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|  | QHTA ministerial submission |
|  | Re. Mock external assessments for Ancient History and Modern History  23 December 2019 |

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   1. **External assessment**

Under Queensland’s new senior assessment system, summative external assessment is developed and marked by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA). In Ancient History and Modern History it contributes to 25% of a student’s overall subject result and takes the form of an examination entitled ‘Short responses to historical sources’.

This examination assesses the application of a range of cognitions (5 of 6 identified in the syllabuses) to unseen questions (3-5) in response to unseen historical sources (up to 12).

The assessment technique is used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

1. *comprehend* terms, concepts and issues linked to Augustus (for Ancient History) and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War (for Modern History)
2. *analyse* evidence from historical sources to show understanding that is linked to Augustus (for Ancient History) and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War (for Modern History)
3. *synthesise* evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument that is linked to Augustus (for Ancient History) and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War (for Modern History)
4. *evaluate* evidence from historical sources to make judgments linked to Augustus (for Ancient History) and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War (for Modern History)
5. *create responses that communicate* meaning to suit purpose that is linked to Augustus (for Ancient History) and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War (for Modern History).
   1. **Mock examinations**

In 2019 QCAA developed and published mock external assessments for all General senior syllabuses including Ancient History and Modern History in a bid to assist teachers and students in the implementation of the new assessment system. For each senior subject, QCAA developed two versions of the assessment – one for ‘school use only’ and one for ‘public use’. Schools are at liberty to use the mock examinations as they feel fit; however, QCAA has suggested that teachers may use the ‘public’ assessment to familiarise students with the papers, and use the other assessment as a ‘secure’ practice paper in late 2020.

The mock examinations for Ancient History and Modern History are deeply flawed papers as they do not allow for the thorough and accurate assessment of these syllabus objectives nor do they consistently adhere to the attributes of quality assessment as prescribed by the QCAA in its professional development materials.

* 1. **The attributes of quality assessment**

According to the QCAA the attributes of quality assessment are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VALIDITY** | **ACCESSIBILITY** |
| **Priorities for assessment** | |
| * alignment * authenticity * authentication * item construction * scope and scale | * transparency * language * layout * bias avoidance |

1. **Problems with the mock examinations for Ancient History and Modern History**

The mock examination papers developed by QCAA for Ancient History and Modern History do not abide by the attributes of quality assessment, as evident in the following[[1]](#footnote-1):

* 1. **Validity**

The mock assessment instruments for Ancient History and Modern History are not valid for the following reasons.

1. **Alignment**

The QCAA maintains that valid assessment is aligned to the curriculum as outlined in the syllabus.

There is a lack of alignment between syllabus specifications and the mock examinations in terms of the approximate weighting of objectives for both Ancient History and Modern History.A detailed explanation of the issue is in Appendix 1, page 22.

1. **Authenticity**

The QCAA maintains that assessment instruments are valid if authentic tasks are set that are meaningful and appropriately challenging given the teaching and learning that has taken place.

While the mock external assessment attempts to address five of the six syllabus objectives, it fails overall to present students with tasks that are sufficiently and appropriately challenging. The tasks do not reflect the level of understanding and skill that would be expected of senior students in their final term of study. As a consequence, the tasks will not be effective discriminators of levels of achievement of the unit objectives.

The lack of challenge appears to stem from five features of the mock external assessment:

1. a design decision that seems to ‘allocate’ only one specific objective to most questions, rather than exploiting the potential of all questions to address a greater number of objectives
2. the use of low-level questions which fail to exploit the potential of some of the sources for rigorous interrogation by the student
3. a selection of historical sources which are not always sufficiently connected to provide opportunities for substantial comparison, contrast, corroboration, contradiction and synthesis
4. the failure to require students to address important issues of ‘evaluation of sources’ in their answers, and
5. the lack of opportunity for students to draw on their prior knowledge of issues to inform their responses and/or add value to their responses.

All five points are illustrated most obviously in the Modern History ‘school use only’ paper.

Question 1 can arguably be seen as requiring nothing more than the ‘identification’ of an ‘explicit message’ in the source – a task that requires no specific historical ability, not even ‘comprehension’. (The question’s direction to ‘describe’ the explicit message is nonsensical.)

Source 1 (remarks made by Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1965) is an important source in Australian history but no probing questions are asked of it. Students could have been asked, for example, to:

* identify and explain how particular values and principles seem to underpin the remarks;
* identify any claims in the source that might be questionable or debatable, and why;
* nominate the potential target audiences Menzies probably had in mind;
* suggest whether various individuals and groups might have reacted differently to the remarks, and why;
* explain whether their study of the ‘Vietnam War’ unit had cast further light on the issue of Menzies’ stated justification for Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam conflict.

Question 2 refers to Source 2, part of a speech by Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell. One weakness is that the section of the speech selected by QCAA does not include Calwell’s main point – that the conflict in Vietnam was a civil war, not a southward thrust by Communist China. Question 2 requires students to simply ‘identify’ the use of ‘power’ in Calwell’s speech, and in no way to ‘explain’ or ‘evaluate’ it. The marking guide, for example, provides a ‘sample response’ which basically paraphrases two references to ‘power’ by Calwell – even though the criteria require ‘a plausible and detailed explanation’. Paraphrasing a statement is not ‘explaining’ it.

Surprisingly, this external assessment misses the opportunity to ask students to explain how Source 2 contradicts Source 1 on the vital issue of why Australia participated in the Vietnam War.

Question 4 requires students to use four of the six historical sources to draw conclusions. But the sources are not sufficiently connected to provide opportunities for valid comparison, contrast, corroboration, contradiction and synthesis.

Because the mock assessment culminates in this ‘synthesis’ task, there would have been greater opportunities for students to demonstrate the processes that underpin ‘synthesis’ if more appropriate and representative sources had been chosen. While Sources 3, 4 and 5 relate to public attitudes to Australia’s involvement in Vietnam, the selection of Source 6 is questionable as it relates to the public *reception of veterans* in 1987, *not to public attitudes* about Australia’s involvement in the war. The nature of Sources 3, 4 and 5 are so disparate and marginal (Source 3 – responses from Churches; Source 4 – response from the Communist Party of Australia and affiliates, and Source 5 a photograph of supporters and protesters during US president Lyndon Johnson’s visit to Australia in 1966) that the question posed is likely to produce student responses that are variously superficial, invalid or ahistorical.

The sample response provided in the marking guide provides the basic argument that “public opinion towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War was quite varied”. A sophisticated response would have been one that recognised change and continuity in public opinion over the duration of the war. Undoubtedly students would have been taught that initially public opinion was largely in favour of Australia’s involvement in the war but by the early 1970s the tide of public opinion had turned against the war. However, the poor selection of sources do not allow the top students to advance a more nuanced argument.

Furthermore, in Question 4 there is a failure to require students to address important issues of ‘evaluation of sources’ in their answers.There appear to be an assumption (implicit in the question, and borne out in the sample response) that sources can be trusted and relied upon to produce valuable evidence. The sample response suggests that students could treat a photo of a crowd in Sydney in 1966 as representative of the divisions in attitude nationwide; and that a photo of the 1987 ‘Welcome Home’ ‘may be interpreted as conveying positive sentiment towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War’. In the sample response, there is no acknowledgement that students are seeing a microscopic ‘slice’ of the issues, and that any ‘understanding’ that they ‘synthesise’ from those sources needs to be couched in the provisional language appropriate to tentative knowledge created from limited (and not necessarily reliable) sources.

To be authentic, the external assessment must allow students to draw on their prior learning in order to inform their responses and thus add value to their answers.

