

Modern History subject report

2025 cohort

January 2026





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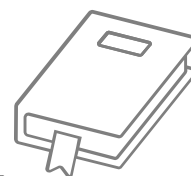
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Contents

Introduction	1
Audience and use.....	1
Subject highlights.....	1
Subject data summary	2
Unit completion	2
Units 1 and 2 results	2
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results	2
Total marks for IA	2
IA1 marks.....	3
IA2 marks.....	4
IA3 marks.....	5
External assessment (EA) marks	6
Final subject results	6
Final marks for IA and EA.....	6
Grade boundaries	7
Distribution of standards.....	7
Internal assessment	8
Endorsement	8
Confirmation	8
Internal assessment 1 (IA1)	9
Examination — essay in response to historical sources (25%)	9
Assessment design	9
Assessment decisions	11
Internal assessment 2 (IA2)	15
Investigation — independent source investigation (25%)	15
Assessment design	15
Assessment decisions	17
Internal assessment 3 (IA3)	20
Investigation — historical essay based on research (25%)	20
Assessment design	20
Assessment decisions	21
External assessment	25
Examination — short responses to historical sources (25%).....	25
Assessment design	25
Assessment decisions	26

Introduction



The annual subject reports seek to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement of internal and external assessment processes for all Queensland schools. The 2025 subject report is the culmination of the partnership between schools and the QCAA. It addresses school-based assessment design and judgments, and student responses to external assessment for General and General (Extension) subjects. In acknowledging effective practices and areas for refinement, it offers schools timely and evidence-based guidance to further develop student learning and assessment experiences for 2026.

The report also includes information about:

- how schools have applied syllabus objectives in the design and marking of internal assessments
- how syllabus objectives have been applied in the marking of external assessments
- patterns of student achievement
- important considerations to note related to the revised 2025 syllabus (where relevant).

The report promotes continuous improvement by:

- identifying effective practices in the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessments
- recommending where and how to enhance the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments
- providing examples that demonstrate best practice.

Schools are encouraged to reflect on the effective practices identified for each assessment, consider the recommendations to strengthen assessment design and explore the authentic student work samples provided.

Audience and use

This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders, and teachers to:

- inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation
- assist in assessment design practice
- assist in making assessment decisions
- help prepare students for internal and external assessment.

The report is publicly available to promote transparency and accountability. Students, parents, community members and other education stakeholders can use it to learn about the assessment practices and outcomes for senior subjects.

Subject highlights

339

schools offered
Modern History



98.57%

of students
received a
C or higher

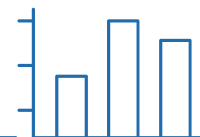


89.91%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA1



Subject data summary



Unit completion

The following data shows students who completed the General subject or alternative sequence (AS).

Note: All data is correct as at January 2026. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered Modern History: 339.

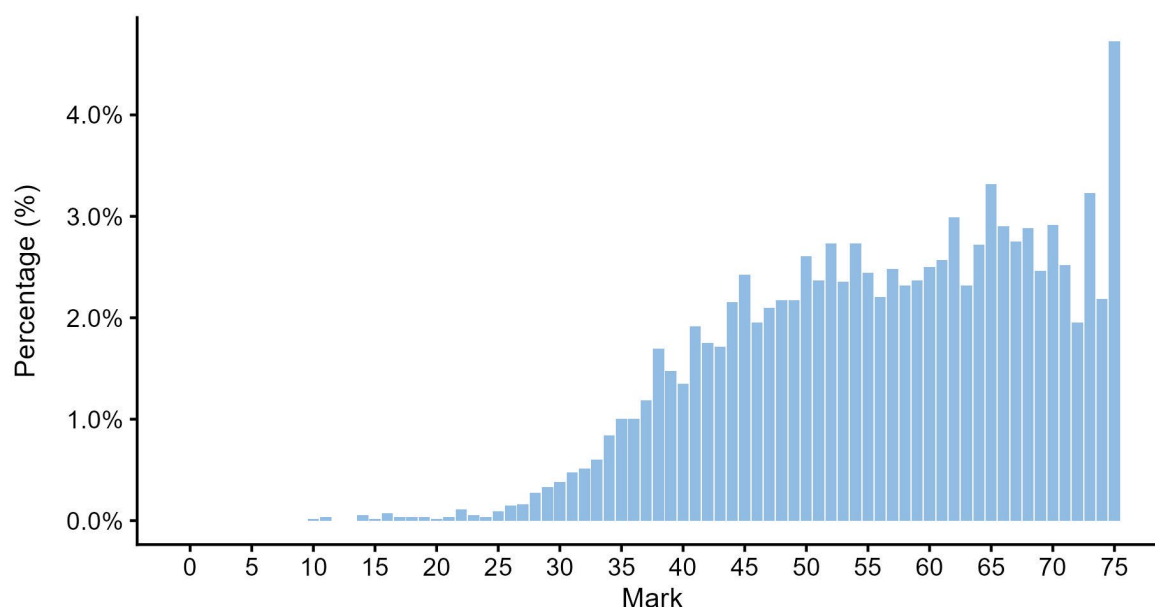
Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	6,103	5,847	5,450

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Unit 1	Unit 2
Satisfactory	5,645	5,511
Unsatisfactory	458	336

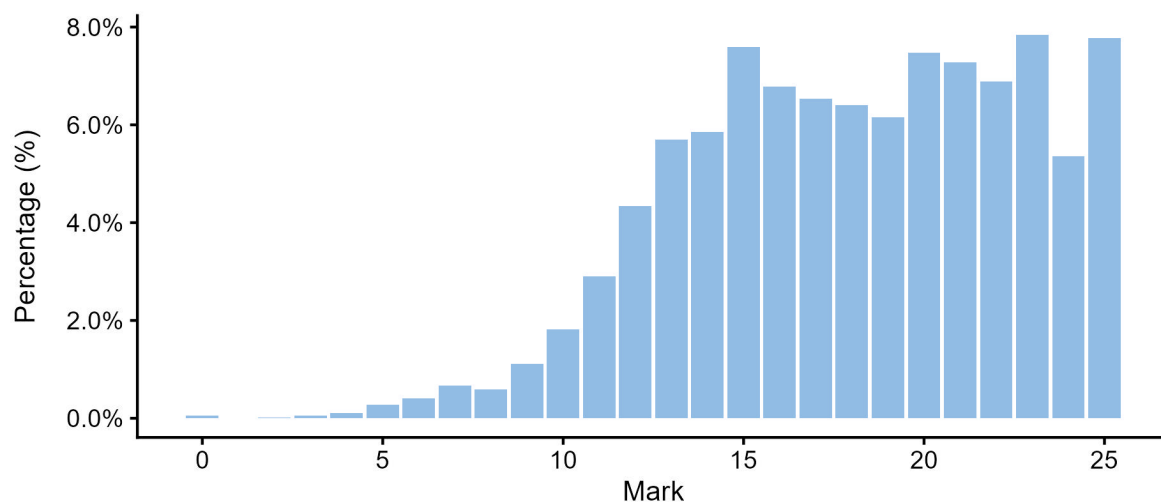
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA

