



NEA: specification requirements and management

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This resource provides guidance on the non-exam assessment (NEA) requirements for A-level History, and should be read in conjunction with the NEA requirements set out in the specification. It develops and exemplifies the requirements, but is wholly consistent with them.

Key reminders

- The historical investigation must be set in the context of approximately 100 years.
- There must be no overlap of content between the issue investigated in the historical investigation and the content studied in Components 1 and 2.
- All three Components together must cover a chronological range of at least 200 years.

Managing the historical investigation

On the assumption that 30 teaching weeks per year are available for the teaching of Components 1 and 2, with approximately 2 to 2.5 hours per week on each component, over a two-year period this will provide for approximately 12 weeks for NEA preparation, guidance and completion.

The way in which the time for NEA is deployed will depend on individual centre decisions and centres will also differ in how they approach NEA. What follows, therefore, are suggestions rather than specific recommendations.

Irrespective of the variety of approaches that centres will adopt, AQA requires that a Question Approval Form is submitted to your NEA Adviser no later than 20 October in the year before the intended completion of the course. This is designed to ensure that the programme of study undertaken meets the requirements to cover a chronological range of at least 200 years, the NEA is set in a context of approximately 100 years, and that there is no overlap of content with examined components. Teachers are reminded that if the regulatory requirements are not met, then a student's entry will be invalid and no result issued.

Centres may aim to introduce the historical investigation in the first year of the course. An appropriate opportunity would be the six weeks which follow the completion of AS examinations, but other opportunities will be available, especially where centres are not entering their students for AS. The introduction to NEA should provide students with a detailed review of requirements and, where this is desired, the teaching of an introductory course which forms the context of the centre's NEA.

The remaining time available for NEA in Year 13 may be deployed in a variety of ways. When checking drafts of a student's work, you must not comment or provide suggestions on how they might improve it, as this would constitute teacher malpractice. However, you can ask questions about the way they are approaching their work and you can highlight the requirements of the marking criteria.

Approaching the historical investigation

NEA is approached in essentially one of two ways:

1. Where each student follows a particular interest and develops an historical investigation from that individual interest.
2. Where each student develops an issue to be investigated as a result of an introductory course based on a common topic.

For either approach, there are common aspects to consider:

- the issue must be one that has produced a variety of historical interpretations
- resources (both the works of historians and appropriate primary sources) must be readily available and identifiable before the issue is finally defined
- the 100 years context must be appropriate.

There are, however, specific considerations depending on the approach taken.

1. Where each student follows a particular interest and develops an historical investigation from that individual interest.

In this approach, the availability of resources may be significant and may well rely more on an individual student's ability to identify them. Some caution should be exercised where the focus of the historical investigation is on local history, as it is possible that an exclusively local issue has not been the subject of debate amongst historians and it may well be advisable that local studies are placed in a broader, national context. These considerations should not, however, deter students and centres from adopting this approach.

2. Where each student develops an issue to be investigated as a result of an introductory course based on a common topic.

Concerns about the availability of resources may well be less significant with this approach, but this approach does raise issues in relation to the individual nature of the historical investigation. The specification, reflecting both the history subject content and regulatory requirements, requires that the historical investigation must be the work of individual students engaging individually with the issue chosen.

Provided that students have engaged individually in the choice of issue to investigate, the sources to be used and the interpretations to be consulted, the following is permissible:

- that all students in a centre base the historical investigation around a common topic
- that students are introduced to a range of possible questions to investigate arising from the common topic
- that students may choose the same or similar questions, provided that this choice is an individual one and reflects consideration of the question by the individual student.

The 100 years context and the issue to be investigated

There is detailed guidance in the specification of the ways in which the 100 years context might be responded to.

It is important to ensure that the context is a valid one and not cited just to appear to meet the need to set an issue in a context of approximately 100 years. For example, an issue which seeks to explore the importance of Puritanism as a cause of the English Revolution would be appropriate if the context were c1550–1640 but wholly inappropriate if the context were 1603–1702, as the causes of the English Revolution cannot be reasonably explored in the latter period.

In the mark scheme for AO1, Investigations which ignore the need for a valid context of approximately 100 years must be limited to Level 2 at best.