For example, in Question 4 a Modern History student might point out that the apparently strong anti-war ‘message’ in the 1966 photo was not representative of national sentiment overall, as evidenced in the landslide Coalition victory in the 1966 federal election fought largely on the issue of the Vietnam War. Or that, for many, supporting the 1987 ‘Welcome Home’ it was a chance to show belated respect to those Vietnam veterans who had been shunned and shamed in the early 1970s, when public opinion had turned dramatically against Australia’s participation in the war.

If students cannot demonstrate their deep understanding of the topic in the external assessment, then the questions in the external assessment become mainly a less challenging and less discriminating test of their ability to process text – a test of literacy rather of historical literacy.

1. **Scope and scale**

The QCAA maintains that assessment instruments are valid if the assessment instrument allows students to fully demonstrate the highest performance level descriptors with the conditions mandated by the syllabus for time and length.

Too often the mock external assessments for Ancient History and Modern History do not provide students with the opportunity to fully demonstrate their highest performance. This is due to:

1. Poor selection of historical sources as evident in the Modern History ‘school use only’ paper. (See elaboration in section b) authenticity.)
2. Context statements following sources which do not provide students with sufficient information. (This point will be elaborated on in the section ‘Accessibility’ which follows.)
3. Poorly crafted questions which either do not clearly indicate the full requirements of the task or use terminology incorrectly. (This point will be elaborated on in the section ‘Accessibility’ which follows.)
4. External assessment marking guides (EAMG) which favour quantitative responses over quality responses.
5. ‘Notes’ in the EAMG which provide example answers which don’t align with the questions asked on the mock assessment.
6. Sample responses which purport to demonstrate ‘the qualities of a high-level response’ but don’t.

The marking guides and sample responses, which accompany each of the mock external assessments for 2020, form part of the assessment instrument package. Due to inherent flaws in these materials student performance will be compromised. This is particularly the case for the State’s most able History students.

*Problems with the EAMGs*

* In each of the marking guides for the mock assessments for Modern History, students are judged in particular questions on the number of points as opposed to the quality of the point/s. (This is even when the question does not stipulate the number of points required in the response.) For example:
  + According to the EAMG for the Modern History ‘Schools use only’ and ‘public use’ papers Question 3, if the response “explains ways” in relation to a source’s usefulness it attracts 3/3 marks but if it “explains a way” it attracts 2/3 marks. There is no reference to the quality of the explanation – just the number of points in the explanation. It is conceivable that a top-level student might write a probing and sophisticated explanation on a source’s usefulness focusing on one particular salient point and receive 2 marks while another mid-level student might write a mediocre response mentioning two aspects of a source’s usefulness and receive the 3 marks. A top-level descriptor should require students to *justify* a source’s usefulness and reliability not just to *explain* it.
  + According to the EAMG for the Modern History ‘Schools use only’ paper Question 4, if the response uses evidence from Sources 3-6 in the stimulus book it attracts 3/3 marks. However, there is no reference to the quality or relevance of the evidence selected. It is possible for a student who selects irrelevant or marginal evidence from each of the sources to achieve the same mark as a student who selects the best and most relevant evidence.

*Problems with the ‘notes’ that accompany the EAMGs*

* + At times, answers don’t match questions asked (E.g. Question 1 Modern History ‘school use only’ paper – the question asks for one explicit message but the EAMG notes provide a range of answers that are either implicit or based on outside knowledge. Question 1 Ancient History ‘school use only ‘paper asks students to explain the meaning of a phrase but the responses provided in the ‘notes’ don’t answer the question. (See page 10 for further details.)

*Problems with the sample responses*

* + At times, historical arguments provided are basic and not sophisticated. (E.g. sample response to Question 4 Modern History ‘school use only’ paper posits the argument that public opinion was varied and provides a summary of each source one after the other rather than synthesising the evidence from the sources in any ‘sophisticated’ way as described in the EAMG.)

The lack of opportunity for more able students to demonstrate deep understanding, and thus distinguish their examination performance from that of other students, has serious implications for the awarding of overall grades and for the subsequent determination of each student’s Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

* 1. **Accessibility**

The mock assessment instruments for Ancient History and Modern History are not accessible for the following reasons.

1. **Transparency**

The QCAA maintains that for assessment to be accessible students are clear about what is being assessed and how the assessment will be marked.

*Lack of transparency in what will be assessed*

In August 2017, QCAA issued a memo which outlined sample content for the topics selected for the external assessments for Ancient History (Augustus) and Modern History (Australian involvement in the Vietnam War). While this sample content is available on the QCAA Portal for Ancient History, this is not the case for Modern History. This means that some Queensland schools have a copy of the original 2017 memo for Modern History which provides the sample content for the external examination and other schools don’t.

In both Senior History syllabuses it is stated that in each of the three summative internal assessments the “assessment instrument developed by schools must reflect the application of *key issues* raised in the *depth study* of the topic selected” (QHTA emphasis). There are two questions that QCAA needs to answer and communicate to Queensland schools about the external assessment:

1. Is the focus of the questions and sources coming from the *depth study*, as opposed to the context and concluding studies, and as stipulated in the syllabus for the internal assessments?
2. Is the focus of the questions and sources on *key issues* as opposed to marginal or esoteric issues/topics?

As the amount of information listed in the ‘sample list of content for subject matter’ is extensive and compulsory (each piece of content is preceded by “students will” comprehend, analyse, evaluate, synthesis etc.), it is important that schools know the answers to these questions so that they can fully and effectively prepare their students for the pending external assessment. Students need to know the history around the particular focus for the external paper, otherwise they will not be able to make informed and considered judgements about historical sources presented to them in the examination.

QHTA is concerned that the focus of the Modern History external assessment will follow the example of the external paper trialled in 2017 when a marginal and esoteric topic (Edelweiss Pirates) was chosen as the focus of the examination on Nazi Germany. Assessment needs to be designed to test what students know – in terms of both knowledge and skills, not to trick or trip up students by focusing on obscure issues /topics.

*Lack of clarity and transparency in context statements in the stimulus book*

If students are unlikely to know the history surrounding a particular source, it is imperative that the context statements provide sufficient information for students to draw valid historical conclusions. Without such information sources could be totally misinterpreted by students and they could draw invalid and ahistorical conclusions.

For the assessment instrument to be accessible (and valid) students need to have access to sufficient knowledge about a source to enable them to ‘look within’ the source as well as have sufficient contextual knowledge – both immediate and more remote – to enable them to ‘look beyond’ the source. The mock external assessment instruments for both Ancient History and Modern History run the risk of falling short on both these conditions.

*Lack of transparency in questions and how they will be marked*

In the two mock external assessments for Modern History students are denied important information relating to how the assessment will be marked.

* In the EAMG for Question 3 (for both Modern History mock assessments) responses are marked on the number of points made and not the quality of the points, and yet the question does not stipulate the number of points required. Where the EAMG is very specific stating that the response needs to explain “*two* of the considerations listed” for each source when assessing reliability, the question itself does not stipulate the number of ‘considerations’ to be explained. Similarly, students are not informed when they evaluate the usefulness of each source that they must explain *more than one way.* This information is only stipulated in the EAMG which is only available to the marker.
* In the EAMG for Question 3 (for both Modern History mock assessments) the descriptor for source usefulness is limited in focus as it just fixates on the ‘relevance to the historical interpretation’, whereas according to the syllabus glossary, there are a number of ways that a student might assess the usefulness of a source. If the EAMG is not flexible in possible student responses, the State’s most lateral and probing thinkers may be unduly penalised. A similar outcome is predicted when considering the top-level descriptor for assessing source reliability in Question 3 as it states that student responses are bound by the requirement to explain “two *of the* *considerations listed*”(QHTA emphasis) – there is no option for a response beyond what is stipulated in the EAMG.
* In the EAMG for Question 3 (for both Modern History mock assessments) responses are required to corroborate the two sources being evaluated; however, nowhere in the question are the students asked to corroborate the sources.

