



14-19 CHANGES  
A LEVEL

# A Level **History**



Available for first teaching  
from September 2008

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### **Background to the changes**

Following a review of 14–19 education, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has revised the subject criteria for A Levels. These changes are intended to reduce the volume of marking for teachers, and the amount of assessment for learners – and to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to realise their full potential. Along with all awarding bodies, OCR has developed revised A Levels for first teaching from September 2008.

### **We've made sure it's a change for the better**

QCA's decision to revise A Levels has given us a great opportunity to make further improvements to our qualifications. We've been talking to teachers, heads of departments, local authority advisers, subject experts and examiners to make sure the new specifications, support materials and schemes of work meet your needs.

# OCR A Level History



OCR offers the choice of two distinct History A Level specifications: History A and History B.

**History A** builds on our current specification. It has been redeveloped in consultation with teachers, and offers a stimulating choice of content, including British, European and World History.

**History B** adopts a totally new approach to the teaching and learning of History at A Level. If you currently teach GCSE Schools History Project – or if you're looking for a new, innovative approach to teaching History which puts greater emphasis on the 'why' and 'how' – this new specification is very likely to be of interest to you.

This brochure includes information on both specifications, to enable you to make the right choice for you and your learners.

# A Level History A

This redevelopment of OCR's existing A Level History maintains the ethos and strengths of the original specification, but in a new four-unit format. This will reduce the volume of assessment for you and your learners, while maintaining the depth and breadth of content. The best features of the current units remain, and you are able to specialise in particular historical periods if you wish.

## Interesting features of the course:

- A coherent and comprehensive A Level History specification. You will be able to construct logical courses, which allow you to teach your chosen topics in depth, and follow them through the units.
- The opportunity to specialise in a historical period, including Medieval, Early Modern 15th-17th century, Modern 18th-19th century and Late 19th-20th century.
- The flexibility to choose which topics you teach, matching them to your resources, interests and expertise. Optional topics include 'From Anglo-Saxon England to Norman England 1035-1087', 'The Renaissance from c.1400-c.1550' and 'The USA and the Cold War in Asia 1945-1975'.
- A comprehensive coursework topic list, including new, exciting options such as 'British India 1815-1878' and 'Britain under Margaret Thatcher 1979-1990'.
- Contemporary topics, such as China and the Middle East, that will excite and engage learners, and enable them to ask significant questions about important issues.
- Coursework topics of personal interest to your learners. They carry out a substantial piece of work, in which they can develop and practise the skills of the historian for themselves.
- The opportunity to develop critical thinking skills by making connections between aspects of the topics covered in the coursework tasks. These skills are invaluable for further studies and later life.

*"Topics make much more sense in the new specification (e.g. England 1035-87 instead of either Edward the Confessor or the Norman Conquest). Also, 2 essays in 90 minutes is a good exam length. In the Enquiries unit again courses look much more coherent than at present. Overall, a large improvement to the old specification!"*

# A Level History A course details

Within the units there are no restrictions over which study topics are chosen. However, if you wish to specialise in particular periods, you'll find the exemplar routes in the OCR specification useful. Visit [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk) to download the full specification.

