

# A position paper from QHTA relating to Senior History syllabuses v1.1 (24 September 2018)

## Focus 1: Objectives and Instrument-specific marking guides

**Aim:** Seeking further revision and refinement to ensure that

- teachers and students can understand what is required
- help teachers make good judgements when assessing student work

## Syllabus objectives, pp. 6-7

### 1.2.1 Syllabus objectives

The syllabus objectives outline what students have the opportunity to learn. Assessment provides evidence of how well students have achieved the objectives.

Syllabus objectives inform unit objectives, which are contextualised for the subject matter and requirements of the unit. Unit objectives, in turn, inform the assessment objectives, which are further contextualised for the requirements of the assessment instruments. The number of each objective remains constant at all levels, i.e. Syllabus objective 1 relates to Unit objective 1 and to Assessment objective 1 in each assessment instrument.

Syllabus objectives are described in terms of actions that operate on the subject matter. Students are required to use a range of cognitive processes in order to demonstrate and meet the syllabus objectives. These cognitive processes are described in the explanatory paragraph following each objective in terms of four levels: retrieval, comprehension, analytical processes (analysis), and knowledge utilisation, with each process building on the previous processes (see Marzano & Kendall 2007, 2008). That is, comprehension requires retrieval, and knowledge utilisation requires retrieval, comprehension and analytical processes (analysis).

By the conclusion of the course of study, students will:

Syllabus objective	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
1. comprehend terms, concepts and issues	•	•	•	•
2. devise historical questions and conduct research	•	•	•	•
3. analyse evidence from historical sources to show understanding	•	•	•	•
4. synthesise evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument	•	•	•	•
5. evaluate evidence from historical sources to make judgments	•	•	•	•
6. create responses that communicate meaning to suit purpose	•	•	•	•

#### 1. comprehend terms, concepts and issues

When students comprehend terms, concepts and issues, they acquire an understanding about matters proceeding from any cause, effect, outcome or consequence; and any general notion or idea that is used to develop an understanding of the past. They establish links between information to understand the nature and significance of historical concepts (e.g. evidence, continuity and change, and perspectives) and general concepts (e.g. democracy, imperialism and liberalism).

#### 2. devise historical questions and conduct research

When students devise historical questions and conduct research, they frame a key inquiry question and sub-questions and develop a research plan to guide an investigation. They understand the complexities within the research that is generated from these questions. Students locate and organise information from primary and secondary sources, and they identify and practise a research process.

#### 3. analyse evidence from historical sources to show understanding

When students analyse evidence from historical sources to show understanding, they identify the features, which may include origin, motive, audience, perspective, context, explicit meanings and implicit meanings. They use this information to break down, examine and/or interpret these features.

Two other important skills students do when they analyse evidence from sources is to compare and contrast this evidence and categorise it. (Marzano and Kendall call these mental operations 'matching' and 'classifying' respectively). These skills should be included in any explanation of analysis as per Marzano and Kendall.

Based on the principle that 'each process build[s] on the previous processes', swap the order of objectives 4 & 5 as in the discipline of History, synthesis builds on evaluation, rather than the other way around. We understand that under the new taxonomy of educational objectives, presented by Marzano and Kendall, the place of synthesis in the hierarchy of mental processes has been questioned. His example of the process of driving a manual car is a case in point. However, in the discipline of History, synthesis cannot be 'learnt off' as a skill-set or automatically acquired as students are always dealing with different evidence in different contexts. This category of cognition calls for creative behaviour on the part of students because it involves newly constructed and oftentimes unique products. As a high-order process, it remains a challenging task. Furthermore, in History, students need to evaluate the worth of sources (objective 5) before synthesising them (objective 4). And likewise, synthesis is the key process that helps to create effective responses that communicate meaning (objective 6).

What does this mean and how might it be shown?

The whole idea of 'features of evidence' needs to be re-thought. The introduction of 'new language' such as this needs to be approached with caution as it can skew or misrepresent what has traditionally been understood in the discipline of History. Does evidence have a motive or is it the author/creator of the source? Is audience a 'feature of evidence' or do all sources have an audience? Is 'explicit meanings and implicit meanings' a 'feature of evidence' or is it the *outcome of interacting* with evidence – students derive/ comprehend/ apply elicit explicit and implicit meaning from the evidence?

**'evaluate evidence':** While it is valid to evaluate evidence from historical sources, this is just a sub-set of a wider evaluation of historical sources. In other words, evidence is just one aspect of a historical source. Other aspects include: type of source, author, date, purpose, motive, perspective, language etc.

#### 4. synthesise evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument

When students synthesise evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument, they select and combine information into a coherent whole. This synthesis may be used to support historical arguments and/or justify decisions about for example, ideas, evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, perspectives, contestability and interpretations.

**'they select':** The selection of evidence is based on an evaluation of this evidence (and the source it comes from). Thus the process of 'synthesis' builds on the process of 'evaluation' – another reason for swapping the order of objectives 4 & 5.

#### 5. evaluate evidence from historical sources to make judgments

When students evaluate evidence from historical sources to make judgments, they assess usefulness and reliability. They make judgments about this information and different perspectives of individuals and groups in the past, how they evolved and how these are shaped by the author's perspective. They assess contested views about the past to understand the provisional nature of historical knowledge. Based on their interpretations, students arrive at reasoned and corroborated judgments.

Replace **'this information'** with **'this evidence'**?

#### 6. create responses that communicate meaning to suit purpose

When students create responses that communicate meaning to suit purpose, they present an account that integrates evidence from sources to explain the past and to develop arguments. They select and use text forms and language conventions, and use recognised conventions of referencing that support ethical scholarship.