To ensure transparency additional information should be provided to students about what is expected in each question. For example: ‘to complete this question you must provide at least two examples…’

1. **Language**

According to the QCAA assessment is accessible if the language used in instructions and items is clear and unambiguous.

In a number of questions terms (general and historical) are used incorrectly. This is particularly the case with the following terms which often are mixed up: explicit v implicit; source v evidence; motive v purpose. If QCAA doesn’t use terms correctly, particularly as defined in its own glossary, students are unlikely to know what is to be expected of them and what they are expected to produce.

*Misuse of the terms “describe” and “explicit”*

* In Question 1 of the Modern History ‘school use only’ mock assessment, students are asked to “identify and *describe* one *explicit* message”(QHTA emphasis.)

The following definitions for ‘describe’ and ‘explicit’ are provided in the syllabuses for Ancient History and Modern History:

*Describe*: give an account (written or spoken) of a situation, event, pattern or process, or of the characteristics or features of something.

*Explicit*: clearly and distinctly expressing all that is meant; unequivocal; clearly developed or formulated; leaving nothing merely implied or suggested.

It is difficult to understand how a student might describe something that is explicit. Not only is the question nonsensical so too is the opening sentence of the sample response: “Source 1 *suggests* explicitly” (QHTA emphasis). One doesn’t ‘suggest’ something that is obvious but rather states/says it; ‘suggests’ means to signal an implicit meaning, not an explicit one. The response goes onto to provide implicit meanings of the source informed by outside knowledge. This response does not align with the question asked.

*Misuse of the terms “evidence” and “source”*

* The Ancient and Modern syllabuses define these terms accordingly:

*Evidence*: the information obtained from sources that is useful for a particular inquiry. Evidence can be used to help construct a historical narrative, to support a hypothesis or to prove or disprove a conclusion.

*Sources*: any written or non-written materials that can be used to investigate the past, for example coins, letters, tombs, buildings.

Thus, information from a *source* becomes ‘*evidence’* if it is of value to a particular inquiry.

As evident in the EAMG and the sample responses these terms are consistently confused. For example the EAMG for Modern History ‘School use only’ paper Question 3, states “Examples of the considerations about the reliability of evidence from Source 3 may include – the author…” The author is a feature of a source not part of the evidence of a source.

This confusion can be traced back to the use of these terms in the syllabus, which has been brought to QCAA’s attention on a number of occasions.

*Confusion between the terms “motive” and “purpose”*

* The Ancient and Modern syllabuses only define motive.

*Motive*: the reasons why someone or something created a source (e.g. to support a perspective; to provide additional information on a matter of interest; to entertain; to celebrate; and to challenge or disrupt a commonly shared point of view.)

The ACARA curriculum for Year 10 introduces *motive* to students for the first time and distinguishes it from *purpose*. *Motive* is what prompts a person to create something and *purpose* is what the creator hopes to achieve by creating it. For example, the *motive* of Watkin Tench, who accompanied the First Fleet, in writing his journal was money (he was commissioned by a publishing company in England to write about the new colony), while his *purpose* was to show what life was like in the new colony.

This confusion is evident in the EAMG notes that accompany the Ancient History ‘public use’ paper Question 2a) which asks students to identify a motive for three historical sources. Some answers identify the purpose of the source as opposed to the motives of the person to create the source.

1. **Layout**
2. *Cover page / Section 1*: On the cover page of each mock assessment, reference to ‘Section 1’ suggests that there are subsequent sections. This is confusing and ambiguous, and needs to be deleted.
3. *Line allocation:* There is no correlation between the number of lines and the number of marks.

Tabulated below are examples from the Ancient History and Modern History ‘school use only’ papers.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question in Ancient History ‘school use only’** | **Marks** | **Lines** |
| 1a | 6 | 14 |
| 1b | 7 | 20 |
| 2 | 26 | 38 |
| 3 | 21 | 38 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question in Modern History ‘school use only’** | **Marks** | **Lines** |
| 1 | 5 | 13 |
| 2 | 17 | 20 |
| 3 | 18 | 42 |
| 4 | 20 | 40 |

The number of lines a question is allocated is one way for students to judge

* the *time* that might be spent on each question, and
* the *length* of the response for each question.

For clarity and accessibility, there should be alignment between the number of marks and the number of lines provided.

1. *Stimulus book*: The layout of the sources in the stimulus book is such that it makes it difficult for students to respond to those questions which involve multiple sources easily and effectively. For example, in the Modern History mock ‘school use only’ paper Questions 3 and 4, comprising over half the marks allocated, require students to focus on multiple sources – Question 3 (two sources) and Question 4 (four sources). Because none of the sources directly face each other, students are required to flip backwards and forwards between sources in the stimulus book to answer the questions. This makes it difficult for students to compare the sources in order to answer the questions.

It is important that the stimulus book is designed to ensure that when multiple sources are required to be interrogated in a question, these sources directly face each other, so that students can quickly and effectively compare and contrast the sources in order to answer the question.

**3. Detailed examination of mock external assessments question by question**

**3.1 Ancient History mock external ‘school use only’ assessment**

**Question 1a (6 marks)**

*Use Source 1 in the stimulus book to explain what is meant by ‘Father of his Country’. Refer to four pieces of evidence*.

**Comment**: The suggested evidence from Source 1 provided in the ‘Ancient History marking guide and response’ does not help explain what the title *means*.

* *‘it was a title that could be offered’* – a title on offer does not confer meaning.
* *‘the [Roman] people were unanimous in offering Augustus the title’* – suggests that Augustus was popular but doesn’t explain the meaning of the title.
* *‘the title was a great honour’* – suggests that the title had value and importance.
* *‘Augustus viewed the title as a high point in his career’* – indicates that the title was valued by Augustus but does not explain the meaning of the title.

What the title actually *means* is that Augustus, like the father of a family, was seen as the protector of the country who looked after the wellbeing of all. There is *no* ‘evidence’ in the source that explains what this title meant.

**Question 1b (7 marks)**

*Analyse Source 1 by stating three explicit and three implicit meanings about August receiving the title ‘Father of his Country’.*

**Comment**: The *implicit* meanings provided by the QCAA responses are questionable. There is nothing in the source that suggests ‘Augustus brought happiness and prosperity that other leaders were unable to achieve’ as provided in the suggested responses. In fact, the title was given to Julius Caesar and to Cicero. As for Augustus being ‘humble’, anybody offered this title was expected to show ‘humility’ by pretending to be reluctant to receive it. It was part of the ‘game’. In the ‘explicit meanings’ offered there is a reference to the calls from the people being rejected and then Augustus accepting the title from the Senate. Of course Augustus rejected the call from the people because only the Senate could confer the title on anyone. There was no way Augustus was going to deliberately insult the Senate by accepting a title from the people which was not theirs to give. Since Augustus was keen to avoid the mistakes of Caesar, who had regularly sought popular support to defy the Senate, it was unlikely he would ignore his own approach and succumb to the flattery of the crowd.

**Question 2 (26 marks)**

*Was the return of the Roman standards from Parthia a military victory or successful diplomacy?*

*Analyse and evaluate the evidence from Sources 2 and 3 in the stimulus book to respond to the question. Refer to two features of evidence and usefulness from Source 2 and two features of evidence and usefulness from Source 3 in your response.*

**Comment**: This question has too many components. Apart from the poor phrasing of the last instructional sentence, it is unclear as to what students are required to do. Are two ‘features of evidence’ and two ‘usefulness’ (what does this mean?) required for each source, so in all eight ‘things’ need to be mentioned or are two ‘things’ required of each source (i.e. one ‘features of evidence’ and one ‘usefulness’) so only four ‘things’ need to be mentioned? Only the EAMG makes it clear as to what students are required to produce – two features of evidence and one judgment about usefulness for each of the two sources, so six ‘things’ altogether.

