



History

Level 1/2 Certificate

Applied History

Guidance on Task Setting

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GUIDANCE ON TASK SETTING

Why is it important to set good tasks?

The study of History is an investigation into the past. This involves asking questions, which is why students taking the J948 Level 1/2 Certificate in Applied History should tackle it through a series of carefully-designed enquiry questions. The enquiries should be interesting and worthwhile. They should enable students to investigate a range of periods and the diversity of human experience. It follows that setting the right task is crucial for students to succeed. This means choosing appropriate content, devising good enquiry questions and marshalling the right materials. The purpose of this guidance is to assist teachers in task setting so that you can provide your students with the best opportunities possible.

Which units will this guidance focus on?

This guidance will focus on units B952, B953, B954, B955 and B956. This is because the coursework units are each assessed through a single assignment (or at most, two assignments), and make up 50% of the total assessment of the qualification.

When teaching the Medieval History Unit B951, you should make use of the enquiry questions in the specification. The several distinct pieces of work which students undertake in building up their portfolio for teacher assessment in units B957, B958, B959 and B960 should also be led by enquiry questions.

NOTE: Teachers should be clear that this course is NOT an Entry Level course, nor does it involve doing 'projects'. It is a Level 1/2 Certificate and is marked and moderated to GCSE standards, and units are graded A* to G. This means that, to do well, students will have to produce arguments, evaluate sources and show the ability to analyse history equivalent to that expected at GCSE.

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HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

1. Read the Specification. The specification provides much more than simply a list of content to be covered. It includes both important information on the key requirements of each unit and advice on how to prepare to teach it. You need to ensure that the task(s) set address these requirements so that candidates are able to access high levels of the mark-scheme.

For the Local History Investigation unit, B952, for example, it is not just a matter of collecting information about your local history; the task must address *“the significance of the chosen aspect of the past, its relevance today and the issues involved in carrying out the enquiry.”*

These key requirements for each unit are made clear below.

2. Read the online Teachers Handbook. <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/75819-teachers-handbook.pdf>

This handbook offers advice on how to teach each unit and includes several examples of successful enquiry questions.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE TOPIC FOR THE TASK?

It is important to select a topic which interests and motivates your students while enabling them to fully meet the specification. You therefore need to be clear about how the key requirements of each unit affect the choice of content for the task. Here are the key requirements for the five coursework units:

B952: Local History Investigation.

As mentioned above, the key requirements for this unit are to address **the *significance of the chosen topic in the past and its relevance to the present.***

Given that there are two elements to these key requirements, a two-part enquiry could be a sensible approach:

1. A first part assessing the significance of the topic in the past. Students could devise their own criteria for significance, or use some of the suggested criteria from the online Teachers Handbook. Successful assessment of significance will involve setting the topic in a wider historical context; the context might be local, regional or national. In the case of sites, it might involve discussion of typicality. The local history topic need not necessarily be a site. As the Specification says, it could be *“... an historical issue, OR site, OR person(s), OR event OR development to the local community.”* So these could include an issue (e.g. industrialisation), a local person, (e.g. a local hero or villain, or semi-mythical figure), an event, such as a battle, or a development, such as the arrival of the railway in a town. The History need not be from long ago: for example, good assignments have been set in the past around the local impact of the closure of coal mines in the last 30 years.
2. A second part assessing the *relevance* of the topic today. Some schools have used local questionnaires to judge the current relevance of the chosen historic topic by asking a sample of local people.

A study of the significance of a less well-known local person could lead to a second part assessing whether the present community feel there should be a statue, or some other commemoration of this person, thus providing evidence of current relevance. Studies of a past local development lead well into an enquiry into current relevance.

Stately homes or well-visited castles are not necessarily the best choice of local topic as they tend to be fully described already in a guide-book. A more neglected or unexpected site or person can add an element of intrigue for the students and a puzzle to be solved. On the other hand, well-documented sites can support a source-based investigation into a less well-known aspect of a familiar site.

(Note that the two elements of the key requirements need not be of equal weight)

B953 International History

The key requirements for this unit are to address an issue of **international significance**. It is important to recognise both of these words here:

1. The topic chosen must be international. That does not just mean 'non-British'. It must look at international involvement, involving several nations and relations between them. A study of the Vietnam war, for example, should not deal only with events that took place in Vietnam; the First World War should not be studied simply through British involvement.
2. The assignment should focus on significance. The same considerations about deciding on criteria for significance will apply as were outlined in the notes on Unit B952 above. As with Unit B952, successful discussion of significance will involve setting the topic in a wider context.

The topic chosen should be "an event, issue or development" as stated in the specification.

B954 Whose History? Presenting the Past

The key requirements for this unit are clearly laid out in the Specification:

"The two key questions are:

In what ways has the past been represented and interpreted?

Why has the past been represented and interpreted in different ways?"

As with B952, two assignments seem to suggest themselves:

1. A first part, investigating different interpretations of a person, a period, a topic, an event or a site. This will involve comparing similarities and differences between different interpretations. A small but diverse range of sources – a maximum of 5 or 6 – is likely to give students much more to get their teeth into than a larger, but less interesting batch of sources.

Try to include sources of different types: written, pictorial, cartoons, film stills etc.

Be sure to include contemporary and secondary judgements.

Remember to give full attributions for all the sources chosen: date, origin, author etc.

2. A second part, investigating why these interpretations differ. Key issues here can only arise from proper attributions to the sources so that students can explore issues such as purpose and audience.

Clearly, controversial people or events work well here.