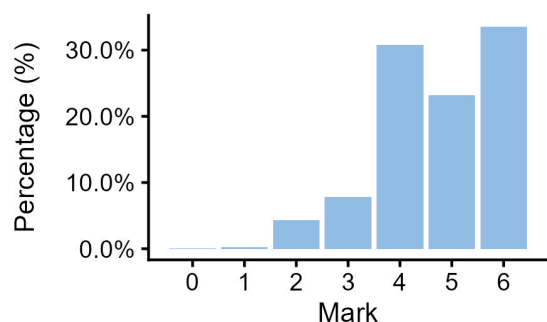


IA1 marks

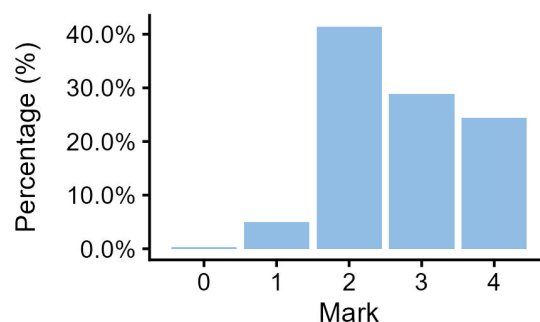
IA1 total



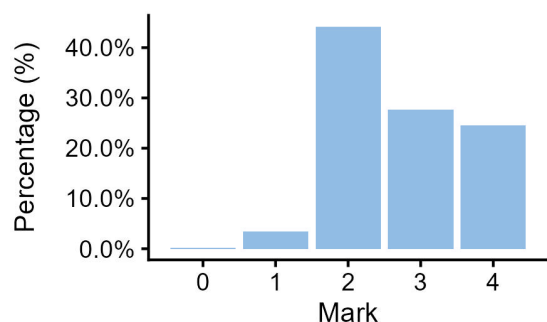
IA1 Criterion: Comprehending



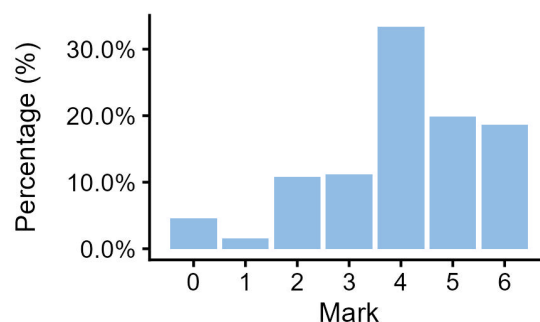
IA1 Criterion: Analysing



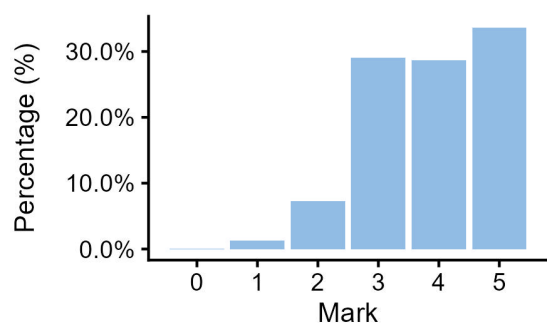
IA1 Criterion: Synthesising



IA1 Criterion: Evaluating

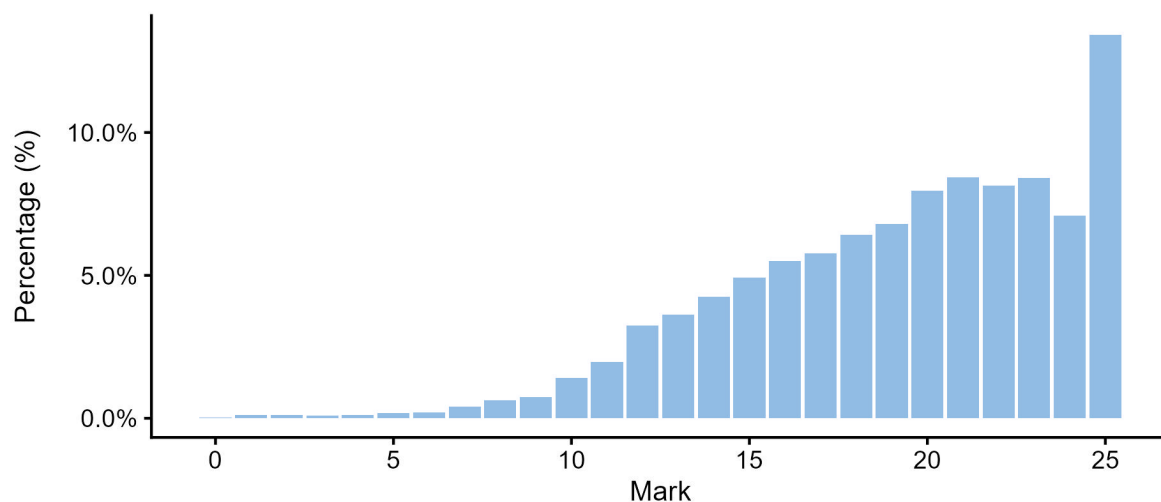


IA1 Criterion: Creating and communicating

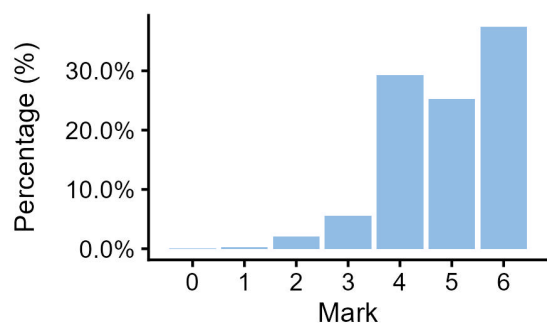


IA2 marks

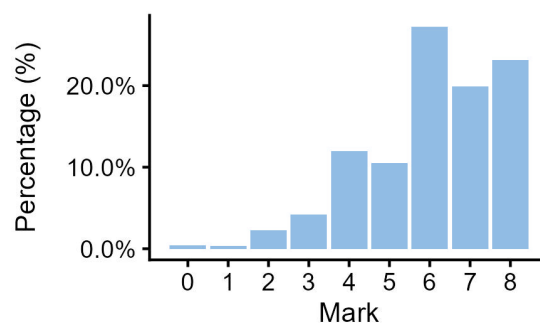
IA2 total



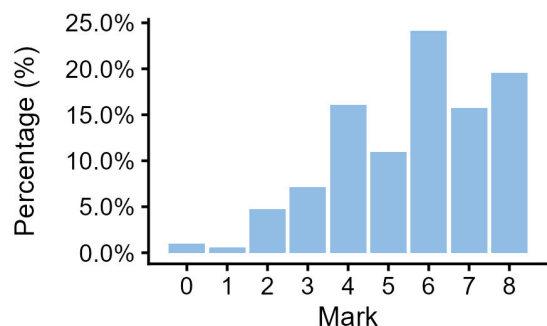
IA2 Criterion: Devising and conducting



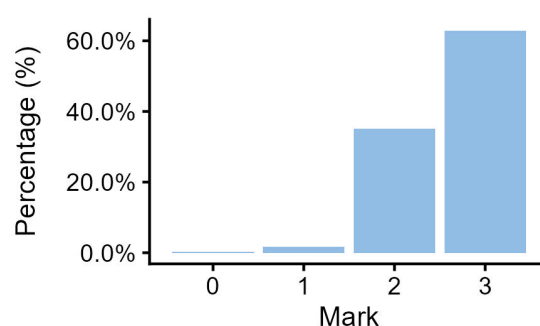
IA2 Criterion: Analysing



IA2 Criterion: Evaluating

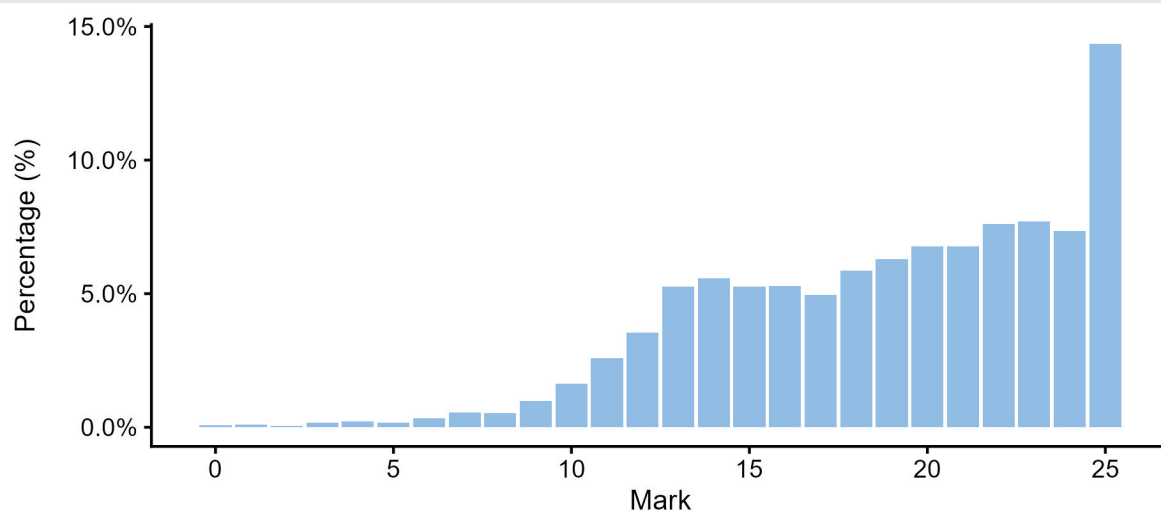


IA2 Criterion: Creating and communicating

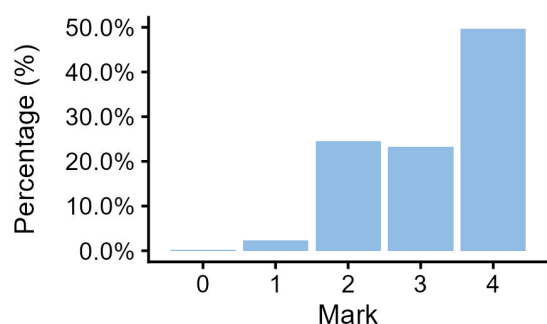


IA3 marks

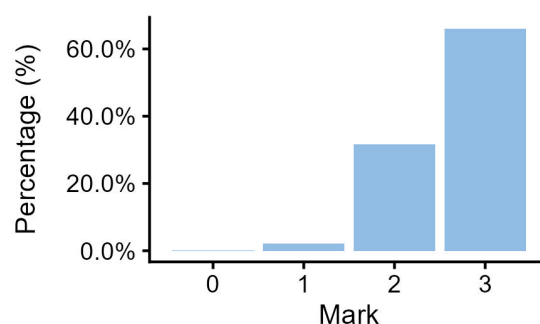
IA3 total



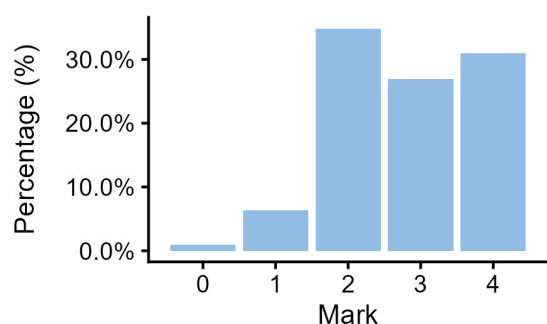
IA3 Criterion: Comprehending



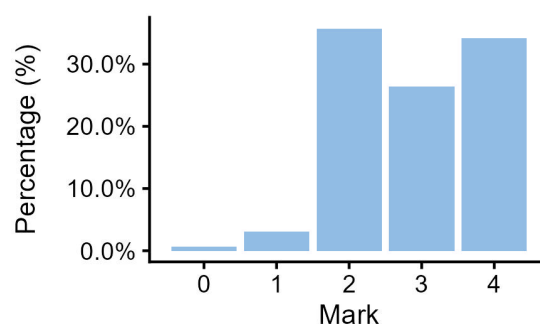
IA3 Criterion: Devising and conducting



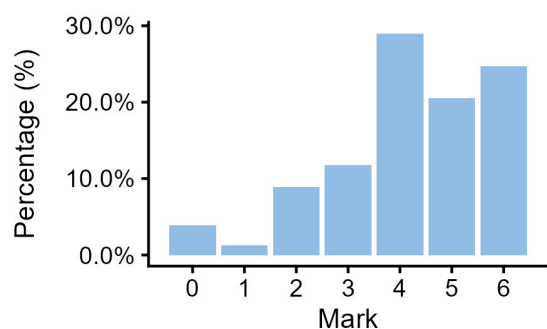
IA3 Criterion: Analysing



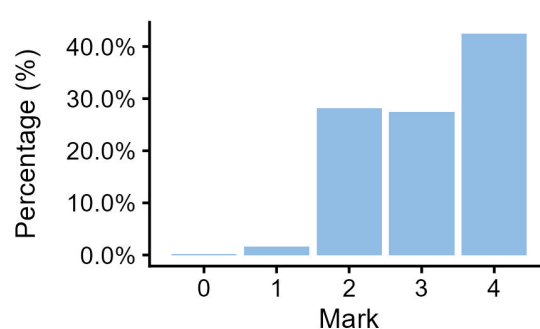
IA3 Criterion: Synthesising



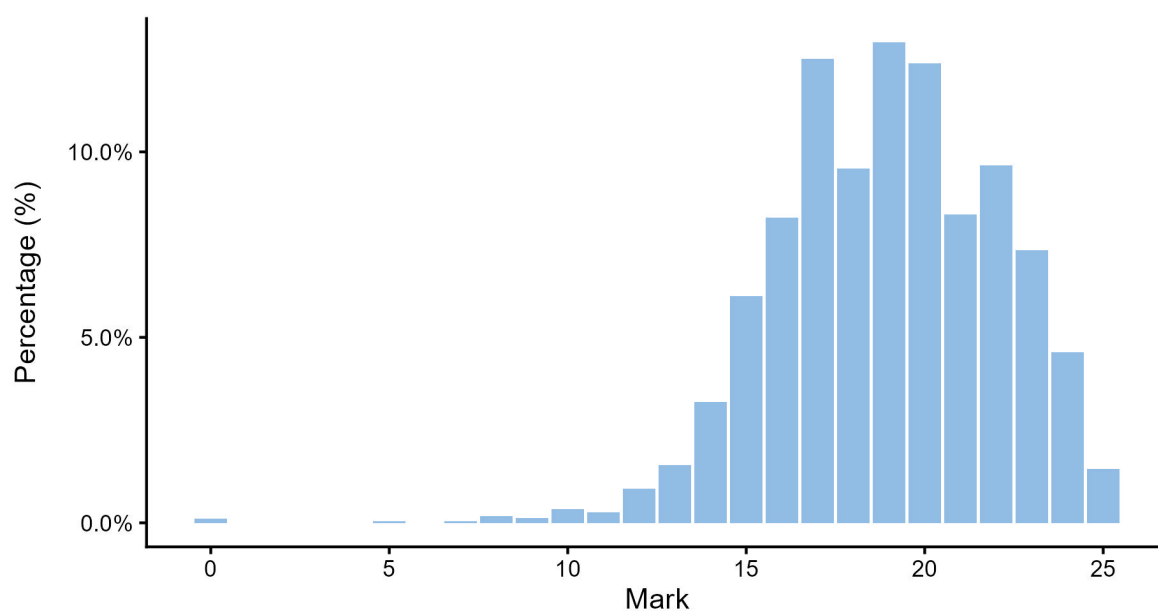
IA3 Criterion: Evaluating



IA3 Criterion: Creating and communicating

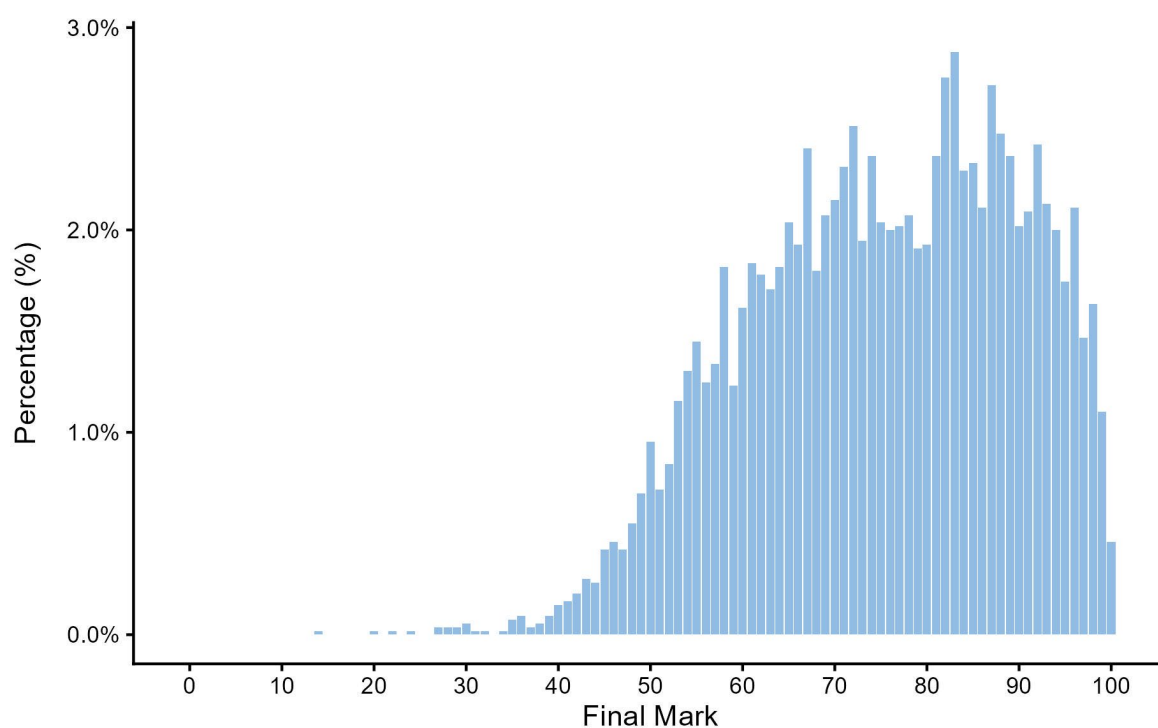


External assessment (EA) marks



Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA



Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–84	83–67	66–44	43–18	17–0

Distribution of standards

Number of students who achieved each standard across the state.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	1,824	2,045	1,503	77	1
Percentage of students	33.47	37.52	27.58	1.41	0.02

Internal assessment



This information and advice relate to the assessment design and assessment decisions for each IA in Units 3 and 4. These instruments have undergone quality assurance processes informed by the attributes of quality assessment (validity, accessibility and reliability).

Endorsement

Endorsement is the quality assurance process based on the attributes of validity and accessibility. These attributes are categorised further as priorities for assessment, and each priority can be further broken down into assessment practices.