According to the marking guide: *‘A discerning explanation of features of evidence may be origin, perspective, motive*

* *written by Augustus to permanently record his achievements*
* *features of evidence selected for analysis can be used to inform a judgment about the usefulness of the source (e.g. it may be an embellished account).*’

Origin, perspective, motive refer to the source not the ‘evidence’. As well as this, the answer says *this was written by Augustus to permanently record his achievements* – this is Augustus’ *purpose*, not his motive. The ACARA curriculum for Year 10 distinguishes *motive* from *purpose*. *Motive* is what prompts a person to create something and *purpose* is what the creator hopes to achieve by creating it. The last point relating to ‘usefulness’ is unclear.

The question and marking guide and exemplar response don’t allow top Ancient History students to excel. First, one would assume that an astute student would have used the word ‘propaganda’ in his/her response about the *Res Gestae* because that is what it is – propaganda. While Augustus was keen to leave his own version of his achievements, he was also well aware of the benefits of putting himself before the public in such a positive light. Copies of the *Res Gestae* were spread around Rome so people could marvel at how wonderful Augustus was. However, Augustus could not deliberately lie about anything in the *Res Gestae* because it was a public document and there were plenty of people who had knowledge of everything and could challenge Augustus if he lied. He was very clever in how he circumvented issues. Second, there is nothing to argue. Any student who has studied Augustus, as he/she should have for this examination, would know that Augustus did not have a military victory over Parthia. In fact Augustus negotiated the return of the standards. No historian would even bother to argue this issue. Students could answer this question without even reading the sources.

In regards to the footnote in the stimulus book related to this question, the footnote definitions miss an important part of one explanation. The ‘Temple of Mars Ultor’ is not just a Temple to Mars the god of war, but to Mars the avenger. It was built by Augustus to celebrate the return of the standards. In the context statements it is important to inform students about the attitudes and political leanings of ancient writers. For example, Cassius Dio was a died-in-the-wool monarchist, so he would be likely to report favourably on Augustus, the founder of the imperial ‘monarchy’.

**Question 3 (21 marks)**

*Synthesise evidence from Sources 4, 5 and 6 in the stimulus book to develop a historical argument about Augustus’s success as a military leader.*

**Comment**: In the marking guide the QCAA provides a number of vague assertions to the question that cannot be supported by the sources provided.

An example of a sophisticated argument is provided: ‘*Despite the military disaster in Germania, ancient sources depict Augustus as a successful military leader, and evidence from Eck suggests he was responsible for reasserting Roman control.’*

It is historically incorrect to assert that *ancient sources* depict Augustus as a successful military leader when there are only *two* ancient sources, one of which describes an absolute military disaster by a writer known for his sycophancy (Paterculus), and the other being a poem by a man who depended on the patronage of Augustus (Horace). Horace, who waxes lyrical about Augustus can be largely discounted due to his questionable reliability. Horace is trying to ingratiate himself with Augustus. He refers to ‘the Latin name and strength of Italy have increased’, knowing full well that Augustus was determined to go back to the ‘good old days’ when Italy was the centre of the ancient world and Latin (not that language of ‘licentiousness, Greek’) was the only language good Romans spoke. Much of what Horace says is hyperbole, e.g. ‘*has eradicated crimes’*. When Horace refers to shutting the doors of the Temple of Janus, and Rome being ‘free from war’, he is talking about *civil* *war* between Augustus and Marc Antony. Augustus closed the doors of the Temple of Janus in a special (propaganda) ceremony to denote he had brought peace to Rome. The doors to the temple had not been shut permanently for decades. Wars did not end, only the civil war between Romans themselves. No reputable historian would use this excerpt from Horace as evidence of Augustus’ military leadership.

Later in the marking guide evidence from Eck (Source 6) is paraphrased: *‘Augustus reasserted control by increasing the forces in the region and by sending Tiberius to lead retaliatory raids and Germanicus to command troops on the Rhine.’* What does ‘reassert control’ mean? Control over what? In fact, Augustus did not reassert control over the German lands east of the Rhine, which was what he was planning, but was forced to retreat to the Rhine and be content with that as his frontier. Augustus wasn’t even in Germania so he could not have been the one reasserting control.

The marking guide suggested for the ‘basic argument’, which obviously is going to attract fewer marks, could be made into a sophisticated argument by a top student. Most historians do not see Augustus as a ‘successful military leader’ because much of his success can be attributed to the brilliant military commanders he had supporting him. His closest friend, Agrippa, was Augustus’ chief military strategist and he was an outstanding military leader. Augustus’ step son, Drusus, was also quite exceptional and was responsible for significant successes in Europe. Unfortunately, he died as the result of gangrene to a wound in his leg, but he was replaced by an equally successful commander, his brother, Tiberius. Tiberius was not as ‘flashy’ a commander as Drusus but he was solid and meticulous.

If Augustus can be blamed for anything, it can be his appointment of Varus to command the legions in Germany in the first place and his removal of all the legions except three along the Rhine. Augustus miscalculated the opposition of the Germans and sent most of the legions to quell a revolt in Illyricum. Rome had experienced the treachery of German ‘allies’ previously so he should have been aware of the fact that relying on German leaders was not good policy. It was the treachery of a German ‘ally’, Arminius, who had been educated and trained as a soldier in Rome, which led to the disaster that Varus faced. Varus also refused to take seriously a warning he was given about Arminius’ treachery.

Source 6 actually hints that Augustus was not making wise decisions because instead of changing his policy towards Germania, Augustus ‘*appears to have decided to continue his offensive strategy’*. Augustus ordered punitive raids to continue east of the Rhine but in reality he had to give up his plans to make the Elbe River Rome’s frontier and retreat to the more defensible Rhine.

**Overall comment**: All of the questions posed are generally poor questions and there are not enough relevant sources to answer these questions.

**3.2 Ancient History mock external ‘public use’ assessment**

**Question 1 (6 marks)**

*Use evidence from Source I in the stimulus book to describe three of the titles held by Augustus and how these reflect his position in the Roman state.*

**Comment**: There are only three titles used in the passage so students have no option but to choose the correct ones. However, the source (Werner Eck) is a bit misleading because the passage refers to his 13 consulships. The consulship was not a title but an elected position which gave him significant power. His titles gave him no specific powers, just authority and prestige. Once the students have identified the titles, the source gives them little else. They have to rely on their knowledge of the period (i.e. recall) to answer the question. This question is basically a knowledge question. The source does not provide them with evidence to *describe* three of his titles; it merely names the titles. The source also does not provide students with *evidence* to show how these titles *reflect his position in the Roman state.* The cognitive verb, ‘describe’, seems to apply to both sections of the question whereas a more appropriate cognitive verb for the second part of the question would be ‘explain’.

**Question 2a (7 marks)**

*Analyse evidence from Sources 1, 2 and 3 in the stimulus book to identify a motive for the creation of each source.*

**Comment**: The question seems to confuse motive with purpose – they are *not* the same. Students can only determine purpose here, not motive. For example, the motive of Tacitus in writing his Annals was his disillusionment with imperial administration and a personal vendetta since he was in the imperial administration under the Emperor Domitian and was badly treated by Domitian. His purpose was to highlight the incompetency and venality of the Roman Emperors and to compare imperial rule unfavourably with the Republic.