## For AS

Teaching units	Assessment method and weighting
<p><b>F961: British History Period Studies</b></p> <p>Learners enter for one of two components: Medieval and Early Modern 1035-1642, or Modern 1783-1994.</p> <p>A wide range of study topics is available, from the Anglo-Saxons up to Post-War Britain, including: <i>The Transition to Norman England; Church and State in the 16th Century; The Origins of the English Civil War; From Pitt to Peel; Foreign and Imperial Policies 1856-1914; Britain from 1951-1994.</i></p>	<p><b>Optional unit</b></p> <p>1 hour 30 mins exam</p> <p>AS - 50%</p> <p>A Level - 25%</p>
<p><b>F962: European and World History Period Studies</b></p> <p>Learners enter for one of two European and World History components: Medieval and Early Modern 1095-1609, or Modern 1795-2003.</p> <p>A wide range of study topics is available, including: <i>The Crusades; The Renaissance; Spain in the 15th and 16th Centuries; Napoleon; The USA in the 19th Century; The Rise of China in the 20th Century; The Crisis in the Middle East Since 1948.</i></p>	<p><b>Optional unit</b></p> <p>1 hour 30 mins exam</p> <p>AS - 50%</p> <p>A Level - 25%</p>
<p><b>F963: British History Enquiries</b></p> <p>Learners are entered for one of two components: Medieval and Early Modern 1066-1660 (three topics) or Modern 1815-1945 (four topics).</p> <p>This is a document studies unit where learners are presented with 4 or 5 sources in the exam. Learners should have knowledge of the prescribed topic and an acquaintance with the kinds of sources available for the topic.</p>	<p><b>Optional unit</b></p> <p>1 hour 30 mins exam</p> <p>AS - 50%</p> <p>A Level - 25%</p>
<p><b>F964: European and World History Enquiries</b></p> <p>Learners are entered for one of two components: Medieval and Early Modern 1073-1546 (two topics) or Modern 1774-1975 (four topics).</p> <p>This is a document studies unit, where learners are presented with 4 or 5 sources in the exam. Learners should have knowledge of the prescribed topic and an acquaintance with the kinds of sources available for the topic.</p>	<p><b>Optional unit</b></p> <p>1 hour 30 mins exam</p> <p>AS - 50%</p> <p>A Level - 25%</p>

## For A2

Teaching units	Assessment method and weighting
<p><b>F965: Historical Interpretations and Investigations</b></p> <p>Internally assessed and externally moderated coursework. Coursework tasks are set by OCR. Learners will produce two 2000-word essays: one based on the examination of a number of historians' interpretations and one based on a personal investigation of a problem/issue about which there is a variety of views.</p>	<p><b>Mandatory unit</b></p> <p>Coursework</p> <p>A Level - 20%</p>
<p><b>F966: Historical Themes</b></p> <p>A choice of 12 key themes covering a period of at least 100 years. Learners will demonstrate synoptic skills by drawing together appropriate techniques, knowledge and understanding to evaluate developments over the whole of the period.</p>	<p><b>Mandatory unit</b></p> <p>2 hour exam</p> <p>A Level - 30%</p>

**NOTE: Learners must take either F961 and F964, or F962 and F963**

## What stays the same, and what changes?

If you're already working with the current OCR A Level History specification, you'll want to know which parts of this remain in the new specification – and what the main changes are.

The table below outlines the key points.

Main aspects that stay the same	Most important changes
You can continue using your experience and resources from teaching the current specification, as the tasks and the skills assessed remain largely the same in the new specification.	In line with QCA criteria, the A Level now consists of four units – two at AS and two at A2.
The content and assessment requirements of current units 2587-89 are carried over to the new specification, forming part of the coursework.	In line with QCA criteria, coursework is now internally assessed.
The most popular topics (historical periods) have been retained, to ensure continuity.	Also in line with QCA criteria, the open book examination is removed.
Learners still complete an individual investigation, which builds on interpretations and the AS enquiries unit.	Although most of the periods of history remain the same, current popular units have been expanded – such as Nazi Germany, The French Revolution 1774-1795, and From Pitt to Peel 1783-1846.
	Instead of a 3000-word individual investigation, coursework now consists of two 2000-word essays: one on historical interpretation and the other on personal investigation.

*"We are already teaching similar units and find they are adaptable to the needs of our learners without being too easy for the most able. The new units enhance the right elements without over stretching the learners."*

# 'Stretch and Challenge' for History A

A new Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) initiative for all A Levels, 'Stretch and Challenge' is designed to give young people the opportunity to demonstrate their potential, and to help universities differentiate between applicants. It will be part of the A2 units, so it won't involve additional questions or exam papers.

**In History A, 'Stretch and Challenge' is achieved through an approach to exam questions which is largely the same as the approach of the current specification:**

- The questions invite a greater variety of thinking and type of answer. For example, the introduction could ask the learner to 'analyse', 'evaluate' or 'discuss'.
- The questions are structured to show more connections between different sections of the specification.
- Extended writing is encouraged.
- There's a wider range of question types – such as case studies and open-ended questions – rather than just short-answer questions.
- There are more synoptic assessments – exploring connections between different areas and levels of the subject – over and above the superficial links within question types.

