

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y100/01/02 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction	3
General overview	4
Most common causes of centres not passing.....	7
Common misconceptions	7
Avoiding potential malpractice.....	7
Helpful resources.....	8
Additional comments.....	8

Introduction

Our moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Online courses

We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

Cambridge Nationals

All teachers delivering our redeveloped Cambridge Nationals suite from September 2022 are asked to complete the Essentials for the NEA course, which describes how to guide and support your students. You'll receive a certificate which you should retain.

Following this you can also complete a subject-specific Focus on Internal Assessment course for your individual Cambridge Nationals qualification, covering marking and delivery.

GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016)

We recommend all teachers complete the introductory module Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, which covers key internal assessment and standardisation principles.

Following this you will find a subject-specific course for your individual qualification, covering marking criteria with examples and commentary, along with interactive marking practice.

Accessing our online courses

You can access all our online courses from our teacher support website [Teach Cambridge](#).

You will find links relevant to your subject under Assessment, NEA/Coursework and then Online Courses from the left hand menu on your Subject page.

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

General overview

The topic-based essay brings together skills required in other units but also offers the challenge of independent research and more extended historical analysis. It is an A Level standard essay, not a thesis or a dissertation and requires selection of relevant material and a distillation of research. It is not intended to be substantially longer than the suggested word length guideline. Very long pieces of writing may lead to redundant descriptive passages or unnecessarily long quotations and exposition of evidence. The key skills of evaluation of different interpretations and the critical assessment of primary and secondary evidence should be able to be demonstrated within the recommended word limit. Over lengthy work is only likely to confirm the qualities shown.

In terms of the first assessment objective which tests similar skills to those required in essays in Units 1 and 2, the best essays showed a clear understanding of the requirements of their chosen question. Of course, few, if any, essays wrote on a totally different topic, for example writing about Charles II when the question was about Charles I.

However, there was a tendency for some essays to neglect the key element in the question. For example, a question about the fall of Nicholas II of Russia should have as its focus an explanation of the actual fall as a result of the February Revolution and not merely be a review of problems and weaknesses of the reign as a whole. A question on the US defeat in Vietnam should focus on explaining why the US chose to withdraw not merely on problems and incidents which occurred in the course of the war. Explaining the outcome of the US Civil War may well involve considering major developments in the course of the war but the focus has to be the situation by 1865. Essays which go no further than Gettysburg in 1863 will not offer a full analysis. Essays on the fall of the Soviet Union which said little or nothing about 1991 or studies of the cause of the English Civil War which merely talked about the Personal Rule up to 1640 were not full analyses. Essays about the Holocaust which focused almost exclusively on events in the 1930s did not really address the question fully.

Key point - Responding directly to the question

This is an essay not a general project so answering questions precisely is important – check that the period in the question, if specified, is dealt with and that the terms of the question have been addressed.

AO1 also requires a discussion of different interpretations with a supported judgement in a similar way to the higher levels for Unit 1 and 2 essays. However very different factors are explained and illustrated from evidence; without judgement the question is not being answered. Questions should invite a judgement and cannot be fully answered by a series of explanations. Stronger essays contained interim judgements and a coherent overall judgement consistent with the evaluation of evidence. As with Units 1 and 2, a 'list of reasons' type of response, however well researched, did not demonstrate the higher level skills needed for the top levels. Describing different theories, for example about Richard III or responsibility for the Holocaust, is not the same as weighing those theories.

When choosing questions, it is important that the debates about the topic are understood. Questions may be valid in themselves and capable of leading to a sustained discussion. However, they may not be suitable for particular candidates in terms of understanding exactly what is involved or what research materials are relevant. If a clear debate cannot be established and assessed by a candidate in practice and given the resources which can be accessed, then it is not a good question regardless of whether it is possible in theory for a sustained critical analysis. Very specialist topics can be rewarding in all sorts of ways, but in terms of a successful outcome in this unit, candidates must be able to sustain a focus on discussion of different interpretations, not imparting specialist knowledge however rigorously researched.

Description of aspects of medieval Japan or description of much more commonly studied topics such as the rise of Hitler remains description and is not able to be rewarded at a high level regardless of depth of scholarship. When careful research is linked to higher level evaluative skills and sustained analysis, then of course results have been impressive and a tribute to both individual candidates and to their centre. However it is the use to which research is put which is the determining characteristic of high level work.