Source 1 is a secondary source and the author’s motive was probably to add to his academic achievements (publishing is part of the requirements of academics at Universities). Students probably don’t know about the requirements of academics. His purpose was to show the honours bestowed on Augustus. However, that is not evidence so students cannot really analyse the evidence since it only becomes evidence when it is used to support an argument. Students could not really use this as evidence of Augustus’ honoured position since they would need more than just a description in a secondary text.

The second source from Horace again shows his purpose not his motive. His purpose was to praise Augustus for restoring peace to Rome and bringing back prosperity and the old life of Romans. His motive was probably to continue to be supported by the emperor. Poets needed patronage and his patron was Maecenas, Augustus’ closest friend and a sponsor of the arts. Students cannot possibly work out the motive of Source 3 since the name of the sculptor is not provided. There are several really significant references in both Sources 2 and 3. Both refer to winning back the Roman standards from the Parthians (the statue has a scene showing this on the breastplate). Losing the standards was a disgrace for a Roman general and Roman efforts to win back these standards by defeating the Parthians had proved disastrous before Augustus (notably Marc Antony’s failure in a disastrous campaign against the Parthians). Augustus did not win them back in battle but through a negotiated settlement with the Parthians. This can hardly be described as ‘torn from the proud pillars of the Parthians’ as written in Source 2 which says something about Horace’s purpose.

**Question 2b (9 marks)**

*Explain three similarities about the way in which Augustus is presented across Sources 1, 2 and 3.*

**Comment**: The use of the cognitive verb, *explain*, is a problem. One can *identify* the similarities or *describe* the similarities but explaining a similarity calls for something else. It is unclear as to what the students are explaining. Are they explaining why the authors are presenting Augustus in this way?

**Question 3 (25 marks)**

*Statement: Augustus maintained effective rule over the provinces.*

*Evaluate the reliability of Sources 4 and 5 in the stimulus book and make a judgment about each source’s usefulness for responding to the statement.*

**Comment**: A valid question which rightly asks students to evaluate the sources in their response.

**Question 4 (23 marks)**

*Synthesise evidence from Sources 4, 5 and 6 in the stimulus book to develop a historical argument about whether Augustus was a powerful leader.*

**Comment**: The main concern with this question is that the sources are quite brief for an argument of this depth. However, top students would have a good opportunity to show their ability because the responses could be quite varied. The term ‘powerful leader’ could produce some good arguments from students.

**3.3 Modern History mock external ‘school use only’ assessment**

**Question 1 (5 marks)**

*Use evidence from Source 1 in the stimulus book to identify and describe one explicit message regarding Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.*

**Comment on the question**: The term ‘identify and describe one explicit message’ is unclear. To identify the explicit message, the student would probably need to quote the message in full. For example, the identified explicit message could be: ‘*We don't go in against the will of the government of South Viet Nam and we haven’t done so.’* But what can it possibly mean to then describe the explicit message? QCAA defines describe as:

* *give an account (written or spoken) of a situation, event, pattern or process, or of the characteristics or features of something.*(QHTA emphasis.)

Taking the QCAA definition, the student could perhaps describe the explicit message as: *‘a short, clear, emphatic and resolute statement by a Prime Minister to a media conference, expressed in simple English’.* Or perhaps paraphrase the message as: *‘The Australian government has not, and would not send military forces to South Vietnam if its government did not want that’*. To go any further would probably involve the student interpreting the explicit message. For example: The message could be described as ‘reassuring to the ears of those who questioned the legality of the Australian decision’. The same criticism could be made of any attempt to describeany other explicit message in the excerpt.

**Comment on the marking guide:** The marking guide includes - as an example of an ‘explicit message’ – the following:

* *South Vietnam made a formal request for this to happen in accordance with the SEATO treaty*

However, the excerpt does not state explicitly that South Vietnam made a formal request to Australia, or that the request was made ‘in accordance with the SEATO treaty’. Menzies’ sentences can be read as implying those two messages, but neither is stated explicitly. This comment might seem like ‘splitting hairs’, but it becomes significant when seen in the light of later debates about 1) whether, in fact, South Vietnam did make a request before Australia announced its commitment and 2) whether any request was made in accordance with SEATO protocols. (In the light of those debates, it’s possible that Menzies worded his statement carefully to avoid making precise claims about how and when Australia announced its military commitment to South Vietnam, and whether a prior formal request had been made in accordance with SEATO protocols.)

The other two example answers are also not explicit messages from the source but implied and in some respects questionable:

* *this is what South Vietnam wanted, and South Vietnam was entitled to make such a request*
* *Australia was obligated in accordance with the SEATO treaty*

The marking guide indicates that a mark of 3/5 can be awarded for a student response that

* *describes an explicit message regarding Australia or the Vietnam War, using evidence from Source 1.*

Given that the question required students to identify a message regarding Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War it seems invalid to award 60% to a student response that mentions ‘Australia’ or ‘the Vietnam War’, but not both – particularly when this question is being answered by Modern History students at the end of Year 12.

**Comment on the sample response:** The sample response states that

* *Source 1 suggests explicitly that Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War occurred because South Vietnam ostensibly wanted this to happen and was entitled to make this request.*

This is a poor sample response, as the use of ‘suggests explicitly’ and ‘ostensibly wanted’ is incompatible with the question’s reference to one ‘explicit message’. An explicit message cannot be a suggested message, and the term ‘suggests explicitly’ is an oxymoron when applied to an ‘explicit message’. The term ‘ostensibly wanted’ is similarly inappropriate when the question asks for an ‘explicit message’. (While probably unintended, the term ‘ostensibly wanted’ is actually a perceptive one, as Source 1 does indeed only imply that South Vietnam wanted Australian involvement.) But the question, focused on an explicit message, does not ask the student to interpret an implied message and therefore this response does not answer the precise question asked.

**Comment on the broader issues** **about Question 1**: According to the syllabus the approximate weighing of the ‘Comprehending’ criterion is approximately 25% and yet it is confined to one explicit message from one source. Arguably, this task could be completed by a student with no background in historical study, but simply possessing a facility with comprehension of English text.

**Question 2 (17 marks)**

*Use evidence from Source 2 in the stimulus book to explain two ways in which Arthur Calwell used the concept of power to communicate his perspective on Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.*

**Comment**: Calwell’s remarks predate those of Menzies which might be confusing for some students. This question is badly phrased. Calwell is not discussing the “concept of power” but rather the possible “use of power” by the Chinese in the region. The phrase “concept of power” is there only to lead students directly to the phrases that deal with China rather than have them undertake an analysis of the concept of power. The question (and sample answer) simply directs students to pick out relevant phrases but not to open them up for analysis or investigation. E.g. If Calwell was suggesting that Menzies had an erroneous assumption about China, then what was that erroneous assumption? As this is exit Year 12 the EAMG should call for a sophisticated argument.

**Question 3 (18 marks)**

*Evaluate the extent to which evidence from Sources 3 and 4 in the stimulus book is useful and reliable in supporting the historical interpretation that ideology played an important role in the formation of attitudes towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.*

**Comment on the question**: As with the misuse of “concepts of power”, the use of “ideology” in this question is problematic. The extracts make mention of religion and Marxism only. There is not enough “ideology” for students to make valid judgements about the “important role of ideology” in the war.

**Comment on the sample response**: For reliability, it is not enough (as the sample answer does) to simply say that this extract was written by a University professor and therefore it is reliable. There needs to be some clue in the context statement as to the perspective of the historian who has written the extract. But the context statement fails to offer any clue (for example, that Kuhn is a Marxist historian and Judith Smart has a strong focus on Women’s’ History in World War I). The contextual statements should be revised to provide clues as to the perspectives of the contributors, if this is not immediately obvious in the extract, so that students can make more informed judgements.