**'corroborated judgments':** judgments aren't corroborated. Rather, reasoned and insightful judgments are based on the corroboration and validation of historical evidence and sources.

## IA2, p. 70 and IA3, p. 90

### Criterion: Devising and conducting

#### Assessment objective

- devise historical questions and conduct research linked to a topic focused on national experiences in the Modern World

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discerning use of historical questions by creating a nuanced key inquiry question and relevant sub-questions</li> <li>detailed use of historical research by using evidence from primary and secondary sources that demonstrate application of the key inquiry question</li> <li>selection of evidence from primary and secondary sources that offer different perspectives.</li> </ul>	5–6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>appropriate use of historical questions by creating a key inquiry question and relevant sub-questions</li> <li>adequate use of historical research by using evidence from primary or secondary sources that demonstrate application of the key inquiry question</li> <li>selection of evidence from primary or secondary sources that offer perspectives.</li> </ul>	3–4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partial or fragmented use of historical questions by creating a key inquiry question and/or sub-question/s that are irrelevant, non-historical or vague</li> <li>rudimentary use of historical research by using evidence from a source that relates to the key inquiry question, sub-question/s or non-historical statements</li> <li>selection of a source or sources that offer a perspective.</li> </ul>	1–2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not satisfy any of the descriptors above.</li> </ul>	0

Unclear performance descriptor. See proposed alternatives following (top of page 3).

Rethink the use of the word **'use'** here. See proposed alternatives following (top of page 3).

**'Perspectives':** greater clarity required here. Perhaps: offer 'different perspectives' (keep for top level performance descriptor) v offer 'similar perspectives' (for second level performance descriptor). Offering perspectives as per second descriptor could be interpreted as same or different, so clarity is required.

## Proposed alternatives:

Change 'use' to 'develop' in dot-point 1

- discerning **development** of historical questions by creating a nuanced key inquiry question and relevant (&/or logically derived?) sub-questions

Dot-point 2 suggested changes

- judicious** use of **detailed** historical research from primary and secondary sources that demonstrate the application of the key inquiry question
- OR**
- judicious application / use of the key inquiry question by skilfully selecting and using detailed evidence from primary and secondary sources in the research

## IA2, p. 71

Apart from the problems identified with the use of the term 'features of evidence' (outlined overleaf), the issue here is that 'identification' elicits a lower level of thinking, despite the qualifier 'discerning' being attached. There is no suggestion of examining or interpreting.

### Criterion: Analysing

Assessment objective

3. analyse evidence from historical sources to show understanding that is linked to a topic focused on national experiences in the Modern World

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>discerning</u> identification of the <u>features of evidence</u> from primary and secondary sources</li> <li><u>detailed</u> examination of the features of evidence from primary and secondary sources</li> <li><u>informed</u> explanation about how evidence from sources contributes to the <u>development of the key inquiry question</u>.</li> </ul>	7–8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>appropriate</u> identification of the features of evidence from primary and secondary sources</li> <li><u>adequate</u> examination of the features of evidence from primary and secondary sources</li> <li><u>reasonable</u> explanation about how evidence from sources contributes to the development of the key inquiry question.</li> </ul>	5–6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identification of the features of evidence from sources</li> <li>examination of the features of evidence from sources</li> <li>explanation about how evidence from sources contributes to the development of the key inquiry question.</li> </ul>	3–4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>partial or fragmented</u> identification of a feature of evidence from a source or sources</li> <li><u>rudimentary</u> examination of a feature of evidence from a source or sources</li> <li><u>superficial</u> explanation about how evidence from a source or sources relate to the key inquiry question, sub-question/s or the topic.</li> </ul>	1–2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not satisfy any of the descriptors above.</li> </ul>	0

Replace 'development of the key inquiry question' with the 'development of a tentative hypothesis' or alternatively, 'informed explanation about how evidence from sources links to the key inquiry question'.



## IA3 (Research essay), p. 91

### Criterion: Synthesising

#### Assessment objective

4. synthesise evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument that is linked to a topic focused on international experiences in the Modern World

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>combination of information from sources to justify insightful decisions</li><li>combination of information from sources to support a sophisticated historical argument</li><li>these combinations use evidence from primary and secondary sources.</li></ul>	3-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>combination of information from sources to justify reasonable decisions</li><li>combination of information from sources to support a basic historical argument</li><li>these combinations use evidence from primary or secondary sources.</li></ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>combination of information from a source or sources relates to a partial or fragmented decision</li><li>combination of information from a source or sources relate to a superficial or rudimentary historical argument or a non-historical argument</li><li>these combinations use evidence from a source.</li></ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>does not satisfy any of the descriptors above.</li></ul>	0

#### Proposal:

Swap dot-point one and two – based on a question of logical progression.

#### Glossary:

features of evidence	attributes of information obtained from sources that are useful for a particular historical inquiry. These attributes may relate to, for example: origin, motive, audience, perspective, context, explicit meanings and implicit meanings
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#### Focus 2: Glossary

Aim: Seeking further revision and refinement.

#### Proposal:

- Rethink the term 'features of evidence' – should it be 'features of a source'? Features might include origins, context, purpose, motive, perspective, language, contents (or information)
- Remove definitions of specific historical events (such as 'Coup of 18 Brumaire', 'Great Shoemakers Strike in New England', 'French and Indian War'), publications (such as 'Encyclopedie'), legislation ('Indian Independence Act of 1947'), and general terms ('apartheid laws' and 'electoral campaigns') etc from the Glossary and replace with a separate, History specific online glossary which provides a comprehensive list of definitions for events, developments, ideas, terms etc. (This might be built up over time and be contributed to by teachers and students, with an editing oversight by QCAA.)