Category 2: Written research tasks
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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 2 tasks
- considerations for the design and implementation of Category 2 tasks
- sources for further advice.
Category 2: Written research tasks

Features
Category 2 instruments engage students in an independent historical inquiry that explores an aspect of the inquiry topic and theme under study. Students present the results of their inquiry in an extended written response that adheres to the conventions of the nominated genre. Details of the characteristics and conditions for Category 2 tasks are found on page 55 of the Ancient History Syllabus 2004 and on page 50 of the Modern History Syllabus 2004.

One possible format is a written assignment where the response is in the form of an analytical essay in which a hypothesis is tested or research question answered. Other options include a formal report, a persuasive or argumentative essay, a piece of historical re-creation or fiction, or a feature article. Teachers should check the format/genre nominated in their school work program. If changes to the work program are required, schools submit a work program amendment.

Category 2 assessment instruments provide evidence for Criterion 1: Planning and using an historical research process, 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 a Category 2 instrument. The highlighted standards on the Ancient History www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html and Modern History www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html subject pages emphasise the qualities that discriminate between the standards.

Considerations for task design and implementation

Topic
The relevant theme purpose statement in the syllabus (Ancient History Syllabus, pp. 27–48, and Modern History Syllabus, pp. 28–43) is a useful starting point when developing and focusing Category 2 assessment tasks.

Year 11 students may be provided with research topics or a research question from which they can develop appropriate sub-questions. Negotiation of the topic is also an option for Year 11 students.

Year 12 students are required to negotiate their research question with their teacher (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 55, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 50). Teachers may provide suggestions for areas of investigation that are within the scope of the inquiry topic and theme under study.

A rationale provided by the student will acknowledge the origins of their research question. For example, a few sentences explaining how the student came up with the question, why it is of interest and how it links to the inquiry topic and theme would be sufficient.

Research process
A process of historical inquiry will be demonstrated through research via the five Aspects of Inquiry that are referred to in the syllabus in Section 6: Learning Experiences, Section 7: Themes and Inquiry Topics and Section 8: Assessment (Ancient History syllabus, p. 19, and Modern History syllabus, p. 20):

- Definitions
- Sources
- Backgrounds, changes and continuities: motives and causes
• Effects, interests and arguments
• Reflections and responses.

Directing students to the Aspects of Inquiry when developing Category 2 assessment instruments will enhance opportunities for students to demonstrate elements of Criterion 1: Planning and using an historical research process. For example, the Aspects of Inquiry could be used to structure students’ records of research.

The scaffolding provided and format selected to maintain records of research is a school decision. Research booklets, notebooks with headings, templates filled in electronically, or student developed records based on guidelines on the task sheet are some of the ways students have recorded their progress through an inquiry.

Reflection occurs at all stages of research; however, it is the key moments of critical reflection that should be evidenced in student folios. Examples of these reflections could include when students:

• encounter information that alters the direction of their research, including revision of research questions and sub-questions
• encounter and address difficulties, e.g. contradictory evidence
• synthesise the information they have located for each sub-question, e.g. answer their sub-questions
• make changes to, or confirm, their hypothesis.

Conferencing and monitoring of progress throughout the research period is an important element of the inquiry and also assists in authenticating student work. The syllabus states that: “Consultation and feedback on the research process should be provided judiciously, gradually diminishing with student experience and confidence” (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 55, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 50).

Evidence needs to be retained to substantiate judgments made about Criterion 1: Planning and using an historical research process, such as research questions, rationale, notes, reflections and planning. Judgments about standards for Criterion 1 must be based on the qualities of the evidence submitted, not the quantity.

Final response

Evidence for Criteria 2 and 3 judgments will be found in the final response where students will demonstrate that they have formed and communicated historical knowledge.

While students will record notes evaluating sources in their record of research as part of their application of the Aspects of Inquiry, this thinking should transfer through to the final written response where the evaluation and use of sources of evidence is integral to developing a strong argument and justifying “insightful decisions” (Criterion 2, A standard). At A standard, this will include: some interpretation of values, motives and perspectives, while acknowledging the context of the production of sources; some corroboration of sources; and evaluation of relevance, representativeness, likely accuracy and likely reliability of key sources (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 62, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 57).

Students are to adhere to the conventions of the nominated genre when forming their written response. Discussion and evaluation of historical evidence should be incorporated in a way that is appropriate to the genre. In the analytical essay genre this evaluation would be integrated throughout the essay. In a genre such as historical fiction, where discussion of sources within the text would disrupt fluency, the evaluation of key sources of evidence might be accomplished through footnotes or an author’s note on sources. Advice on how this evaluation may be incorporated succinctly and fluently into arguments is found under Assessment advice on the

The general objectives state that students should be able to use a “correctly formatted bibliography and the conventions of referencing” (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 8, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 8). The syllabus states that for a written assignment “full referencing” is used, and for other formats “referencing appropriate to the genre” (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 55, and Modern History Syllabus p. 50).

**Further advice**

For further advice see the documents listed below, available at 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.

- **Categories 2 and 3: Assessment design guide**
- **Sample assessment task 2 (Modern History)**
- **Sample assessment task 1 (Ancient History)**
- **Reflective questions**
- **Keeping a reflective log**
- **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.**