

NOTICE TO CENTRES

FAO: Examinations Officers and Heads of Department – History

Date: June 2014

Subject: OCR GCE History B (H108/H508)

OCR GCE HISTORY B (H108/H508)

You may already have received a letter or an email about this specification. To ensure that all centres that may be teaching or about to teach this specification are aware of this important information, we have released this update as a Notice to Centres, in order to reach all relevant Heads of Department and Examinations Officers.

After running two History A Levels for the last six years, OCR has reluctantly decided that it will not submit a new draft specification for History B for accreditation as part of its wider programme of qualification reform.

This means that the current GCE History B specification will be available to teach in September 2014 but not beyond and the last assessment for this specification will be in June 2016. We will confirm the situation regarding resit opportunities once Ofqual has confirmed with all awarding bodies the arrangements for resits of qualifications ending in 2016.

OCR will be formally withdrawing GCE History B from the Ofqual list of accredited qualifications, in line with Ofqual's Conditions of Recognition, using the final assessment opportunity dates above. We will take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of Learners in relation to this qualification and its withdrawal.

While this is disappointing news for many, we wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedication and commitment in supporting this distinctive A Level over a number of years. We also hope you will consider the benefits of transferring to a new broader single specification – GCE History A – that, once accredited, will encompass the approach and interests favoured by users of our current History B specification.

The major reason for the decision not to offer a reformed GCE History B qualification for 2015 is low uptake. The present GCE History B entry numbers have remained stubbornly low (under 1200 candidates) over the last five years, despite much input and support from ourselves and the wider History community, and there is no evidence to show that numbers will grow. This figure compares poorly with the numbers taking History A which are over 12,000 and rising. There are also some technical challenges and compromises involved in making a new 'co-teachable' History B specification and the development of this qualification comes at a time of the enormous commitment and cost of the largest programme of qualification reform in a generation. Although OCR is a 'not for profit' organisation, we are forced to make hard choices in the current climate and the expense of offering a second specification given its relatively poor reach is no longer justifiable.

We are determined to offer history teachers and students choice through our new and expanded History A specification. Once accredited for teaching from 2015, History A will offer over 58 topics, including some exciting new options which have never featured on an A Level specification before.

notice to centres *continued*

OCR will be concentrating its efforts on supporting and managing the single new History A specification. Our history team will be contacting schools to offer support in transferring to the new GCE History A specification for September 2015. We will offer every support to schools wishing to make this transition, including detailed mapping documents to the closest equivalent History A topics (for those who want to preserve their content choices and resources), specially-produced transition guides on changing the teaching approach, and comprehensive guidance on the requirements of the History A qualification. We will also be offering free INSET specifically for schools making this transition.

We would like to take this opportunity to confirm that we are committed to supporting the current GCSE A (SHP) specification and to redeveloping this in line with the timetable for GCSE reform.

Once again, we regret having had to reach this decision and appreciate the impact on your school. If you have further queries, please contact us at history@ocr.org.uk or call us on 01223 553998 to speak to Mike Goddard or Grant Robertson of the History team.