**Comment on the marking guide**: According to the syllabus glossary, *evaluate* means *weighing up/ assessing* strengths, implications, limitations, examine and determine the merit/value or significance of something based on criteria (in this case usefulness and reliability).

The marking guide does not effectively assess the cognitive verb of evaluate in regards to usefulness.

* The top level descriptor for source usefulness requires the response to ‘explain ways’ in which evidence from the sources (Sources 3 and 4) is ‘relevant to the historical interpretation’. However, the EAMG remains silent on two accounts: i) the student’s judgement – how useful are the sources and ii) the quality of the student’s judgement/explanation about the sources. In the instrument-specific marking guides (ISMGs) in the syllabuses qualifiers, such as ‘discerning’ or ‘effective’ or ‘adequate’ are used to distinguish between the quality of student judgements/explanations.  A possible outcome of the current EAMG is that a middling student, who identifies two obvious and straightforward ways evidence is relevant to the interpretation, scores more highly than a student who makes an insightful comment about only one way.
* Nowhere in the question does it indicate that students need to provide more than one explanation for usefulness and reliability per source.  As students have to evaluate the usefulness and reliability for two sources this ends up being 12 marks from the possible 17. (By only giving one really well reasoned explanation for usefulness and reliability for the two sources, a student could lose four marks).

The EAMG for this question also includes a possible 3 marks for those students who identify corroboration between the sources. However, nowhere in the question does it indicate that students need to corroborate. As the students will not have access to the EAMG in the examination, how are they possibly meant to know what to focus on in their answer?

**Question 4 (20 marks)**

*Synthesise evidence from Sources 3, 4, 5 and 6 in the stimulus book to form a historical argument about public opinion towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.*

**Comment**: Students are required, at the top level, to form an argument that is “sophisticated and intellectually complex.” This is not possible with the sources provided. The main problem with the sources is that they are too disparate and don’t have a clear coherent focus. If the aim is for students to develop an argument about public opinion and the war, then there has to be a mix of quantitative evidence (the Gallop Polls are readily available) and qualitative evidence (ranging from Nadine Jensen’s single act of protest in 1966, through the Save Our Sons protests to the mass Moratoria).

Given that Source 6 depicts a 1987 scene, the question needs to clarify whether students need to address ‘public opinion towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War’ across the whole period 1966 to 1987. Sources 3 and 4 – both secondary sources – comment on the period up to the moratoria (around 1970) while Source 5 depicts a 1966 scene. Source 6 stands out as a source from many years later. These differences in dates add further confusion to the imprecision of the set question’s lack of any prescription of a time period.

Both photos (Sources 5 and 6) represent a ‘slice of the reality’ and are questionable in terms of ‘representativeness’. Source 5 is not necessarily reflective of the wider ‘public opinion’ in Australia in 1966. While it depicts a division of opinion among a small segment of a crowd in Sydney, it cannot be assumed that the division was mirrored more widely within that crowd, within the population of Sydney or within the entire Australian populace. The ‘sample response’ provided in the QCAA document avoids any questions of ‘representativeness’:

*Within Source 5 there are also contrasting messages in relation to public opinion and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War. In the foreground, for example, some of the imagery is quite positive as several placards on display welcome the then President of the USA, Lyndon B Johnson (LBJ) to Sydney (e.g. one of these placards says: ‘Hip Hip Hooray for LBJ’). Thus, assuming messages directed at LBJ are a proxy for views about Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, then this and similar messages are quite positive. However, the background of this picture suggests a much more negative perspective. This is because the placards here are very explicit in their suggestion that Australia remove itself from the Vietnam War; with some saying, ‘Get out of Vietnam’, ‘Escalate peace not war’ and ‘End Vietnam horror’.*

But the ‘sample response’ – while identifying ‘contrasting messages in relation to public opinion’ – makes no comment about the obvious fact that the photo depicts a tiny fraction of the Australian population, and the implication that the photo is a very limited ‘source of evidence’. If the assessment question had required the (hypothetical) student to bring to bear all of their prior understandings developed during their intensive depth study of this prescribed topic, then that student might have included statements such as:

*While Source 5 suggests that the Sydney crowd was clearly divided in its ‘public opinion’ about Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War, it’s more likely that the ‘anti-LBJ, anti-US, anti-involvement’ protestors were a visible but committed minority on this occasion. Opinion polls in the years 1965-66 indicated majority support for Australia’s involvement, and in 1966 the coalition government won a landslide victory in the federal election, in which the Vietnam War was a major issue in the electoral campaign. As well, it’s known that opposition to the war was strongest in the capital cities, particularly Sydney and Melbourne. That would make this photo even less typical of public opinion nationwide in 1966.*

Source 6 is even more problematic. It seems based on the questionable assumption that a 1987 photograph can provide reliable evidence of ‘public opinion towards Australian involvement’ in a war that finished twelve years earlier. Indeed, the ‘sample answer’ seems to accept that assumption:

*Source 6 is telling as it depicts people holding Australian flags or placards welcoming home Australian Vietnam war veterans during a parade in their honour in 1987. The source may be interpreted as conveying positive sentiment towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War because it could be assumed this parade is affirming implicitly such an opinion.*

Interestingly, this answer does not comment on the expression ‘welcoming home’ – a title chosen deliberately to acknowledge that the veterans had not been ‘welcomed home’ in any comprehensive sense upon and after their successive return(s) from Vietnam between 1966 and June 1973. That information is crucial in interpreting and evaluating the photo as evidence of ‘public opinion’. Public opinion to the Vietnam involvement changed dramatically between 1965 and 1973. By the time the final troops were withdrawn in 1973, majority public opinion in Australia had turned against Australia’s involvement.

It’s likely that, in 1987, many or most of those watching the ‘Welcome Home’ processions – including those who supported Australia’s involvement originally – would have become opponents of that involvement by 1973. Far from showing support for Australia’s involvement, they would have chosen to ‘welcome’ the veterans to acknowledge and show sympathy for the well-publicised suffering of those veterans who had been shunned and vilified after returning from an ‘unpopular’ war. Whether that interpretation is valid or not, the point is that the students responding to the photograph are unlikely to be in a position to evaluate its usefulness or reliability in supporting a thesis about ‘public opinion towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War’ – unless they had been able to ‘look within’ and ‘look beyond’ the source to establish the immediate and wider context of the photograph.

The QCAA ‘sample response’ demonstrates a lack of such contextual understanding. In a statement that is extraordinarily ahistorical, the sample states that:

*The source may be interpreted as conveying positive sentiment towards Australian involvement in the Vietnam War because it could be assumed this parade is affirming implicitly such an opinion.*

There are problems with all four sources (3-6) used in this question. The set question is not framed in a way that encourages students to interrogate each source rigorously or to bring to bear their prior knowledge of the historical topic. Thus, it is unsurprising that the ‘sample response’ can offer nothing more than the anodyne (and ungrammatical) conclusion that:

*Thus, the evidence from Sources 3-6 convey [sic] a range of views regarding Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.*

Anyone with a grasp of the English language might conceivably have reached that same conclusion, without necessarily having studied the topic or, indeed, having studied any history at all.

**3.4 Modern History mock external ‘public use’ assessment**

**Key points:** For a ‘response to historical sources’ assessment task, there is a basic problem with using four sources that are secondary source commentaries on the Vietnam War and two primary sources - a cartoon from 1950 and a contemporary newspaper commentary from 1965. The opportunities for evaluative questions are limited as students will probably have little basis for evaluating the credibility, reliability and usefulness of the secondary sources. That undermines the potential of the examination to produce quality answers that reflect the unit objectives comprehensively.