**You'll find examples of 'Stretch and Challenge' style questions in your specimen assessment materials.**

*"The unit for British History fits in with current practice quite well. In fact, extending the Early Stuarts to the Civil War makes more historical sense."*

*"The document topic on the mid-Tutors and the corresponding A2 unit on Rebellions are very popular amongst our students. However, the most exciting part is the coursework as it allows them the freedom to explore their own areas of interest. It is a big selling point."*

# A Level History B

History B adopts a totally new approach to the teaching and learning of History at A Level. If you currently teach GCSE Schools History Project – or if you're looking for a new, innovative approach to teaching History – this new specification is very likely to be of interest to you.

History B combines the traditional 'what happened?' aspect of History with a greater emphasis on the 'why?' and 'how?' aspects of the historian's work.

## Interesting features of the course:

- A totally new A Level History, which builds on the successful approach of GCSE Schools History Project and will engage and motivate learners by enabling them to study several modes of explanation of ideas, motives and events. Unique to this specification, learners look at different approaches to explain why historical events happened, and adopt a critical evaluation angle to the study of History.
- A range of exciting and innovative study topics designed to engage learners. For example, Medieval topics on the Vikings and the Black Death, Early Modern options on the Different Interpretations of Witch-hunting, and Modern options on British Imperialism and Debates about the Holocaust.
- The opportunity for learners to learn how to evaluate the suitability of sources when answering historical questions. This particularly benefits learners by creating a progression from GCSE work on historical sources.
- The freedom to choose a topic your learners are particularly excited about as they complete an individual study on historical significance. This is designed to develop their research skills, as they are asked to complete a Research Diary.
- Good preparation for further study, by teaching research and critical thinking skills. This course's approach prepares learners for the type of exam questions they will be asked to complete at degree level.
- If you currently teach GCSE Schools History Project, some of your favourite topics are covered in more depth – for example, Women's History, Class History and Social History. Most importantly, your existing knowledge and sources will help ensure the successful delivery of this specification.

*"There is a selection of units in Spec B that we currently teach or have resources for and the unit topics will be inherently interesting for the students."*

*"Non British topics will excite our students. We will definitely consider this new specification!"*





# A Level History B course details

## For AS

Teaching units	Assessment method and weighting
<p><b>F981: Historical Explanation – British History</b> or <b>F982: Historical Explanation – Non-British History</b></p> <p>Learners will explore the theory and practice of explanation - of ideas, actions and events - located in topics spanning 20-40 years (British and non-British options available).</p> <p>Options include: The End of Consensus: Britain 1945-90; Russia in Turmoil 1900-1921.</p>	<p><b>Optional units</b></p> <p>1 hour 30 mins exam</p> <p>AS – 50%</p> <p>A Level – 25%</p>
<p><b>F983: Using Historical Evidence – British History</b> or <b>F984: Using Historical Evidence – Non-British History</b></p> <p>This unit considers the theory and use of evidence. Learners will, for example, consider the distinction between historical sources and historical evidence, and between primary and secondary sources. They will also cover the wide range of different types of historical sources – for example, written, pictorial and statistical – and the different issues they raise, as well as the different uses they have.</p> <p>Learners will study a topic of approximately 100 years in duration - from a choice of British and non-British options. In examination, they will use sources to test a hypothesis.</p> <p>Options include: Black Death in England, the Italian Renaissance.</p>	<p><b>Optional units</b></p> <p>1 hour 30 mins exam</p> <p>AS – 50%</p> <p>A Level – 25%</p>

## For A2

Teaching units	Assessment method and weighting
<p><b>F985: Historical Controversy – British History</b> or <b>F986: Historical Controversy – Non-British History</b></p> <p>Building on earlier units, learners will study how and why historians disagree about the past - exploring how different methodologies lead to different interpretations. They will then consider different approaches to their chosen topics.</p> <p>Options include: Different Interpretations of British Imperialism 1850-1950; Different American Wests 1840-1900; Different Interpretations of Witch-hunting.</p>	<p><b>Mandatory unit</b></p> <p>3 hours controlled assessment</p> <p>A Level – 30%</p>
<p><b>F987: Historical Significance</b></p> <p>In this final unit, learners will examine the vocabulary of significance. They will prepare a Personal Study (of up to 3000 words) backed by a Research Diary to demonstrate their understanding and methods.</p>	<p><b>Mandatory unit</b></p> <p>Coursework (marked internally and moderated externally)</p> <p>A Level – 20%</p>

**NOTE: Learners must take either F981 and F984 or F982 and F983**

## 'Stretch and Challenge' for History B

A new initiative for all A Levels, 'Stretch and Challenge' is designed to give learners the opportunity to demonstrate their potential, and to help universities differentiate between applicants. It will be part of the A2 units, so it won't involve additional questions or exam papers.

