

- There is a new requirement to study an historic environment. This helps students make sense of the world around them and looks at how specific sites and places have affected, and been affected by, historical developments.
- We've included the study of an historic environment in our British depth study, so you can enrich your teaching and give your students a better understanding of a critical period of British history.
- In response to the new regulatory requirements we've designed a specification that supports effective teaching through a coherent approach. All exam boards must test second order concepts in their papers, including continuity, change, cause and consequence. We believe in testing second order concepts in their appropriate place – eg change and continuity are best tested within the thematic study as they tackle change and continuity over time.



# Specification at a glance

## Assessment 1: Understanding the modern world

### What's assessed

Component 1 focuses on the modern world. In Section A, there's a choice of four different period study options, which focus on two key developments in a country's history over a 50 year period. In Section B students answer questions on one of five modern wider world depth study options. Each option looks at conflict and tension, including how and why conflict and tension arose, what the consequences were and the role of the nations and states involved. As our specification has no prohibited combinations, the topic you choose in Section A does not affect your choice of options in Section B.

### How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)
- 50% of GCSE

### Section A

You can choose from one of the following four period study options:

- 1A America 1840-1895: Expansion and consolidation
- 1B Germany 1890-1945: Democracy and dictatorship
- 1C Russia 1894-1945: Tsardom and communism
- 1D America 1920-1973: Opportunity and inequality

### Section B

Each paper also contains a choice of five wider world depth studies. Students answer questions on one of the following:

- Conflict and tension, 1894-1918
- Conflict and tension, 1918-1939
- Conflict and tension between East and West, 1945-1972
- Conflict and tension in Asia, 1950-1975
- Conflict and tension, 1990-2009 (New)

### Questions

- Two sections
- Section A – six compulsory questions
- Section B – four compulsory questions

## Assessment 2: Shaping the nation

### What's assessed

In Component 2, students study events and developments which have shaped the history of the UK. Section A, the thematic study, enables students to look at key developments over a long sweep of time. In Section B, a British depth study, incorporating the study of an historic environment, students look at the complexity of British society at a critical time in the country's development and how the historic environment was shaped by that society. As our specification has no prohibited combinations, the topic you choose in Section A does not affect your choice of options in Section B.

### How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)
- 50% of GCSE

### Section A

You can choose from one of the following three thematic options:

- 2A Britain: health and the people
- 2B Britain: power and the people (New)
- 2C Britain and the world: migration, empires and the people (New)

### Section B

Each paper also includes a choice of four British depth studies incorporating the study of a specific historic environment:

- Norman England (New)
- Medieval England – the reign of Edward I (New)
- Elizabethan England (New)
- Restoration England (New)

### Questions

- Two sections
- Section A – four compulsory questions
- Section B – four compulsory questions



# A spotlight on our new topics

We've created our most flexible specification yet, combining the best topics from our current Schools History Project and Modern World History specifications to create one new GCSE with our most popular topics, and some new ones, giving you and your students flexibility.

Here's a quick overview of the new topics.

## Assessment 1: Understanding the modern world

### Section B: wider world depth studies

#### Conflict and tension, 1990–2009

This wider world depth study focuses on conflict in the Gulf and Afghanistan, including George Bush's 'war on terror'. It shows how and why conflict occurred and what the consequences were. This study considers the role of key individuals and groups and how they were affected and influenced international relations.

## Assessment 2: Shaping the nation

### Section A: thematic studies

#### Britain: power and the people

This thematic study will enable students to gain an understanding of the development of the relationship between the citizen and the state in Britain over a long period of time. It charts the journey from feudalism and serfdom to democracy and equality. It reveals how, in different periods, the state has responded to challenges and their consequences. It allows students to construct an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the citizen.



## Britain and the world: migration, empires and the people

This thematic study will help students to gain an understanding of how the identity of the people of Britain has been shaped by their interaction with the wider world. It will consider the people who invaded and conquered Britain, the country's relationship with Europe and the wider world. It will consider the ebb and flow of people into and out of Britain and evaluate their motives and achievements. It considers the causes, impact and legacy of empire upon the ruled and the ruling in the context of Britain's acquisition and retreat from empire.

### Section B: British depth studies

#### Norman England, 1066–c1100

Students will study the arrival of the Normans and the establishment of their rule. This topic will address political, military, religious, economic, social, and cultural aspects of this period.

## Medieval England – the reign of Edward I, 1272–1307

Students will study the major events of Edward I's reign, including his relationship with the Scots and Welsh, from a variety of perspectives.

### Elizabethan England, c1568–1603

This option allows students to study in depth the last 35 years of Queen Elizabeth I's reign. It will focus on major events of her reign, such as the extent to which it was a 'Golden Age', considered from economic, religious, political, social and cultural standpoints.

### Restoration England, 1660–1685

In this option, students will focus on aspects of Charles II's reign, a period of rapid political, economic, social and cultural change.

## The historic environment

The study of the historic environment is a new requirement for all GCSE History specifications. We've included this in the depth study. The study of the historic environment will focus on a particular site in its historical context and examine the relationship between a specific place and associated historic events and developments. Each year we will nominate an appropriate site, which will be well known and supported by resources.

## Clear assessment and marking you can trust

We know the time and effort that you and your students put in to exams. We also understand how essential it is that the marks we give are fair, reliable and trustworthy.

### Getting the right results

Our Centre for Education Research and Practice (CERP) provides statistics and research evidence to ensure we assess and mark your students' work fairly and accurately. We also recruit and train the highest calibre examiners and continually monitor their work.

### Clear question papers

Students of all abilities will understand our clearly worded exam papers.

### Well structured mark schemes and exemplar materials

Our mark schemes demonstrate how to help your students get the best marks. Our exemplars use real student answers with comments from senior examiners to explain how our mark schemes are applied.

### More exam help and advice available

1. Watch our videos on 'assessment explained' or see 'how we create a specification' at [aqa.org.uk/exams](http://aqa.org.uk/exams)
2. Analyse student results with our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)
3. More exam-related help is available at [aqa.org.uk/results](http://aqa.org.uk/results)

### Assessment support

Our exam resources will help you prepare for exams, these include practice questions, tests and revision exercises. If you'd like to speak to us about the new exams, call us on 0161 958 3861.

## Free resources help you bring the new specification to life

We are working closely with some fantastic teachers to create resources you'll find useful and inspiring.

Each resource will help you with a specific aspect of teaching – either planning your lessons, teaching them, or preparing your students for exams.

### Free resources include:

- schemes of work and lesson plans
- specimen question papers and mark schemes
- events to introduce you to the new specification and advise on how you can teach it
- student exemplar materials
- guidance on mapping the content from Key Stage 3 – 4
- guidance on teaching the historic environment
- training and professional development opportunities
- digital resources from Teachit History.



### Want to improve your teaching skills?

We can support you throughout your teaching career with practical training, tried, tested and taught by teachers.

Browse and book our professional development events at [aqa.org.uk/professional-development](http://aqa.org.uk/professional-development)



Join the conversation  
@AQACPD

## Meet the team

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## Keep in touch

Contact our dedicated  
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To receive regular updates about  
GCSE History, register with us at:  
[aqa.org.uk/update](http://aqa.org.uk/update)

The information in this guide is based on the draft specification submitted to Ofqual in April 2015 and is subject to change. We will publish the accredited specification and specimen question papers as soon as we receive Ofqual accreditation expected in the summer.