**Question 1a (5 marks)**

|  |
| --- |
| *Use evidence from Source 1 in the stimulus book to define the term domino theory and explain* how *the concept of forward defence is linked to the domino theory.* |

This is relatively straightforward task – i.e. finding the information in the source that describes the core idea of the *domino theory* and that describes the policy of *forward defence* and making a connection between them. That said, it is not clear what the direction to ‘use evidence from Source 1’ means. Does it mean quoting particular text, or putting the ideas in the student’s own words?

What the question doesn’t do is to ask students about the author’s standpoint on the domino theory – a more challenging question. In the source, Evans uses the term ‘certain surface plausibility’ when referring to ‘concerns about the intentions of China (at the time)’. Perceptive students could interpret this as signalling Evans’s doubts about the validity of the domino theory, but could also suggest that it could be an example of hindsight, with Evans’s speech dating from 1989, 24 years after the situation he is describing.

**Question 1b (2 marks)**

*Use evidence from Source 1 in the stimulus book to explain one reason for why actions taking place in Asia were an important issue for the development of the domino theory.*

The expression ‘to explain one reason for why’ is clumsy and unclear. And the rest of the question is possibly ambiguous. Are students to explain why one action taking place in Asia influenced the development of the domino theory (for example: ‘The Korean War heightened fears of Chinese expansionism, a key factor in the development of the domino theory’) or why a number of actions taking place in Asia influenced the development of the domino theory (for example: Chinese involvement in the Korean War and Chinese support for insurgency groups in South east Asia heightened fears of communist China, a key factor in the development of the domino theory’). The EAMG does not provide clarity as to the quantum of evidence required here.

The question could be reworded for clarity. The terms ‘to explain one reason for why’ and ‘issue for the development of the domino theory’ are imprecise and confusing. A clearer question would be ‘Explain why – according to the author - actions taking place in Asia influenced the development of the domino theory’. That ‘proviso’ of ‘according to the author’ is a reminder that the reasons given in the source are not necessarily undisputed ‘fact’ but rather the reasons being reported by a commentator from 24 years later.

**Question 2 (13 marks)**

*Use evidence from Sources 2 and 3 in the stimulus book to compare perspectives on defence treaties and Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War.*

For a start, the question is ambiguous. Are students to compare perspectives on defence treaties and compare perspectives on Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War or compare perspectives on the relationship between defence treaties and Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War?

Either way – but particularly if the latter task is intended – there is a potential problem in the question. If students are restricted to ‘using evidence from Sources 2 and 3’, then they will be limited to the particular interpretations of, and the particular omissions of the two authors Warner and Cuddy. Both are problematic, as follows:

Warner makes a number of statements that are largely correct about each of ANZUS and SEATO. However, his statement that ‘The SEATO obligation remains’ is misleading, as it suggests that the reason ‘why Australian troops are going to Vietnam’ emanates from the provisions of the SEATO treaty. That explanation was challenged at the time, as South Vietnam had not made the official request for military assistance as required by the SEATO protocols. In the aftermath of the war, in an Australian government report in 1975, the explanation was discredited. The Australian Government paper ‘Australia’s military commitment to Vietnam’ (1975) stated that

* “Despite the fact that the Government of South Vietnam on 29 April 1965 announced that the Australian battalion was sent in response to a request from South Vietnam, this is not borne out by the evidence of the documents” (https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-3737). *[QHTA note: the South Vietnamese statement about a request was made the day after Menzies announced that a battalion would be sent to Vietnam.]*
* Australian military assistance to South Vietnam was not at any time in response to a request for defence aid from South Vietnam as a Protocol State to SEATO as a Treaty organisation.

And, in any case, there was no iron-clad ‘obligation’ under SEATO. The treaty specified that a member was not ‘obliged’ to accede to a request for military assistance, but rather that a member state was required only to ‘act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes’. That would include the state’s constitutional processes for deciding to commitment armed forces to a conflict.

What then should a student do in answering Question 2? If, in their intensive study of the ‘Vietnam War’ topic, the student had not learned about the debates about whether the SEATO treaty applied to Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War, the student might simply state that ‘Warner makes it clear that Australia’s commitment of troops to the Vietnam War was a result of its obligations under the SEATO treaty’. But, if the student had learned about those debates, the student might state that ‘Warner claims that Australia’s commitment of troops to the Vietnam War was a result of its obligations under the SEATO treaty. However, that explanation is challengeable and almost certainly invalid on two grounds. First, there is no automatic ‘obligation’ under the SEATO treaty to provide military assistance in response to a member state’s request. Second, as revealed in the Australian government’s 1975 report, Australia announced its commitment of troops without having received the formal request from the government of South Vietnam, as required under the SEATO treaty.’

Herein lies the problem. The more knowledgeable student would be prevented from providing a superior answer by the wording of the question, viz ‘Use evidence from Sources 2 and 3’. At a senior level, it seems inappropriate and indefensible for an assessment task to not allow a student to demonstrate the sophisticated depth of their knowledge of the set topic. As well as penalizing able students, the task is likely to produce a ‘bunching’ of simplistic answers that will not discriminate among Queensland Modern History students in the way that is essential if achievement is to be rewarded appropriately and – ultimately – ATARs are to be determined validly.

Briefly, similar problems exist with Warner’s statements on ANZUS, which seem to suggest that Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War was in accordance with its obligations under ANZUS. This is not the case, as the Vietnam War did not involve an ‘attack on the Unites States or New Zealand’ (or for that matter ‘on Australia’). Further, Warner’s statement about ‘American assurances that ANZUS will apply if we run into serious trouble in Malaysia and New Guinea’ is not an accurate statement about the provisions of ANZUS. But it does support the theory that Australia committed to the Vietnam War in the hope that the USA would fulfil its role in relation to ANZUS, should future ‘problems’ arise.

Cuddy’s statement (Source 3) is more credible in proposing that Australia committed to Vietnam to help ensure that, in the event of future trouble, Australia would be able to call on US assistance. Cuddy also acknowledges that the justification of an ‘obligation under SEATO’, rather than being a valid justification, was instead a ‘view’ that Australia and the USA agreed to agree on.

In terms of what a more knowledgeable student could bring to the answer, neither source refers to the alternative theory that Australia actually encouraged the USA to ‘invite’ Australia to commit a battalion to the Vietnam conflict in 1965, again with a view gaining an ‘insurance policy’ guaranteeing future US support in any ‘trouble’. As the Australian government’s 1975 report stated, ‘In the first instance, therefore, the offer of troops by Australia was made to the United States and not to South Vietnam’ (https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-3737). However, again, the set question’s wording would preclude any reference to knowledge gained from the 1975 report.

**Question 3 (17 marks)**

*Use evidence from Sources 4 and 5 in the stimulus book to evaluate the extent to which evidence from each source is useful and reliable in supporting the historical interpretation that fear played a large role in Australia’s decision to become involved in the Vietnam War.*

Source 4 is a political cartoon from 1950. As such, it could be seen as evidence of fear of Chinese expansion among the Australian public in 1950, but not necessarily beyond. Further, it needs to be treated as the political/artistic product of one cartoonist, and again not necessarily a viewpoint shared widely by many Australians. In this regard, questions could be asked about the popular readership of, and agreement with, the standpoint of *The Bulletin,* in which the cartoon was published. In terms of ‘Australia’s decision to become involved in the Vietnam War’, what’s not known is whether anti-Chinese sentiment continued until 1965, and whether the actual decision makers in the Australian government were influenced by any such popular ‘fear’. To be a quality answer, a student would need to engage with these sorts of considerations, producing a likely answer that is couched in tentative, provisional language. If that is what happens, Question 3 could be considered effective. Quite probably, students of lesser ability would produce simplistic answers that draw a direct, even causal relationship between the cartoon and the 1965 decision to commit an Australian battalion to Vietnam.