Data presented in the Assessment design section identifies the reasons why IA instruments were not endorsed at Application 1, by the priority for assessment. An IA may have been identified more than once for a priority for assessment, e.g. it may have demonstrated a misalignment to both the subject matter and the assessment objective/s.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Internal assessment	IA1	IA2	IA3
Number of instruments	339	339	339
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	82	92	93

Confirmation

Confirmation is the quality assurance process based on the attribute of reliability. The QCAA uses provisional criterion marks determined by teachers to identify the samples of student responses that schools are required to submit for confirmation.

Confirmation samples are representative of the school's decisions about the quality of student work in relation to the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) and are used to make decisions about the cohort's results.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0*, Section 9.6.

The following table includes the percentage agreement between the provisional marks and confirmed marks by assessment instrument. The Assessment decisions section for each assessment instrument identifies the agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks by criterion.

Number of samples reviewed and percentage agreement

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	337	2,275	0	89.91
2	337	2,294	0	84.87
3	337	2,258	0	79.53

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)



Examination — essay in response to historical sources (25%)

The examination assesses the application of a range of cognitions to an unseen question.

Student responses must be completed individually, under supervised conditions, and in a set timeframe.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Alignment	51
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	6
Scope and scale	8

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided an unseen question that was appropriate for the syllabus conditions, which included narrowing the question to a specific
 - person, group of people or organisation, e.g. a senior member of the Chinese Communist Party rather than the whole of the Chinese Communist Party
 - timeframe, e.g. specific year/s rather than multiple decades or longer
 - idea or a subset of an idea, e.g. views on economic liberalism rather than economics or liberalism
