Category 4: Additional test formats
December 2011
Advice for teachers

Category 4: Additional test formats

Compiled by the Queensland Studies Authority
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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 4 tasks
- considerations in the design and implementation of Category 4 tasks
- sources for further advice.
Category 4: Additional test formats

Features

Category 4 instruments are supervised tests that may take a variety of formats. For all formats the questions/tasks are unseen. Details of the characteristics and conditions for Category 4 tasks are found on page 57 of the Ancient History Syllabus 2004 and on page 52 of the Modern History Syllabus 2004.

The most common formats chosen by schools are response to stimulus tests or combined short response and response to stimulus tests. These formats provide good opportunities for students to demonstrate Criterion 2: Forming historical knowledge through critical inquiry and Criterion 3: Communicating historical knowledge. Other formats possible include: objective tests, essay tests, editorials or news articles. It is possible to apply the full range of standards descriptors for Criteria 2 and 3, with the exception of referencing (in Criterion 3). Teachers should check the format/genre nominated in their school’s work program. If changes to the work program are required, schools submit a work program amendment.

It should be clear how judgments have been made by matching the qualities of student responses to the standards. The highlighted standards on the Ancient History www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2047.html and the Modern History www.qsa.qld.edu.au/2055.html subject pages at the QSA website emphasise the qualities that discriminate between the standards.

Considerations in task design and implementation

Combined short response and response to stimulus tests

The selection of sources and design of questions must provide students with opportunities to demonstrate the range of syllabus standards for Criteria 2 and 3. The five Aspects of Inquiry may be used as a guide to develop questions:

- Definitions
  - questions asking for definitions of key terms and historical concepts
  - questions about the significance of, or relationship between, events, people and developments

- Sources
  - questions about the likely accuracy, reliability, relevance or representativeness of the sources, taking into account the time period and context of production (see below for examples)

- Backgrounds, changes and continuities: motives and causes
  - questions about the backgrounds, causes, changes or continuities studied in the inquiry

- Effects, interests and arguments
  - questions focused on the perspectives, arguments, explicit and implicit meanings, patterns, values and motives identified in sources (see below for examples)

- Reflections
  - questions that allow students to reflect on understandings developed during the inquiry
  - questions that lead to decision making/justifying a historical argument.
Response to stimulus tests

The questions provided should offer opportunities for students to explicitly demonstrate the various aspects of Criterion 2. As with Category 1 tasks, it is suggested that schools might provide a brief contextualising statement for each source provided (especially unseen sources) to assist students to make insightful judgments in relation to historiographical considerations. Clean copies of sources are provided in the test and seen and unseen sources should be clearly labelled.

The examples below show how foregrounding key words from the general objectives and standards can assist in framing questions that allow students opportunities to explicitly demonstrate their historical thinking:

• Evaluate the **likely reliability** of Source A. Justify your response.
• What does the cartoon (Source C) **imply** about US motives? Explain your reasoning.
• What may have been X’s **motive** in producing this source?
• Comment on the **likely accuracy** of this source taking this into consideration.
• How might the perspective offered in Source 4 be affected by the **time period in which it was produced**?
• Is the point of view in this letter (Source 3) **representative** of mainstream opinions from that time? Explain your reasoning.

It is also advisable to include some sources that offer a variety of perspectives on the same aspect of the inquiry to allow for questioning across sources — differing perspectives may be identified, historical accounts may be corroborated, and sources can be synthesised to reach a decision or justify an argument, as shown in these examples:

• What **perspectives** do Sources A and B give concerning X’s motivations to reform?
• Identify at least one other source that **corroborates** the view presented in Source 1. Justify your answer with evidence from the sources.
• To what extent does Source 3 convey similar **values and motives**? Explain with evidence.
• Refer to Sources A–D. Do these sources present a positive, critical or neutral view of X? Briefly explain your reasoning for each source (categorising evidence).
• Is there evidence to support the assertion that ....? Refer to the evidence in Sources 1–5 to justify your decision.

Unseen essay

The syllabus states that for a Category 4 essay, no notes or additional materials are permitted during the test (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 57, and Modern History Syllabus, p. 52). Where a Category 4 unseen essay is assessing Criterion 2, student responses must make definite reference to significant sources. Because no notes or sources may be brought in to the test, the main sources accessed in class may be listed on the assessment instrument to remind students of the range of sources that they could make reference to in their response. It is possible for schools to choose to set an unseen essay that assesses Criterion 3 only. However, such a task would not meet the syllabus post-verification requirement to assess Criterion 2.
Further support

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 site, or contact the Senior Education Officer at [seo@qsa.qld.edu.au](mailto:seo@qsa.qld.edu.au).

- **Category 4: Assessment design guide**
- **Criterion 3: Communicating historical knowledge** — Incorporating direct and indirect reference to historical evidence
- **Criterion 3: Communicating historical knowledge** — Refer to the evaluation process without disrupting the argument
- **Quality assuring senior assessment instruments: a tool for schools**
- **Designing effective assessment.**