Source 5 is a secondary source commentary from 2002, produced by three academics. As such, it is likely to be based on substantial research, but not necessarily unchallenged. The source proposes that, in 1965, the main ‘fear’ of the Australian government was with communism in Indonesia, and that the ‘Vietnam commitment was the price Australia paid to secure’ an ongoing commitment by the USA to Australia’s security, specifically against Indonesian ‘attack’.Thus, a student might explain that, according to Source 5, Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War was mainly the result of fear of Indonesia specifically, and might then comment that this wasn’t revealed in Menzies’ statement justifying the military commitment, when fear of Chinese expansion through Vietnam was the prime reason, although the envisaged playing out of the domino theory did extend to Indonesia.

In terms of Question 3, it’s likely that a student could make a case that the two sources are ‘useful’ in supporting a particular thesis about ‘fear’, but would have difficulty explaining how ‘reliable’ the sources are.

With Source 4, as explained, it’s unclear how representative Lindsay’s cartoon might be of Australian sentiments at the time, or of Australian sentiments in the ensuing 15 years. And the student would have no basis for claiming that such ‘fear’ of China influenced the Australian government decision in 1965, unless the student drew on wider knowledge of that fear from their study of the topic.

With Source 5, a student would have no basis for evaluating how ‘reliable’ the source is – other than making a shaky assumption about academic knowledge – unless they drew on wider knowledge of the decision-making by the Australian government in late April 1965, including not only the parliamentary statement by Menzies but also the claims made in the Australian government’s revealing report of 1975. As indicated earlier, the examination paper does not make clear whether students are free to draw upon such wider and deeper knowledge in framing their responses to the specific sources in the stimulus book.

**Question 4 (18 marks)**

*Synthesise evidence from a range of sources in the stimulus book to form a historical argument about one motive behind Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.*

Source 6 – a 1994 commentary by an Australian serviceman published in an official defence force journal – is unusual and interesting. However, the issues related to the other sources above – of authorship, of standpoint, of representativeness, of reliability and usefulness (in short, of both possibility and limitations) – apply also to Source 6.

This question itself has promise, but would need to be clarified. It’s ambiguous.

It’s not clear whether a student must refer to only one motive in their answer – for example, the Australian government’s wish to ensure US military support in any future ‘problem’ – and then draw on relevant evidence from those sources that support that interpretation of ‘motive’.

Or, given that the student is asked to ‘form an argument’ - rather than, for example, ‘establish a case’ – can the student put forward just one interpretation of motive, but also explain that there are other, competing ‘motives’ that have been proposed – for example, that it was ‘all about meeting our SEATO obligations’ - and indeed, some combinations of compatible ‘motives’– for example, that the desire to keep the USA ‘on side’ went hand-in-hand with a genuine desire to beat back a communist threat in Vietnam. In all this, there could be an ‘argument’ as the question requires, allowing the student to make statements about the likely validity of the various interpretations of ‘motive’. This could produce rich and sophisticated answers.

Two final points:

First, given the points made above, any student answer would need to acknowledge the uncertainty of any claims made, and consequently express the answer in provisional, tentative language where appropriate.

Second, QCAA must clarify throughout this paper, and particularly in this ‘synthesis’ question, whether students are free to draw upon all of their knowledge of the Vietnam War derived from their intensive depth study of the topic. As explained above, failure to allow this would have serious adverse consequences for individual student demonstration of their proficiency in Modern History, for the appropriate awarding of discriminating results and for the effective determination of a student’s tertiary admission rank.

**4. Conclusion**

The mock external assessments developed and published by the QCAA for Ancient History and Modern History do not adhere to the attributes of quality assessment in terms of validity (lack of alignment with the syllabuses, lack of authenticity, issues with scope and scale) and accessibility (problems with transparency, language, and layout). While five of the six syllabus objectives are being assessed, the mock assessments, which comprise the Question and response book, Stimulus book and Marking guide and response, are deficient in their current form. They fail to overall present students with tasks (and teachers with marking guides) that reflect the level of understanding of the external topics (Augustus for Ancient History and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War for Modern History) and the skills of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and synthesis that would be expected of senior students in their final term of study. The lack of clarity, transparency and validity of some tasks will inevitably trick or trip up students, and the poor selection of historical sources will limit their ability to write coherent and probing responses that are informed by their wider knowledge. The overall lack of opportunity for students to demonstrate their deep understandings and skills will have serious implications. It will be difficult to discriminate between examination performances of students throughout the State and this will have serious implications for the awarding of overall grades and for the subsequent determination of each student’s Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

**5. Appendix 1 - alignment**

The QCAA maintains that valid assessment is aligned to the curriculum as outlined in the syllabus.

There is a lack of alignment between syllabus specifications and mock examinations in terms of the approximate weighting of objectives for both Ancient History and Modern History.

As set out in the Senior History syllabuses, the following table summarises the criteria and weighting of assessment objectives within the external examination – short responses to historical sources.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Objectives** | **Approximate weighting of objectives** |
| Comprehending | 1 | 25% |
| Analysing | 3 | 20% |
| Synthesising | 4 | 20% |
| Evaluating | 5 | 25% |
| Creating and communicating | 6 | 10% |
| Total |  | 100% |

The table below summarises the criteria and its relative weighting in the mock assessment for Modern History ‘school use only’ paper.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Question** | **Mark allocation** | **Approx. weighting** |
| Comprehending | 1 | 5 | 8% |
| Analysing | 2 | 17 | 28% |
| Synthesising | 4 | 17 | 28% |
| Evaluating | 3 | 15 | 25% |
| Creating and communicating | 3 & 4 | 6 | 10% |
| Total |  | 60 | 100% |

\* This criterion is only assessed in Question 3 (3 marks) and Question 4 (3 marks).

The table below summarises the criteria and its relative weighting in the mock assessment for Modern History ‘public use’ paper.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Question** | **Mark allocation** | **Approx. weighting** |
| Comprehending | 1 | 7 | 12.5% |
| Analysing | 2 | 13 | 23.5% |
| Synthesising | 4 | 14 | 25.5% |
| Evaluating | 3 | 14 | 25.5% |
| Creating and communicating | 3 & 4 | 7 | 10% |
| Total |  | 55 | 100% |

\* This criterion is assessed in Question 3 (3 marks) and Question 4 (4 marks).

The table below summarises the criteria and its relative weighting in the mock assessment for Ancient History ‘school use only’ paper.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Question** | **Mark allocation** | **Approx. weighting** |
| Comprehending | 1 | 13 | 21.5% |
| Analysing + Evaluating | 2 | 22 | 36.5% |
| Synthesising | 3 | 17 | 28% |
| Creating and communicating | 2 & 3 | 8 | 13% |
| Total |  | 60 | 100% |

\* This criterion is assessed in Question 2 (4 marks) and Question 3 (4 marks).

The table below summarises the criteria and its relative weighting in the mock assessment for Ancient History ‘public use’ paper.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Question** | **Mark allocation** | **Approx. weighting** |
| Comprehending | 1 | 6 | 12.5% |
| Analysing | 2 | 16 | 23.5% |
| Synthesising | 4 | 19 | 27% |
| Evaluating | 3 | 21 | 30% |
| Creating and communicating | 3 & 4 | 8 | 11.5% |
| Total |  | 70 | 100% |

\* This criterion is assessed in Question 3 (4 marks) and Question 4 (4 marks).

1. Examples have been taken across the mock assessments – ‘schools only’ and ‘public use’ - for both Ancient History and Modern History. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)