FAQs – OCR A & AS Level History

CONTENTS

SUBJECT CONTENT

What do I do if I have a specific question about subject content?

Please email History@ocr.org.uk and we are more than happy to help in any way we can.

TEXT BOOKS

What textbooks are available and where can I get hold of one?

A number of new textbooks have been released for the A Level History qualification.

I would recommend that you contact our publishing partner Hodder for any textbooks to support the OCR History A Level. Hodder have a series of Access to History titles available in print and digital formats that are endorsed by OCR and matched to OCR's History specification.

This document will give you an idea of what is on offer:
http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/media/Documents/History/OCR_A-level_Course_Guide.pdf

For unit 1 Hodder has produced a book for every topic, and for units 2 and 3 for most of the popular topics - so please do check the document above before making a decision on the textbooks that you would like to order.

To order your titles or request Inspection Copies fill in the order form on the above document or visit www.hoddereducation.co.uk/alevelhistory/ocr for further instruction.

Do I need to cover all of the content in the textbook?

It is worth first looking to see if the text book that you are using has been endorsed by OCR. Not all of the Hodder publications that link to the specification are endorsed (including much of the Access to History series) and as a result might contain topics that do not align explicitly with the content that you see in the specification. It is perfectly acceptable to use these textbooks but when using them just bear in mind that you will only be required to cover topics that have been outlined within the specification. Nonetheless, examiners will also credit any relevant material used to answer questions set.

REVISION

There are a few resources that would definitely be very helpful to your revision planning for the OCR History A Level. Hodder have several titles available in print and digital formats that are endorsed by OCR and matched to OCR's History specification.

These revision guides for OCR History A Level are listed in this document: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/223668-options-booklets-handbook.pdf

To order your titles fill in the order form on the last page of the above document or visit www.hoddereducation.co.uk/alevelhistory/ocr for further instructions.

Hodder also have a series of Student Revision Webinars that might be worth attending:
http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/Event/439
http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/Event/440
http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/Event/465

Furthermore, we have recently uploaded some INSET material for coursework that you might find of use (www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk) and on our interchange website we have some candidate style answers from our legacy A Level (www.interchange.ocr.org.uk).

RESITS AND REVIEWS OF MARKING

What is OCRs policy on Reviews of marking?

We follow JCQ rules on all post-results services. Please see http://www.ocr.org.uk/ocr-for/exams-officers/stage-5-post-results-services/ and https://interchange.ocr.org.uk/Modules/GeneralQualification/Post%20Results/Results%20Enquiry/Pages/ResultsEnquiryMenu.aspx?menuindex=73&menuid=107 for further information.

ONE-TO-ONE SESSIONS

Is it possible for you to come to our school for a one to one session?

Yes, we certainly have a few options for any school requiring some additional support.

In the first instance I would recommend that you contact us on the phone to establish some general guidelines and discuss where you are at in your understanding. If further support is still needed we might be able to provide a one-to one service on request, however you will need to contact CPD Hub to discuss this further, therefore, it would be best to explore what we can do over the phone first.

You can also look at attending one of our Regional Education Network Meetings. We've been hosting these free regional events around the country for a few months, and they have proved popular with history teachers. The events give you an opportunity to share good practice, and to discuss teaching issues, ideas and resources with colleagues. At the same time OCR Subject Specialists will be there on hand to answer any questions. To book these events go to EventBrite www.eventbrite.co.uk and search for 'OCR History'.

GRADE BOUNDARIES

What are the grade boundaries?

We can't be too precise about these at this stage as out of fairness to all learners the final grade boundaries are decided using a combination of the examiners' expert judgement and statistics to determine how the level of difficulty differs series to series and to even out the consequences of any variation. However, the standard for the new A-level is designed to be the same as for the legacy A-level, and therefore the legacy design thresholds should give you a good indication, i.e. 80% for an A and 40% for an E, with reasonable spacing of other grades in between. A list of the results for the legacy A-Level are listed here http://www.ocr.org.uk/ocr-for/exams-officers/stage-4-results/results-statistics/.
When grade descriptors from Ofqual are made available; we will publish these on our website.

SAMPLE ANSWERS

Are sample answers available?

Our A Level History A candidate style answers have been designed to help to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and to provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. These would be a good place to start and are listed under 'Candidate exemplars' on the A Level History A page of our website http://www.ocr.org.uk/history. More candidate style answers are in preparation now for Unit 3. If you want to volunteer your own students work to publish as sample answers then please contact us at History@ocr.org.uk.

In addition to candidate style answers a complete set of sample assessment materials can also be found here listed under 'Assessment material' http://www.ocr.org.uk/history.

MARK SCHEME APPLICATION

Why are the mark-schemes less detailed and how should I use them?

In some ways the mark schemes are not as detailed as they were in previous years and this is deliberately designed to be the case to ensure that we can reward good history regardless of the approach taken by the candidate so that students will be rewarded when they do what the question asks. The mark scheme has been designed to credit students wherever and however they demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for a particular level, no set answer is expected. Each mark-scheme gives some suggestions for how students might do this. Have a look at this one as an example http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/170524-unit-h105-y131-alfred-and-the-making-of-england-871-1016-sample-assessment-material.pdf.

If you still have queries then you can of course email us at History@ocr.org.uk and we will be happy to go through this with you further.

COURSEWORK

When and how do I submit the Text and Task Proposal Form?