- addressed the requirement for students to apply ethical scholarship. Some instruments elaborated further by directing students to
 - identify a source based on its label (e.g. Source 1, Source B or Source III), title, authorship (full name or family name, e.g. Vladimir Lenin or Lenin), or a combination of these approaches
 - use a recognised system of referencing. This approach, which was less common, is acceptable but is not mandated.
- included stimulus that conformed to syllabus specifications, particularly the inclusion of context statements for all sources. Context statements may include information about the author,

time of production and any general details about the circumstances in which a source was produced, e.g.

- how others, such as contemporaries of the author or illustrator, have responded to the evidence from the source
- issues associated with the translation of evidence from a source into English
- the size, presentation and/or original colour scheme of a visual source
- included stimulus relevant to the task, with evidence that allowed students to address the unseen question. For example, sources may align with, contradict or challenge a particular line of thinking developed when responding to the unseen question.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- cite the full name from the syllabus for this assessment instrument — essay in response to historical sources — rather than other descriptions, e.g. analytical essay, argumentative essay, narrative prose
- include the correct number of sources in the stimulus.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment.

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Bias avoidance	10
Language	10
Layout	4
Transparency	0

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided clear instructions about the unseen question using cues aligned with specifications, objectives and ISMGs, e.g. signposting the unseen question by
 - placing it on its own separate line within the task section of the assessment instrument
 - highlighting it using bold, italics and/or colour
- avoided unnecessary jargon by using appropriate scaffolding in the stimulus sources. For instance, the first time an abbreviation appeared in a source (e.g. UNHRC), it was immediately followed by the full name in square brackets (e.g. UNHRC [United Nations Human Rights Commission]).