*"We are familiar with the GCSE SHP specification and would welcome the idea of continuation to A Level standard."*

**'Stretch and Challenge' is incorporated in History B, and is achieved through a new approach to exam questions:**

- The questions invite a greater variety of thinking and type of answer. For example, the introduction could ask the learner to 'analyse', 'evaluate' or 'discuss'.
- The questions are structured to show more connections between different sections of the specification.
- Extended writing is encouraged.
- There's a wider range of question types – such as case studies and open-ended questions – rather than just short-answer questions.
- There are more synoptic assessments – exploring connections between different areas and levels of the subject – over and above the superficial links within question types.

**You'll find examples of 'Stretch and Challenge' style questions in your specimen assessment materials.**

*"I like the idea of Units 5 and 6 being about contentious issues and I think that, once they grasp the details, students will be very engaged by those historical debates."*



# Support for A Level History teachers

To help you get started with the new A Level in History, OCR will run a number of training courses. We will also provide a range of detailed support materials and resources – some produced by OCR, some by our publishing partners.

## Training

The following INSET courses will be available from September 2007:

### **Get ready – introducing the new specifications (first teaching from September 2008)**

These **free** half-day (morning) sessions will cover both History A and History B, giving you an overview of the new OCR specifications.

They will:

- **Look at the structure of the new specifications**
- **Compare the new specification content with the old, including coursework and ‘Stretch and Challenge’ implications**
- **Discuss the support and resources available from OCR**
- **Summarise the benefits of the OCR specifications.**

### **Get started – towards successful delivery of the new specifications (first teaching from September 2008)**

These full-day sessions will give you guidance and support in planning to teach the new AS/A Level specifications.

They will:

- **Give an introduction to the structure and content of the new specifications**
- **Consider approaches to first teaching, and suggest best practice**
- **Look at coursework and ‘Stretch and Challenge’ implications**
- **Review the support and resources available from OCR.**

*This course will have some similarity to the half-day ‘Get ready’ sessions, but will look at the new specifications in more depth, with the emphasis on first teaching.*

*Places are allocated on a first come, first served basis – so if you’re interested in attending one of these events, visit [www.ocr.org.uk/training](http://www.ocr.org.uk/training) to find out the dates of the events nearest to you.*

## Support materials

OCR is producing the following materials to help you prepare for the new A Level History:

### History A

- **OCR schemes of work:** Available autumn 2007.
- **OCR lesson plans:** Available autumn 2007.
- **Summary of past examiner reports:** Available October 2007.
- **Coursework guidance:** Available October 2007.
- **OCR exemplar answers to Specimen Assessment Materials:** Available Spring 2008.

### History B

- **OCR schemes of work:** Available autumn 2007.
- **OCR lesson plans:** Available autumn 2007.
- **Teacher guide for the theory elements of each unit:** Available October 2007.

*For more information on all these support materials, visit [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)*



We're also working with publishing partner Heinemann to provide further resources to support the new specifications.

## **For History A** **Heinemann will publish the following:**

### **For learners:**

- AS History for OCR A: Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany 1919-63
- A2 History for OCR A: Russia and its Rulers 1855-1964.

All learner books feature a Live Text exam café CD-ROM. Exam café is exam support where learners can get advice from their peers, teachers and from examiners. This will be print and electronic support.