This year as in previous years, the most variable element in essays was the critical evaluation of primary evidence. Very few answers in Unit 1 offer little or no evaluation of given sources, but it is not uncommon to see primary evidence used to support explanations or arguments but being taken at face value with little critical assessment. Stronger responses used both contextual knowledge and analysis of provenance to weigh primary sources, but some essays focused more on using primary evidence. This was of value but helped to demonstrate critical skills relating to AO1 or AO3. With regard to using primary sources, it is important that they are relevant and do actually support analysis. For example, in a discussion about the relative importance of Napoleon's Russian campaign in his eventual downfall, sources showing the hardships of the retreat suffered by French troops do not help much. Vietnam essays about why America withdrew often reproduced the execution of a Viet Cong suspect in the Tet Offensive, but again this alone does not really help with the debate in itself. Evaluation should, as with Unit 1, go beyond limited explanations of origin. Simply saying that a speech by Hitler is useful and reliable because it is by the leader of Germany is not A Level evaluation. There are increasing amounts of primary evidence available online, but it is important that before choosing a topic, candidates do make sure that it is possible to access appropriate sources that relate directly to the question.

AO3 deals with interpretations by historians. One issue is that few secondary sources argue for one cause or consequence being overwhelmingly important. If assessing, say, the relative importance of Rasputin as a cause of the end of the Romanovs, then a single comment by a historian to the effect that he had a very negative effect on the reputation of the Tsar and Tsarina is not the same as a developed interpretation about his relative importance. Choosing statements in this way may distort what a historian is actually saying. Also, factual statements in themselves are not enough to establish a way that a historian explains the past. In choosing questions, it is important that there is access to differing interpretations. For example, a historian may argue that the American War of Independence was essentially a civil war. The evidence for this can be assessed and the interpretation weighed. However, a description of the battle of Saratoga is more difficult to assess and it is difficult to dispute that it was a British defeat. It may be evidence for a view about why Britain lost but it is the general explanation that should be weighed. In general, essays were able to find a range of historians and there was some strong assessment of interpretations, but there is a distinction between weighing a view and simply juxtaposing an alternative view, arguing that there are different possible explanations. As with AO1 and AO2, it is important to offer a sustained and supported judgement. That support should come from the use of knowledge, not speculation about the historian and what might have influenced their interpretation. There was less of this approach but it is not the intention that ad hominem analysis form the basis of judgement here any more than in the assessment of interpretations in Unit 3. Evaluation should be of named historians not general schools of historical writing.

There is no specific reference in the mark scheme for the different assessment objectives for referencing and bibliography and there is no preferred system. It is important however for evidence to be referenced. Centres should require this as good practice. It is difficult to assess the evaluation of primary evidence without seeing what the sources are and the date they were produced. It is also important to see evidence that historians' interpretations have been read and not simply been read about. Without referencing it is difficult to assess merely a reference to a historian in the body of the essay without knowing the date and title of the work being used.

Independent study, which involves finding sources and organising a substantial piece of analytical writing, is a challenge, but one which has considerable rewards in education terms and also in terms of preparing students for higher education. Obviously there are varying degrees of success in meeting the demands of the assessment objectives but overall there is a great amount of valuable and worthwhile work done every year on this unit.

Candidates who did well generally:	Candidates who did less well generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were aware of the demands of their chosen question and responded directly to them • offered supported judgements about different ways the past has been interpreted in relation to their chosen topic • wrote relevantly and sustained analysis throughout • evaluated a range of primary sources rather than simply accepting them at face value • supported evaluation of primary evidence with knowledge and analysis of provenance • evaluated a range of historians' interpretations using contextual knowledge • ensured that interim judgements led logically to a clear overall judgement • offered a clearly written and well-structured essay which showed awareness of recommended word length • referenced evidence clearly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were less aware what their chosen question required in terms of both content and offering supported judgement • described different interpretations without assessing them enough or offered a one-way argument which did not take into account alternative views • included material that was not relevant or offered description rather than argument • offered a limited range of evidence which was used to support arguments without being sufficiently evaluated • relied on outlining factual material taken from historians rather than identifying, analysing and evaluating interpretations • offered views which became assertions rather than being based on the analysis of evidence • offered essays which were predominantly lists rather than being structured to offer discussion of different interpretations • lacked clear referencing to identify evidence.

Most common causes of centres not passing

- Overly descriptive essays which offered some factual material but limited analysis and judgement.
- Irrelevant material not linked to question whose requirements had not been well understood.
- Limited appropriate primary evidence which was not evaluated in a supported way.
- Limited use of historians or poor grasp of interpretations.
- Weak structure and sometimes unfinished or fragmentary work.