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- promote the accessibility of evidence from sources included in the stimulus by
 - providing translations of all words that are not in English
 - including definitions for words and/or phrases that students
 - cannot understand from the context in which these words are written
 - have not been exposed to previously
- are free from incorrect publication dates for sources in the stimulus
- minimise distractors in sources that form a part of the stimulus by, e.g.
 - using, where appropriate, the same font and size for the written sources
 - using ellipses in written sources to remove remarks that have little or no relationship to the unseen question.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The 2025 General syllabus and AS resource list the features of the assessment technique on page 11, rather than in the specifications section. An assessment instrument can provide a description of these features by, e.g.
 - stating ‘all its features’ or ‘all features of the task’
 - listing all the features as written in the syllabus and AS resource
 - a combination of the above approaches.
- The syllabus conditions no longer include word length for examinations. The *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0* (Section 8.2.6) provides guidance about managing response length. This guidance applies to more open-ended assessment techniques, such as essays, reports and presentations. By specifying a maximum length for student generated work for these techniques, the expected scope of the task is appropriately limited. Managing response length does not apply to examinations. For examinations, the syllabus assessment conditions specify the time allocated, including any perusal or planning time. Schools should design examinations with an appropriate number of questions, and provide suitable space or lines for responses, to guide students in completing the examination within the allowed time. A required or recommended word length must not appear on IA1 instruments.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Comprehending	99.41	0.59	0.00	0.00
2	Analysing	99.70	0.30	0.00	0.00
3	Synthesising	98.22	1.48	0.30	0.00
4	Evaluating	92.88	7.12	0.00	0.00
5	Creating and communicating	98.81	1.19	0.00	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for the Comprehending criterion, judgments recognised the use of terms (plural) being correctly placed into historical contexts. For example, in one response, the terms Father Adrian Turchinsky and the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Brisbane were linked to the emergence of Russian Orthodoxy as a part of Australia's religious history during the 1920s and 1930s
- for the Analysing criterion, judgments recognised
 - the identification *and* examination of features of evidence (plural) at the upper and mid performance levels.
 - the use of a range of sources (e.g. primary and secondary sources, written and visual sources, sources that reflect different perspectives) from the stimulus supplied for identifying the features of evidence at the upper performance level
- for the Synthesising criterion, judgments recognised the combination of information from the stimulus supplied to support a *sophisticated* historical argument at the upper performance level. A sophisticated historical argument reflects intellectual complexity, e.g.
 - is multifaceted and/or multilayered
 - involves considered refutation or reconciliation of contradictory or otherwise problematic evidence from sources included in the stimulus
 - is well supported through the corroboration of historical evidence
 - engages with the historical, methodological and/or philosophical assumptions underscoring evidence from sources included in the stimulus
 - reflects a combination of one or more of the above
- for the Creating and communicating criterion, judgments recognised the *consistent* demonstration of the features of an essay in response to historical sources at the upper performance level, e.g. the introduction set the context and included a hypothesis *and* an outline of the argument.

Practices to strengthen

When making judgments for this IA for the 2025 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The Evaluating criterion in the 2025 syllabus
 - assesses judgments, rather than judgments and statement/s, related to the usefulness and/or reliability of evidence from historical sources
 - does not require these judgments to be corroborated
 - now includes descriptors to capture judgments characterised as superficial, irrelevant or inaccurate.

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- for the Evaluating criterion, attention is given to ensuring judgments are reflected in responses. At the upper and mid performance levels, judgments (plural) about the usefulness *and/or* reliability of evidence from sources are required.

Additional advice

It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- Each criterion assessed is now worth the same number of marks in the 2025 syllabus.
- The Analysing, Evaluating and Synthesising criteria are each described in one performance-level descriptor, rather than three, in the 2025 syllabus.
- The low performance level for the Comprehending criterion has two performance-level descriptors, rather than three, in the 2025 syllabus.
- The Synthesising criterion in the 2025 syllabus now includes a performance level that characterises a historical argument as effective.

Samples

The following excerpts address an unseen question that focuses on the extent to which Roosevelt's New Deal achieved relief, recovery and reform for the American nation in the wake of the Great Depression.

Excerpt 1 demonstrates the thorough and mostly accurate use of terms placed into historical context by linking the terms to specific times, places, and/or spaces related to the unseen question. The terms include, for example, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal.

Excerpt 2 marks the beginning of a detailed examination of implicit meanings associated with FDR's aspirations for greater executive power. The excerpt provides a detailed examination by identifying the explicit evidence in the source and elaborating on this evidence with precision, and clarity about a plausible intended interpretation.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Following his inauguration as president in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt established the New Deal, a series of ^{Terms} policies, programmes and ~~not~~ organisations which aimed to help America recover from the hardships following the Great Depression. It was a departure from ^{the} previous governments' laissez-faire doctrine, with the government taking a more active role in the nation's affairs; directly ^{using} its power to ~~controlling~~ ^{facile} ~~facile~~ issues faced by the American people. ^{Hypothesis} The New Deal was mostly effective ~~at~~ at achieving relief, recovery and reform, ~~as it achieved~~ through its ^{that dealt} strategies ~~to deal~~ with economic, social and ~~politi~~ political challenges. It helped the unemployed both in ~~regaining~~ jobs and re-employment and ~~while they were~~ financial difficulties, inspired the American people and was a successful ^{signposting} trade off between civil liberties and government control.

Excerpt 2

However, ~~the New Deal was also~~ FDR's ~~political~~ ^{Arg.} ~~interest~~ in order to introduce his ~~poli~~ the New Deal's policies, FDR ~~needed~~ needed more political power, although he was able to achieve an ~~effett~~ effective compromise between the government's control and civil liberties. In a cartoon ~~published~~ ^{origin} published in the Chicago Tribune in 1937, Joseph Parrish depicted FDR's ~~at~~ attempts to gain more power, depicting showing FDR ~~asking~~ holding a large bowl of power and asking for, "more please" (Source 7), implying that ^{FDR} Roosevelt was attempting to further increase his power and become a ~~dictator~~ dictator. However, ^{FDR} Roosevelt himself justified his requests for more power in his inaugural address, highlighting how he would need, "broad ~~executive~~ executive power to wage a war against the ~~emergency~~ ^(Source 1) emergency", in order ~~to~~ to achieve the New Deal. ⁵⁷ ⁵¹ ^{used}

Internal assessment 2 (IA2)



Investigation — independent source investigation (25%)

An independent source investigation uses research and investigative practices to assess a range of cognitions in a particular context. It is an opportunity for students to demonstrate the application of historical concepts and historical skills — by selecting and analysing a range of historical sources and considering different perspectives — to the investigation.

Investigative practices and research include locating and using evidence from historical sources and information that goes beyond what has been provided to the student in class. Research conventions, including citations and reference list, must be adhered to. Responses are completed individually, under process writing conditions, over a number of hours.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Alignment	18
Authentication	1
Authenticity	3
Item construction	8
Scope and scale	1

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- allowed for unique responses by
 - directing students to decide *for themselves* the specific area of the past they would investigate, regardless of whether or not a list of *possible* suggestions was included
 - providing general guidance, rather than highly specific and prescriptive advice about the development of responses
 - emphasising that a response template, if provided, could be adapted or rejected at students' discretion.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include checkpoints that are suitable for the task and align with the authentication strategies. Checkpoints must *not* include instructions that

- relate to the requirements for other assessment instruments, particularly the historical essay based on research, e.g. refer to the need for an introductory paragraph
- mandate requirements that exceed those in the syllabus, e.g. refer to the inclusion of an annotated reference list
- contradict the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, e.g. refer to the submission of two drafts, rather than one.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Bias avoidance	0
Language	1
Layout	0
Transparency	2

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided clear instructions using cues that aligned with the specifications, objectives and ISMG. This was often facilitated by
 - putting all or most instructions in one place, typically the task section
 - directing students to complete the response themselves, e.g. 'To complete this task, you must', 'To complete this task, students will'.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The features of the assessment technique have been revised and are now listed in the Additional subject-specific information section (General syllabus and AS resource, p. 11). Revisions include
 - the removal of a rationale
 - revised requirements for the source interrogation
 - revised requirements for the critical summary to accommodate the addition of the Synthesising criterion to the ISMG
 - an adjusted suggested response length breakdown to accommodate the above revisions.

An assessment instrument can provide a description of the features by, e.g.

