Ancient and Modern History 2004
Advice for teachers

Category 1: Extended written response to historical evidence
December 2011
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About this advice

This advice is intended to help teachers implement the syllabus in their school setting. It provides information about:

- features of Category 1 tasks
- considerations for the design and implementation of Category 1 tasks
- sources for further advice.
Category 1: Extended written response to historical evidence

Features

In Category 1 instruments students write an extended response to an historical question under test conditions. The response is drawn primarily from evidence located in a set of sources provided by the teacher. While some content knowledge from classroom learning will be used to tie the argument together, this will not overshadow the engagement with sources provided in the test. Details of the characteristics and conditions for Category 1 tasks are found on page 54 of the Ancient History Syllabus 2004 and on page 49 of the Modern History Syllabus 2004.

Students will undertake this process when completing Category 1 assessment:

1. Consider the unseen historical question (or statement to respond to).
2. Evaluate the historical sources provided in order to make a decision about the question (or statement).
3. Synthesise evidence from the sources to write an essay that justifies an historical argument.

Category 1 assessment instruments provide evidence for Criterion 2: Forming historical knowledge through critical inquiry, and Criterion 3: Communicating historical knowledge. It is anticipated that schools will apply the full range of standards descriptors for Criteria 2 and 3 in a Category 1 instrument. Highlighted standards and annotated responses to an Ancient History and Modern History Category 1 task are available on the Ancient History www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html and Modern History www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html subject pages at the QSA website to assist teachers in matching student work to the standards.

Considerations for task design and implementation

Conditions

Category 1 instruments are completed under test conditions in response to an unseen question. To maintain the syllabus requirement for an unseen question, this task must be completed in one sitting. The syllabus recommends 90–120 minutes working time. No notes may be brought into the room and teachers must provide clean copies of the sources for the test (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 54, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 49).

Question

For Category 1 instruments students may be asked to respond to either a question or a statement. The question or statement must include a point of contention to ensure it elicits decision-making from students. For Year 11, some brief guidelines about how to structure a response might be included.

It is advisable to narrow the question to one particular aspect of a wider inquiry. Overly philosophical questions beyond the scope of a student essay, and broad questions that will only elicit a narrative or descriptive response, should be avoided. For example, rather than a broad question about the Cold War, a question about an aspect of the Cuban Missile Crisis will allow students to develop a more focused response. It is essential that the question is manageable within the recommended word length (Year 11: 500–600 words; Year 12: 600–800 words).
More than one question may be offered to students, but teachers must then ensure the sources provided are suitable for each question.

**Sources**

The school’s work program will indicate the decisions the school has made regarding the sources to be provided. In Year 11 all sources may be seen, or some sources seen and some unseen. At this level all sources will be relevant and would clearly be either for or against the question or statement being addressed. By Year 12 some sources must be unseen. The use of all unseen sources is also possible. It is a syllabus requirement that some “contestable” sources are provided for Year 12, Category 1 instruments (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 54, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 49).

**Seen** sources are those that students have encountered before, and know will be on the test. It is anticipated that these sources will have been discussed and used in class. **Unseen** sources have not been presented to students before the test, and students do not know that they will appear on the test.

The number of sources is not stipulated but teachers should consider the time available for the test as they select sources, and decide which will be seen and unseen. For example, if a long, written source is required this might be included in the seen sources.

Effective student responses will incorporate direct and indirect references to historical evidence in order to support a hypothesis that answers the question or responds to the statement. Providing sources that offer a range of perspectives will enhance opportunities for students to demonstrate aspects of Criterion 2 such as evaluating the relevance, representativeness, likely accuracy and likely reliability of sources. Some contextualising information for each source can assist students to do this evaluation. This contextualising information should be brief and only provide enough information for students to make their own judgments about the source. For example:

- **Source 1:** Cicero was a famous orator of the Republican Era (1st Century BCE). He was a champion of the old Roman values.

- **Source 1:** Tagore, the renowned Indian visionary and poet, participated in the Indian Nationalist Movement and was a devoted friend to Gandhi.

The incorporation of evaluation of evidence throughout the essay lends strength to the argument. Advice on how this evaluation of sources may be incorporated succinctly and fluently into a written response is found under Assessment advice on the Ancient History [www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html) and Modern History [www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html) subject pages at the QSA website. For a Category 1 instrument it is acceptable for students to use a simplified form of referencing to refer to sources using only author’s name or source number, e.g. Barnes (Source 4) maintains that … or Source C depicts …
Further support

For further advice see the documents listed below, available on the Ancient History [www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html) and Modern History [www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html) subject pages at the QSA website, or contact the Senior Education Officer at seo@qsa.qld.edu.au.

- Category 1: Assessment design guide
- (Sample instruments and responses) *Extended written response to historical evidence*
- Criterion 3: Communicating historical knowledge — Incorporating direct and indirect reference to historical evidence
- Criterion 3: Communicating historical knowledge (Standard A only) — Refer to the evaluation process without disrupting the argument
- Quality-assuring senior assessment instruments: a tool for schools
- Designing effective assessment.