The coursework form does not need to be submitted until the year of entry so the deadline for your first cohort of A Level students will be 31 January 2017. However, you should get your questions approved before students start work on the coursework unit. The form is submitted online and can be found on the Assessment Preparation section of the GCSE History webpage.

Can they do their coursework on a topic they have covered in another unit?

Yes, the only restriction is that they cannot do their coursework on anything they studied in the Unit 3 depth studies.

Is further guidance available for teachers on this coursework unit?

Yes, a guidance document is in development and will be available to download from the weblink below at the end of April http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-history-a-h105-h505-from-2015/
You also might find the coursework packs that were used at the INSET meetings useful, here is a link
https://cpdhub.ocr.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?e=fjefcbdbhgnidcpindncdphpabihkmpcehicklnfcaadliolbp

AS EXAMINATION

How should the AS Unit 1 10 mark utility question be answered?

For the 10 mark utility question, as long as the source is evaluated using provenance and relevant knowledge, and a supported analysis of its utility is reached, no set approach is required. What an answer might look like in practice might be a paragraph of why the source is useful: what does it say about the specific question, what specific information does it contain and what is the source's analysis of the problem, backed up by the student's own knowledge of these. Another paragraph then on provenance - is it contemporary, is it hearsay, does the provenance enhance the utility of the source. Then a final paragraph, summing up and reaching an overall analysis - has the source been really useful in offering a balanced view, or is it limited by its entirely negative/positive take on the issue in question. Please note though that this is not a formula or a recommended way of doing it, just one way in which the top of level 5 could be achieved. Our A Level History A candidate style answers might also help to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered. These are listed under 'Candidate exemplars' on the A Level History A page of our website http://www.ocr.org.uk/history.

How should I approach teaching the interpretations element of unit 2?

For the AS interpretation the students do not need to know any historians or schools of thought. The aim is to develop awareness that the past can be interpreted in different ways.

The question will require the candidate to assess the strengths and limitations of a historian's interpretation of an issue related to one of the specified key topics. They should be able to place the interpretation with the context of the wider historical debate on the key topic. However they will not be required to know the names of individual historians associated with the debate or to have studied the specific books of any historians. They'll need to be able to understand the wording of the quote and explain it within the wider historical debate and consider both strengths and limitations using their own knowledge of the topic.

In effect they need to evaluate the strengths and limits of the given interpretation based on the historical context - a straightforward 3 paragraph structure might be appropriate: paragraph 1 analysing the interpretation (what is it saying, where does that fit into the debate – e.g. what other views are held about the issue), paragraph 2 the interpretation's strengths (through application of their own knowledge), paragraph 3 its weaknesses (again through own knowledge). They **do not** need a concluding paragraph stating whether they the candidate agree, just analysis of strengths and weaknesses

The interpretations themselves should come from the natural arguments and debates that are found within the teaching of the unit.

Yes, the key issues that have been specified as AS Interpretation topics for section B of the examination can also be the basis for the essay question in Section A.

SPAG

What is SPag? How will it be assessed?

There are no marks explicitly reserved for SPAG at A Level but the quality of written communication is accessed throughout.

SCHEMES OF WORK

Do you produce schemes of work for A-level topics?

Suggested schemes of work are available on our forums here:
http://social.ocr.org.uk/node/2501/conversations.
We are also always keen to see teachers sharing their own resources here.

EXTRA READING

Where can I find additional reading materials and resources?

Each of the topics at A-level has its own dedicated forum on the social area of our website. You can view these here: http://social.ocr.org.uk/node/2501/conversations and all of the unit 1 and 2 topics have suggested schemes of work, with reading lists attached, in their areas. So for example for England 1445-1509, there is a suggested scheme of work here:
http://social.ocr.org.uk/files/ocr/Y105%20SoW%20England%201445-1509.pdf

For unit 3, most of the resources are still in preparation at the moment, and these will be made available when we have them on the forums above for their respective topics.

Also, on the main section of the website at: http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-subject/history/ we have candidate exemplars, delivery guides and other resources for many of the A-level topics, especially for unit 1 and 2, with more to come for unit 3. It's really worth looking over these to get an idea of the standard expected from candidates for the different courses.

COLLABORATION

If other schools are teaching the same topic is there a way that we can contact them?

I would suggest that you start a conversation on the topic specific forums where you will find other teachers teaching the same topic. Here is the link http://social.ocr.org.uk/node/2501/conversations.Otherwise, if you have registered your options on the Specification Creator Tool then we can send you a list, so please contact us at History@ocr.org.uk and we will send this across.

ACCESSIBILITY

What are OCR's learner accessibility accommodations?

To apply for the appropriate arrangements for disabilities, learning difficulties, permanent or temporary conditions, including applications for modified papers, you will need to access the online tool 'Access Arrangements Online', via Interchange. In addition to this, you will find further information about Access Arrangements on the OCR Access arrangements webpage and the JCQ website.

If you want to discuss the accessibility of resources to support delivery of our qualifications please contact resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk with some further information about the resources that you require.

CPD/INSET

I was not able to attend a CPD event. Can I get materials from it?

You can download all our CPD materials free of charge here:
https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?e=fjefcbdbhgnidcpoonie&CATN_ID=1

UPDATES

How can I stay up to date with any OCR History updates?

Our e-newsletter currently has over 6,000 subscribers and is a great way to keep up to date with our news, resources and events. You can subscribe here http://www.ocr.org.uk/i-want-to/email-updates/