- stating 'all its features' or 'all features of the task'

- listing all the features as written in the syllabus and AS resource
- a combination of the above approaches.
- The syllabus conditions no longer include word length for examinations. The *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0* (Section 8.2.6) provides guidance about managing response length. This guidance applies to more open-ended assessment techniques, such as essays, reports and presentations. By specifying a maximum length for student generated work for these techniques, the expected scope of the task is appropriately limited. Managing response length does not apply to examinations. For examinations, the syllabus assessment conditions specify the time allocated, including any perusal or planning time. Schools should design examinations with an appropriate number of questions, and provide suitable space or lines for responses, to guide students in completing the examination within the allowed time. A required or recommended word length must not appear on IA2 instruments.
- Mark allocations have been revised for all criteria.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Devising and conducting	97.92	1.78	0.30	0.00
2	Analysing	97.03	2.37	0.59	0.00
3	Evaluating	86.65	13.35	0.00	0.00
4	Creating and communicating	99.41	0.30	0.30	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for the Devising and conducting criterion, judgments recognised the application of the key inquiry question at the upper and mid performance levels. This was achieved when the historical research included in responses was clearly linked to the key inquiry question, e.g. the rationale, source analysis and/or critical summary of evidence discussed how or why the evidence from selected sources
 - helped to address the key inquiry question, which may have included affirming or challenging its conceptualisation
 - facilitated revisions to the key inquiry question that was eventually cited in the response
 - prompted new lines of investigation related to the key inquiry question

- related to historiographical, political or other types of discourse that may assist in addressing the key inquiry question
- conveyed a combination of the above
- for the Analysing criterion, judgments recognised the *discerning* identification of the features of evidence from primary and secondary sources at the upper performance level. The features of evidence are characterised as discerning when they are clearly linked with one or more of the historical questions included in the response
- for the Creating and communicating criterion, judgments recognised the *consistent* demonstration of ethical scholarship at the upper performance level. This requires students to apply a recognised system of referencing across their response, including a reference list. Irrespective of the recognised system of referencing being applied, all the ideas included in the response that originate from others, whether in the form of direct quotes or paraphrasing, must be referenced.

Practices to strengthen

When making judgments for this IA for the 2025 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The Evaluating criterion in the 2025 syllabus
 - assesses judgments, rather than judgments and statement/s, related to the usefulness and/or reliability of evidence from historical sources
 - does not require these judgments to be corroborated
 - now includes descriptors to capture judgments characterised as superficial, irrelevant or inaccurate.

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- judgments about usefulness *and* reliability are reflected at the upper performance level (7–8 marks). These judgments must typically be *discerning* across the response
- judgments about usefulness *and/or* reliability are reflected at the second performance level (5–6 marks). These judgments must typically be *effective* across the response
- judgments about usefulness *and/or* reliability are reflected at the third performance level (3–4 marks). These judgments must typically be *adequate* across the response.

Additional advice

It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- Each criterion assessed is now worth the same number of marks in the 2025 syllabus.
- The Devising and conducting criterion in the 2025 syllabus now requires students to *acknowledge* different perspectives.
- The Synthesising criterion is now assessed in the 2025 syllabus. While evidence for other criteria may be present in this section, the focus of the critical summary must be on synthesising, i.e. the creation of a historical argument in response to the key inquiry question, which combines evidence from the chosen 4–6 sources to support the historical argument (2025 syllabus, p. 11).
- The Analysing, Evaluating and Synthesising criteria are each described in one performance-level descriptor, rather than three, in the 2025 syllabus.

Samples

The following excerpts address a key inquiry question that focuses on how the Night of the Long Knives was used by Hitler to eliminate threats and secure public support to fortify his position as leader of the Nazi Party.

Excerpt 1 identifies and provides a detailed examination of the explicit and implicit meanings associated with Hindenburg's perspective toward the execution of SA members as part of the Night of the Long Knives. This identification and examination is discerning because the student examines the perceived existence of genuine threats to the political stability of the Nazi Party in relation to the focus of the key inquiry question.

Excerpt 2 reflects the detailed use of evidence from primary and secondary sources that demonstrate the application of the key inquiry question and sub-questions. This is evidenced where the explicit and implicit meanings of the Bullock and Low sources are linked to the implications of the Night of the Long Knives in achieving Hitler's political control.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Night of the Long Knives. Hindenburg commends Hitler for orchestrating and purge, demonstrating his supportive perspective towards the execution of SA members. In stating that "Hitler stopped treason in the bud", Hindenburg implies the existence of genuine threats towards the political stability of Nazi Party and that Hitler's actions were not motivated by personal political gain.

Excerpt 2

Contemporary and modern perspectives suggest Hitler orchestrated the purge for political self-interest. Bullock (1962) and Low (1934) provide insight into the notion that Hitler intended cement his succession to the presidency and position as party leader through the undertaking of the purge. In Bullock's excerpt, Hitler is represented to have falsified the reasoning for the purge, Bullock depicts this through stating that Hitler disguised the purge "as action forced on him not by pressure from the Right, but by disloyalty and conspiracy on the Left". This shows that Hitler misrepresented the purge to advance his own agenda. Accordingly, evidence further indicates that Hitler didn't perform these actions for the betterment of the NSAP but employed them as a vessel to better his political standing. This is corroborated by Low, therefore heightening Bullocks reliability. This corroboration is seen through Low's hyperbolised cartoon where he displays Hitler's absolute sovereignty, implying that the main outcome of the Night of the Long Knives was to further the ascendancy of Hitler's control of the military and cement himself as Germany's next leader.

References

Bullock, A. (1990). *Hitler: A Study of Tyranny*, Penguin Press. (Originally published 1962.)

Low, D. (1934, July 3). They salute with both hands now. [Cartoon]. *The London Evening Standard*.

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)



Investigation — historical essay based on research (25%)

This assessment requires students to research a historical topic through collection, analysis and synthesis of primary and secondary sources. A historical essay based on research uses investigative practices and research to assess a range of cognitions in a particular context. Investigative practices and research include locating and using evidence from historical sources and information that goes beyond what has been provided to the student in class. Responses are completed individually, under process writing conditions, over a number of hours.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Alignment	17
Authentication	6
Authenticity	3
Item construction	2
Scope and scale	1

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- reflected the selection and contextualisation of one Unit 4 topic that had not been nominated by the QCAA as the basis for external assessment.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include checkpoints that align with the specifications, e.g. refer to a key inquiry question rather than sub-questions
- address the assessment specification about the application of ethical scholarship by directing students to use a recognised system of referencing to acknowledge sources (including a reference list). Assessment instruments may do this in a variety of ways including, e.g.
 - using the statements about ethical scholarship exactly as written in the syllabus and AS
 - requiring students to apply a particular referencing system, including a reference list.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Bias avoidance	0
Language	1
Layout	0
Transparency	0

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided clear instructions using cues aligned with the specifications, objectives and ISMGs, e.g. using bold and/or italics to emphasise the words 'student-driven' in the task section
- were free from errors and modelled accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation and other textual features, e.g. correct use of apostrophes and semicolons, capital letters for proper nouns.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The 2025 General syllabus and AS resource list the features of the assessment technique on page 11, rather than in the specifications section. An assessment instrument can provide a description of these features by, e.g.
 - stating 'all its features' or 'all features of the task'
 - listing all the features as written in the syllabus and AS resource
 - a combination of the above approaches.
- The 2025 General syllabus and AS resource prescribe a revised length of up to 2,000 words, *including the key inquiry question and direct quotes*.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Comprehending	99.41	0.59	0.00	0.00
2	Devising and conducting	99.41	0.59	0.00	0.00
3	Analysing	97.03	2.67	0.30	0.00
4	Synthesising	98.81	1.19	0.00	0.00
5	Evaluating	83.38	16.32	0.30	0.00
6	Creating and communicating	97.03	2.37	0.59	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for the Comprehending criterion, judgments recognised the explanation of issues related to a key inquiry question. For example, a key inquiry question about the origins of the Space Race between the Soviet Union and the United States of America during the 1960s was addressed by focusing on issues associated with the proliferation of knowledge about rocket engineering in the wake of Operation Paperclip, the militarisation of space, and the general alarm raised by the popular press in Western nations following the successful launch of *Sputnik I* in 1957
- for the Devising and conducting criterion, judgments recognised the use of evidence from primary *and* secondary sources at the upper performance level
- for the Analysing criterion, judgments recognised the examination of features of evidence from *primary and secondary sources* at the upper performance level or *sources* at the mid performance level
- for the Creating and communicating criterion, judgments recognised the consistent demonstration of the features of a historical essay based on research and ethical scholarship (e.g. inclusion of a student-generated key inquiry question above the first paragraph of the response) at the upper performance level.