Common misconceptions

- That the precise wording of the question is not important as long as skills are shown.
- That using sources in argument is the same as evaluating them.
- That explanation of interpretations or evidence is equivalent to evaluating.
- That very long answers are better than answers which are more aware of the recommended word length.
- That detailed factual content, regardless of the way that knowledge is used, is a sign of high achievement.
- That a structured programme involving a clear scheme of work is not necessary for a coursework unit.

Misconception



When marking coursework there is a misconception that explanation of a source or its use in argument is the same as evaluating it. 'The source is from Churchill's 1948 book 'the Gathering Storm' and confirms the view that Chamberlain preferred Lord Halifax as his successor. This supports the claim that Churchill was far from being the most obvious choice as leader as set out by John Charmley'. This uses a source and identifies it but there is no judgement about it.

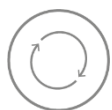
Avoiding potential malpractice

- Be very aware of the requirements for this unit as set out by OCR and also of the JCQ regulation for coursework and guidelines about AI.
- In preparing candidates, any guidance must make sure that the essay remains their independent work.
- Student study records or logs are helpful in ensuring that the work is their own and the result of their own research and allow teachers to see how work has progressed independently.
- Comparing work done on the same title for any signs of collaboration.
- Avoiding any detailed comment or specific recommendation either in writing or marking work which could mean that the work was no longer independent.
- Making the independent nature of the work very clear to candidates and parents/carers and all members of the department.

Helpful resources

- A free online marking course is available on [OCR Train](#).
- There is [Scheme of Work](#) for coursework. This contains a list of resources.
- There is a [video](#) in which the choice of questions is discussed
- There is also a [useful Y100 guide to marking video \(YouTube.com\)](#), in which the principal moderator for Y100 talks through how to mark and annotate an example script.
- And we've also summarised [top tips from the video](#) on our website, along with a pdf of the script used in the video itself.
- We've also made a [guide to assessing AO2](#) in particular, in response to centres asking us for more detail on how to assess the evaluation of primary sources in Y100.
- Each year PD sessions include exemplar scripts as well as advice and guidance. You can access details of upcoming training on the [OCR website](#).
- Past [Examiner Reports](#) on Y100, published after each series and which often include pointers on marking and annotation. You can access these on Teach Cambridge.

Assessment for learning



Coursework is linked to the other units. It shares skills with them all. Effective teaching should reinforce those links by a regular programme of skills teaching which, for example, links the source evaluation of Unit 1 with source evaluation in Y100.

Additional comments

Although Y100 is an independent study unit teachers should give structured support to students. The OCR Scheme of Work suggests how this could be implemented, from introducing the unit, to guidance on question choice, to teaching or reinforcing the skills needed and ensuring that progress is maintained. Essay writing and structure, choice and evaluation of evidence and research skills may be taught or reinforced within the guidelines for ensuring that this remains independent study. There is a structured workbook available from Hodder Education.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

[ExamBuilder](#) is a free test-building platform, providing unlimited users exclusively for staff at OCR centres with an [Interchange](#) account.

Choose from a large bank of questions to build personalised tests and custom mark schemes, with the option to add custom cover pages to simulate real examinations. You can also edit and download complete past papers.

[Find out more](#).

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

You will need an Interchange account to access our digital products. If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.

Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find available courses for your subject under Assessment - NEA/Coursework - Online courses. Click on the blue arrow to start the course.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

There are **two types** of online course: an **introductory module** and **subject-specific** courses.

The introductory module, Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, is designed for all teachers who are involved in internal assessment for our qualifications. It covers the following topics:

- the purpose and benefits of internal assessment
- the roles and responsibilities of teachers, assessors, internal verifiers and moderators
- the principles and methods of standardisation
- the best practices for collecting, storing and submitting evidence
- the common issues and challenges in internal assessment and how to avoid them.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on
01223 553998

Alternatively, you can email us on
support@ocr.org.uk


For more information visit

 **ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder**

 **ocr.org.uk**

 **facebook.com/ocrextams**

 **twitter.com/ocrextams**

 **instagram.com/ocrextaminations**

 **linkedin.com/company/ocr**

 **youtube.com/ocrextams**

We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



I like this



I dislike this

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2024 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource in your centre, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the resource. Resources intended for teacher use should not be shared with students. Resources should not be published on social media platforms or other websites.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.