### **For teachers:**

- AS History for OCR A: Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany 1919-63 LiveText for Teachers with Planning and Delivery Resource
- AS History for OCR A: Planning and Delivery Resource supported by OCR endorsed topic books:
  - Church and State 1529-1589
  - The German Reformation 1517-1546
  - Liberals and Conservatives 1846-1895
  - The Unification of Italy 1815-1870
- A2 History for OCR A: Russia and its Rulers 1855-1964 LiveText for Teachers with Planning and Delivery Resource
- A2 History for OCR A: Planning and Delivery Resource supported by OCR endorsed topic books:
  - The Development of the Nation State: France 1498-1610
  - The Ascendancy of France 1610-1715
  - Civil Rights in the USA 1865-1992
  - The Development of Democracy in Britain 1868-1997

Planning and delivery resources are tailored to the OCR specification and OCR teacher support material. They contain customisable lesson plans, teacher notes and worksheets. This is delivered as an electronic version of the learner book containing video, extra sources, 'Stretch and Challenge' material and weblinks.

*For more information on these resources, visit [www.heinemann.co.uk](http://www.heinemann.co.uk)*

Other publishers may also produce support material, and we will consider them for endorsement after we've assessed them against the OCR Quality Assurance process.

## **For History B** **Heinemann will publish the following:**

### **For learners:**

- AS OCR History B: The Theory of Historical Explanation and Using Historical Evidence
- AS The End of Consensus: Britain 1945-90
- AS Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England 1489-1601
- A2 OCR History B: Historical Controversy and Historical Significance
- A2 Different interpretations of British Imperialism 1850-1950
- A2 Different interpretations of witch hunting in Early Modern Europe c. 1560-c. 1660.

All learner books feature a Live Text exam café CD-ROM. Exam café is exam support where learners can get advice from their peers, teachers and from examiners. This will be print and electronic support.

### **For teachers:**

- AS History for OCR B: The Theory of Historical Explanation and Using Historical Evidence Live Text for Teachers with Planning and Delivery Resource.
- A2 History for OCR B: Historical Controversy and Historical Significance Live Text for Teachers with Planning and Delivery Resource.

Planning and delivery resources are tailored to the OCR specification and OCR teacher support material. They contain customisable lesson plans, teacher notes and worksheets. This is delivered as an electronic version of the learner book containing video, extra sources, Stretch and Challenge material and weblinks.

## Other OCR History qualifications

As a History teacher, you may be interested to know about these two GCSE qualifications. Both are designed to help learners develop a variety of skills, such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation and communication of information – all of which will be useful in a wide range of jobs or in a further study of the subject. The courses will enable learners to develop a knowledge and understanding of past events and periods, and to explore the key features and characteristics of those periods.

### **GCSE History (Modern World)**

This course covers 20th Century History up to the present day, and approaches it in two different ways. Firstly, in the International Relations Core, learners study an outline of developments in international relations from the end of the First World War to the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, 1919-1989. Secondly, learners look at studies in depth, over a shorter period, of societies 'in the round' – for example, the USA, 1919-1941. These depth studies are more concerned with the various aspects of political, social, economic and cultural development in a single society rather than with a theme (international relations) over a longer period of time, as in the Core. The course also includes an element of British History in the British Depth Study, which looks at social change in Britain between 1906 and 1918.

This course is suitable for anyone wishing to study 20th Century History to GCSE level, and for all abilities. A short course is available for those wishing to study only half the content of the full course. There is also a corresponding Entry Level Certificate.

*For more information on GCSE History (Modern World), visit [www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/GCSEHistory\\_B\\_Modern\\_World.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/GCSEHistory_B_Modern_World.html)*

### **GCSE History (Schools History Project)**

This course approaches History in two ways. Firstly, a study in development looks at change and cause over a long period of time, and the analysis of different features of historical situations. Secondly, an in-depth study looks at people and problems in the past through the social, economic, political, cultural and religious aspects of a country over a relatively short period of time. The course also provides an opportunity for learners to study local history.

This course is suitable for any learner wishing to study History to GCSE level, and for all abilities. It is particularly useful for anyone wishing to study a local historical site. A short course is available for those wishing to study only half the content of the full course. There is also a corresponding Entry Level Certificate.

*For more information on GCSE History (Schools History Project), visit [www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/GCSEHistory\\_A\\_Schools\\_History\\_Project.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/GCSEHistory_A_Schools_History_Project.html)*

# Want to find out more?

For more information on the new OCR A Level History – and on all our History qualifications – visit [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk) or call **01223 553998**

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**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)**

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