Practices to strengthen

When making judgments for this IA for the 2025 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The Evaluating criterion in the 2025 syllabus
 - assesses judgments, rather than judgments and statement/s, related to the usefulness and/or reliability of evidence from historical sources
 - does not require these judgments to be corroborated
 - now includes descriptors to capture judgments characterised as superficial, irrelevant or inaccurate.

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- for the Synthesising criterion, attention is given to determining if the historical argument reflects intellectual complexity *or* covers the core points associated with the key inquiry

question when determining whether a historical argument should be characterised as sophisticated or basic, respectively.

Additional advice

It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2019 and 2025 syllabuses:

- The features of an IA3 (2025 syllabus, p. 11) now specify that the student's key inquiry question must be included at the beginning of their response. This is one of the features of a historical essay based on research that is assessed in Communicating.
- The Analysing, Evaluating and Synthesising criteria are each described in one performance-level descriptor, rather than three, in the 2025 syllabus.
- The low performance level for the Comprehending criterion has two performance-level descriptors, rather than three, in the 2025 syllabus.
- The Synthesising criterion now includes a performance level that characterises a historical argument as effective in the 2025 syllabus.

Samples

The following excerpts are from a response that addresses a key inquiry question focused on the extent to which the dissolution of the USSR was the primary cause for the cessation of the nuclear arms race during the Cold War.

Excerpt 1 was extracted from a body paragraph within the response and reflects a discerning judgment about usefulness. In this case, the student uses evidence such as explicit and implicit meanings, origin and context from the primary source in a discerning manner to substantiate a judgment about the usefulness of the source.

Excerpt 2 was extracted from another body paragraph within the same response and reflects the combination of evidence from primary and secondary sources to justify insightful decisions about the impact of arms limitation negotiations and treaties. In this case, the student combines information from primary and secondary sources to justify insightful decisions about how arms limitation treaties contributed to the de-escalation of the nuclear arms race.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

The destabilisation of the USSR was driven by structural economic stagnation and political challenges, which Mikhail Gorbachev sought to address from 1985 through the reform policy of *perestroika*, aimed at revitalising the economy by increasing governmental transparency. In *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Gorbachev retrospectively reflects that "Perestroika is an urgent necessity arising from the profound processes of development in our socialist society. Any delay in beginning perestroika could have led to an exacerbated internal situation in the near future, which...would have been fraught with serious social, economic, and political crises" (Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbačev, 1996). Written after the Soviet collapse, this statement underscores Gorbachev's recognition of the primacy of internal pressures within the USSR that demanded urgent reform. While Gorbachev's account provides a useful, authoritative perspective on the internal crises driving *perestroika*, its autobiographical nature introduces potential Soviet bias, as his personal investment in the policy leads him to emphasise its constructive intent while omitting its ultimate failure to prevent the USSR's disintegration. However, when considered alongside independent evidence of the USSR's tangible decline in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev's reflection remains a valuable indicator that it was systemic weakness, rather than arms control efforts, that fundamentally destabilised Soviet power.

Excerpt 2

Throughout this tense struggle for global dominance, both superpowers amassed vast nuclear arsenals in pursuit of strategic superiority, turning nuclear proliferation into a dominant force and prompting international calls for arms control (Aliprandini & Goodwin, 2024). By the 1970s, bilateral arms control negotiations, such as the *Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (SALT I), culminated in the 1972 *Anti-Ballistic Missile* (ABM) Treaty in which both nations agreed “not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems” in order to “be a substantial factor in curbing the race in strategic offensive arms...[decreasing] the risk of outbreak of war involving nuclear weapons” (United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.). By removing missile defence systems, the treaty strategically reinforced the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), disincentivising first-strike actions and slowing arms production. This strategic function is evident in the treaty’s explicit causal language, framing such constraints as essential to curbing the nuclear arms race and consolidating détente (Office of the Historian, 2019). This momentum continued into the *Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces* (INF) Treaty of 1987, where the US and USSR jointly agreed to “eliminate their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles” and permitted the “right to conduct on-site inspections”, displaying the radical shift from limiting to dismantling nuclear arsenals (I.I.N.O.R. Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, n.d.).

External assessment



External assessment (EA) is developed and marked by the QCAA. The external assessment for a subject is common to all schools and administered under the same conditions, at the same time, on the same day. The external assessment papers and the external assessment marking guide (EAMG) are published in the year after they are administered.

Examination — short responses to historical sources (25%)

Assessment design

The assessment instrument was designed using the specifications, conditions and assessment objectives described in the summative external assessment section of the syllabus. The examination consisted of one paper (48 marks). Students were required to provide paragraph-length answers to four short response items using evidence from the historical sources provided in the stimulus book.

General syllabus examination

This examination assessed subject matter from Unit 4. Questions were derived from Topic 1: Australian engagement with Asia since 1945 (World War II in the Pacific ends) and the aspect of the topic: Australia and the Vietnam War. The stimulus book included excerpts from primary and secondary sources that conveyed information about a range of issues related to Australia and the Vietnam War, including:

- the relationship between Australia and the United States of America during the Vietnam War, with reference to the policy of forward defence
- the extent to which Australian historians and a historical source have a shared view that the tours of duty of Australian veterans were viewed as personally and militarily challenging
- how members of the Australian Labor Party were divided in their views on Australian involvement in the Vietnam War
- how students impacted the course of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.

AS examination

The AS examination assessed subject matter from AS Unit 2. Questions were derived from Topic 8: Anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, 1948–1991 (apartheid laws start — apartheid laws end) and the aspect of the topic: strategies used to oppose apartheid in South Africa. The stimulus book included excerpts from primary and secondary sources that conveyed information about a range of issues related to strategies used to oppose apartheid in South Africa, including:

- the relationship between Satyagraha and strategies used to oppose apartheid in South Africa
- the extent to which cultural historians and a historical source have a shared view that the music industry in the United States of America was viewed as either opposing or doing little to oppose apartheid in South Africa
- how consumer boycotts were interpreted as contributing to the end of apartheid in South Africa

- how embargoes on the sale of weapons to the Government of South Africa contributed to the end of apartheid.

Assessment decisions

Assessment decisions are made by markers by matching student responses to the EAMG.