The International History need not necessarily be a 20th century topic. Successful enquiries in the past have investigated the growth of the Islamic Empire, the Crusades and the Renaissance.

B955 Change over Time

The key requirements for this unit are laid out in the 'Aims' section of the specification: *"to understand... the causes of change, the rate of change, the concept of turning-points, the impact of change..."*

The task here needs to focus on analyses as well as descriptions of change over time and students will need to be guided by the wording of the assignment in order to address these issues. Not all of the concepts listed need to be dealt with; the task could focus on, for example, the impact of change on different groups of people, or the differences between short-term and long-term change, or the balance of change and continuity.

Although this study might appear to have some similarities with the Schools History Project Development Studies, note that the period to be covered in this study is only *"approximately 100 years."* This suggests an approach through looking at a period of considerable change and analysing it by means of the concepts in the key requirements. Although some selected periods from within SHP Development studies would be appropriate, there are plenty of other possibilities, perhaps exploring Change over Time in a local area, or taking a theme such as women's rights.

B956 A Society in Depth.

This unit is an investigation of the lives of different groups of people in a particular place (not in Britain) over a short-ish period, about 30-50 years. The Key Requirement is that the enquiry should lead to two distinct assignments:

Assignment 1: An examination of the nature of the chosen society through close study of a small batch (5-7) of sources. As with Unit B954, they should be varied in topic and nature - written, pictorial, cartoons, film stills etc.; be sure to include contemporary and secondary judgements. Remember to give full attributions to all the sources chosen: date, origin, author etc. Questions will need to guide students to consider issues of utility, reliability and interpretation as part of their evaluation of how these sources help us understand that society at that time.

Assignment 2: An examination of the role of an individual. This should be more than a biography; it should explore the significance and impact of the chosen individual. As in Assignment 1, students will need to be guided to ensure that they explore these issues in their responses.

SETTING TASKS

Example 1. B953 International Study: The Olympics.

Let's think through the enquiry question and the task for this. Obviously the Olympics are an international event, but where can we find 'significance'?

"What is the significance of the Olympic Games?" is too vague and is all about sport.

"What is the political significance of the Olympics?" is better but still too vague.

How about: "The Olympics are not just about sport'. How far do you agree with this statement?"

It is often a better strategy to set up an enquiry through a statement which students have to agree or disagree with: it gives them a reason to write an argument and often produces better work. Most students are going to need more help with the task; they don't need to write about every Olympic Games of the modern era. You could direct them to three Olympics: Mexico City, 1968 and the 'black power' protest of US athletes; Munich 1972 and the murder of 11 Israeli athletes by terrorists; Moscow 1980, boycotted by US and some other nations. Three such events are all that can be properly analysed within the word limit; anymore and students' analyses will tend to be more superficial.

Teaching the backgrounds to these political events at the three Olympics will make up the programme of study for the unit. Some students will be able to carry out some research on their own; others will need much more support. It is therefore possible to differentiate the assignment task according to the abilities of the students. The level of support that individual students have received will be an important factor when you come to mark the assignment: clearly those who have worked more independently should receive more credit than those who have been more closely guided through the material. It is important to communicate these differences to your Moderator when the time comes to send off samples of work for moderation.

Don't forget the big enquiry question. This enquiry is not about three political incidents; it's about whether the Olympics are just a sporting event. Best answers will state the student's view in the opening sentences. While most of the rest of the assignment will explain the politics behind the three incidents, the final conclusion should come back to explore why the Olympics provided the settings for them.

Example 2. B952 Local Investigation: the workhouse.

Sometimes an item in a local newspaper can spark off a Local Investigation by providing a way in to the tricky second part of the key requirements for B952: examination of current relevance. In this case, the item was about a proposal to demolish a local workhouse and sell off the land. Workhouses are usually quite well-documented and a visit to the local Record Office will usually provide sufficient resources. The website <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/> is also extremely useful. Look for good stories, names of inmates or staff. Outline histories of Poor Law workhouses will provide sufficient context and controversies.

The obvious question is "What was the significance of X Workhouse in the life of this area?" or, in some situations, "The workhouse at XX was widely hated'. How can we tell if this statement is true?"

The threat of demolition provides material for the second part, on current relevance. Interviewing people in the street rarely stimulates much of interest, but three or four interviews with key players – the current owner, the planning officer, neighbours – could provide a lively follow-up.

Example 3. B956 A Society in Depth: the French Revolution.

This is a big topic, so students will write better responses in Assignment 1 if the collection of 5 to 7 sources are all drawn from either the same period, (for example, 1792) or around the same issues (for example, the causes of the Revolution).

It may be necessary to set one or two specific questions on each source, so that students are pointed at key features, and question styles can be drawn from former GCSE source papers. However best responses bring all the sources together in a final task giving a big picture of what they tell the student.

There are obviously many interesting individuals from the French Revolution who could be selected for Assignment 2. Some schools let their students choose from a list, this is a bit more work for the teacher! Students need to be made clear that they should not write a biography, but examine the significance of the individual chosen in the History of the Revolution. The counter-factual question "What if X had never been born, how would the History of the French Revolution be different?" could get at this kind of analysis.

A Note on Sources

The tasks in some units certainly have to be based on sources – see B954 and B956 above. However, provided the balance over all of the units of the course includes some work with sources there is no need to bring them into the task for every unit. The bullet-points in the mark-schemes do include descriptors at each level for how sources have been used, but applying these under the 'best-fit' advice means that they will not be brought into play when marking every assignment. The decision over how much students work with sources is up to the teacher preparing the teaching programme. Nevertheless, when students are required by the set task to work with sources, they need to do so to GCSE standards.

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