Effective practices

Overall, students responded well to:

- the requirements of the Comprehending criterion in Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4. This was evident when students included the use of relevant terms from sources that were placed in historical context
- the requirements of the Evaluating criterion in Question 3. This was evident when students unpacked the evidence from Sources 4, 5 and 6 to support their judgments about how each source was useful for investigating the extent to which members of the Australian Labor Party were divided in their views on Australian involvement in the Vietnam War (General examination) or the extent to which consumer boycotts were interpreted as contributing to the end of apartheid in South Africa (AS examination)
- the requirements of the Creating and communicating criterion in Questions 3 and 4. This was evident when students organised their paragraph/s purposefully to succinctly and fluently convey ideas related to the questions
- the requirements of the Synthesising criterion in Question 4. This was evident when students skilfully combined well-chosen evidence to form a historical argument based on the question: 'to what extent did students have an impact on the course of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War' (General examination) or 'to what extent did embargoes on the sale of weapons to the Government of South Africa contribute to the end of apartheid' (AS examination).

Practices to strengthen

When preparing students for external assessment, it is recommended that teachers consider:

- implementing learning experiences that support students to effectively respond to short response questions, e.g.
 - deconstructing questions, paying close attention to how the syllabus objectives, nominated sources, instructions and/or proposed investigations relate to each other
 - deconstructing questions to determine the number of parts that need to be addressed in each question and forming point sentences that address the full question
 - collaboratively and independently writing sample responses with emphasis on effectively structuring a response, using well-chosen evidence, skilfully combining evidence from historical sources and (when applicable) creating a sophisticated historical argument
 - engaging students in self-reflection and peer-review processes to evaluate written responses using past examination materials
- conducting time management activities, where the focus is on
 - understanding what can be done during planning time
 - making choices about how to approach the questions in the paper and assign approximate time allocations for each question during planning time

- planning a response and checking that all the required parts of the question have been addressed in the planning.

Additional advice

- It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2025 and 2026 Modern History external examinations:
 - Schools must select one of the following two topics to teach for their 2026 external examination, as per QCAA memos [016/24](#) and [044/25](#)
 - Unit 4, Topic 4: Mass migrations since 1848 (California Gold Rush begins)
Aspect of the topic: Migration from Asia to Australia 1960s–1990s
 - or
 - Unit 4, Topic 8: Cold War and its aftermath, 1945–2014 (Yalta Conference begins — Russo–Ukrainian War begins)
Aspect of the topic: Reasons for the end of the Soviet Union, 1980s–1990s.
 - The 2019 syllabus specified the approximate weighting of assessment objectives for the external assessment. This information has been removed, so there is no prescribed approximate percentage of marks for each assessment objective in the 2025 syllabus.
 - Word lengths and the specified number of questions have been removed from the conditions in the 2025 syllabus.

Samples

Short response

Question 2 (AS examination)

This question required students to analyse evidence from Source 3 to explain the extent to which *Sun City* aligns with the view of cultural historians that the music industry in the United States of America either opposed or did little to oppose apartheid in South Africa.

Effective student responses:

- explained the extent to which the cultural historians and *Sun City* have a shared view about the music industry in the United States of America opposing apartheid in South Africa, using well-chosen evidence from Source 3
- explained the extent to which the cultural historians and *Sun City* have a shared view about the music industry in the United States of America doing little to oppose apartheid in South Africa, using well-chosen evidence from Source 3
- included one term from Source 3
- included a second term from Source 3
- used relevant terms from Source 3 that are placed in historical context.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate how it could be interpreted that cultural historians and *Sun City* have a shared view that the music industry in the United States of America did little to oppose apartheid in South Africa

- to demonstrate how students can draw on a range of evidence from the source, such as the title, reference details, context statement and/or footnotes (if applicable). In this instance, the student drew on information contained in the context statement
- to demonstrate how evidence from Source 3 was well-chosen when it closely aligned with the explanation. In this instance, the student clearly explained how the information in the source supported an interpretation of how cultural historians and *Sun City* had a shared view that the music industry in the United States of America did little to oppose apartheid in South Africa.

Source 3 also indicates, however, that the songwriter, Steven Van Zandt, and the Artists United Against Apartheid may have been exceptions within the music industry in the USA as it indicates that in the 1980s, "a range of singers from the United States of America performed at Sun City." The inclusion of these details in Source 3 may indicate that the source, to a significant extent, aligns with the view that the music industry in the USA did little to oppose apartheid in South Africa, instead indicating that Zandt acted in exception to the music industry's attitude towards apartheid.

Question 3 (General examination)

This question required students to evaluate evidence from Sources 4, 5 and 6 to determine their usefulness for investigating the extent to which members of the Australian Labor Party were divided in their views on Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.

Effective student responses:

- explained discerning judgments about usefulness for Sources 4, 5 and 6, and used well-chosen evidence from each source
- used relevant terms from Sources 4, 5 and 6 that were placed in historical context
- organised paragraph/s purposefully to succinctly and fluently convey ideas relating to the question.

This excerpt has been included:

- to demonstrate a high-level response where a discerning judgment about the usefulness of evidence from Source 5 is included. This judgment is discerning because it explains specifically why the evidence from Source 5 is relevant for exploring the extent to which members of the Australian Labor Party were divided in their views on Australian involvement in the Vietnam War

- to illustrate how judgments about usefulness can be determined by discussing the strengths and limitations of the evidence provided by the source in relation to the investigation
- to illustrate the use of well-chosen evidence from Source 5, particularly the selection of direct quotes and discussion of implicit meanings that clearly and plausibly linked with the judgment noted above.

Saunders

states that the ~~general~~ ALP's general attitude towards peace movements had been transformed into one of "ambivalence" by the 1960s, with some members of the ALP being indifferent towards the Peace Congress, while others "were regularly invited and often appeared at pacifist meetings" (Source 5). ~~That~~ Saunders's article is moderately useful as while it emphasises some divisions in the ALP surrounding support for peace movements, it does not ^{explicitly} ~~extensively~~ communicate the extent to which this division contributed to the ALP's stance on ^{sustained} involvement in Vietnam. While it can be assumed that those who supported the peace congress were in favour of decreasing, or withdrawing Australian involvement in Vietnam, Saunders does not explicitly comment on whether such ~~unproven~~ opinions were shared or contested by the remainder of the ALP, ultimately limiting the source's usefulness.

Question 4 (General examination)

This question required students to synthesise evidence from Sources 7, 8, 9 and 10 to form a historical argument in response to the question 'To what extent did students have an impact on the course of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War?'

Students were also asked to include a judgment about the extent to which evidence from two or more of the sources corroborated the historical argument being presented in their response.

Effective student responses:

- developed a sophisticated historical argument that responded to the question
- skilfully combined evidence from Sources 7, 8, 9 and 10 to develop the historical argument
- explained a discerning judgment about the extent to which evidence from two of the sources corroborated the historical argument being presented
- used relevant term/s from Sources 7, 8, 9 and 10 that were placed into historical context

- organised paragraph/s purposefully to succinctly and fluently convey ideas relating to the question.

These excerpts have been included:

- to demonstrate a high-level response where intellectual complexity — a central feature of a sophisticated historical argument — was reflected by acknowledging and addressing perspectives that were raised in the evidence from Sources 7 (Masell) and 8 (Karageorgos) that challenged the historical argument posed.

However, while students played a role in increasing youth engagement in ~~the~~ anti-war movements, other activist groups and individuals ^{also} played a significant role in the advocacy that culminated in Australia's withdrawal from the war. Ellie Karageorgos' 2023 article ~~acknowledges~~ acknowledges that while young people are often given credit for their advocacy efforts, "older activists regularly play a part in protest movements" as well (Source 8). Acknowledging that interest and ~~in~~ involvement ~~was~~ in the anti-war campaigns extended beyond just ~~the~~ ~~at~~ Australia's student population, with the proposed historical argument. Additionally, Karageorgos' perspective is corroborated by Masell, who acknowledges that alongside students, "trade unionists, office workers, housewives" and other members of the general public made significant contributions to the ~~protestations~~ and anti-war movements that prompted the gradual decline of support for Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.