Investigations should be set in the context of approximately 100 years. This means that much thought needs to be given to the issue that the student wishes to study. Students with, for example, an interest in Tudor rebellions, could **either**:

- review the similarities, differences and significance of rebellions which occurred throughout the Tudor period and reach conclusions as to the extent to which they threatened the Tudor dynasty or had similar causes, etc.

or

- select one rebellion for particular study, provided that this rebellion is placed in the context of rebellions in general.

In the first case, the historical interpretations to review would be most appropriate if the interpretations related to rebellions as a whole. In the second case, the interpretations could focus on the single rebellion which has been selected.

Questions which reflect a specific interest, for example, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, need careful planning to avoid the 100 years coverage appearing to be either perfunctory or contrived. It would not be appropriate in this example, for the focus of the debate to be on the relative importance of Martin Luther King to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, as the 100 years context could be neglected. It might be more appropriate to assess Martin Luther King's contribution compared with the contribution of those who came before him.

The Investigation should be set in the context of approximately 100 years. A context which is significantly longer than 100 years will raise issues of comparability with those which adhere to the 100 years. This also applies to a context significantly less than 100 years. NEA advisers will be able to offer clarification.

Writing the historical investigation

Students are not permitted to duplicate the content of what is studied in Components 1 and 2. They are allowed, however, to base the historical investigation on the same or similar chronology, as long as the requirement to study the chronological range of at least 200 years is met.

The historical investigation should be a single extended response, but must clearly respond to all three Assessment Objectives.

AO1 is worth 50% of total marks and AO2 and AO3, 25% respectively.

The historical investigation should reflect this allocation of marks. Whilst a strict arithmetical approach is not required and may, in some circumstances, disrupt the flow of the argument, the responses to AO2 and AO3 must be substantial, reflecting the weighting that is carried by them in the mark scheme.

In Components 1 and 2, Assessment Objectives are tested discretely in separate tasks; in Component 3, all three are tested in the single historical investigation. However, the historical investigation must be written in such a way that the three Assessment Objectives form part of a single extended essay and are not treated separately.

The historical investigation should be completed in 3500-4500 words, excluding bibliography, footnotes and appendices, with a limit of 4500 words. The word count for each NEA must be recorded on the Candidate Record Form (CRF), which is submitted to the moderator. Submissions that exceed the word limit will incur a five mark penalty, which will be applied by AQA.

A01

AO1 is defined as follows in the subject criteria:

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance

To meet the requirements of this Assessment Objective, students should demonstrate:

- engagement with one or more of the concepts referred to in the Assessment Objective
- effective organisational and communication skills through analysis and evaluation which consistently and relevantly focuses on the question that is set and integrates into this evaluation, primary sources and historical interpretations
- analysis and evaluation which reflects the views and conclusions of the student
- substantiated judgements, which appear as the argument develops (assertive and unsubstantiated or undeveloped judgements will not be placed in higher levels).

A02

AO2 is defined as follows in the subject criteria:

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

The length of primary sources to be used is not prescribed. The skills required to interrogate primary sources to corroborate or challenge the overall response to the chosen issue may be met through primary sources of differing lengths and ones which include visual sources.

Students are required to analyse and evaluate the value of three primary sources of at least two different types (as exemplified in the specification), referring, as appropriate, to provenance, content and argument and tone and emphasis.

To meet the requirements of this Assessment Objective, students should demonstrate:

- selection of sources which are directly relevant to the issue and question of the Investigation
- awareness of the value which may result from consideration of the provenance of the source, considering, for example, who the author is, when specifically it was produced, to whom and in what form it is addressed, the tone and style of the source and the content it contains.

A03

A03 is defined as follows in the subject criteria:

Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.

In doing so, students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding, as appropriate to the investigation, of:

- the limitations placed on historians when they develop interpretations
- the significance of the time and/or context in which a historian writes
- comparison and evaluation of differing historical interpretations.

Whilst the issue to be investigated must be placed within the context of approximately 100 years, the work and interpretations of the two historians which are studied in depth may:

- be interpretations which refer to the whole 100 years
- be interpretations that relate to a period of years, or a particular aspect, within the 100 years, but cover the same period within the 100 years
- be interpretations that relate to different periods or aspects within the 100 years context.

Students must analyse and evaluate the work of two historians in depth to demonstrate the skills and knowledge but should also show a general awareness of the range of debates related to the issue chosen.

Advice on the historical investigation

Guidance and advice will be provided by AQA NEA Advisers from the beginning of the course. To find out who your NEA Adviser is, contact us at history@aqa.org.uk.

The role of the teacher

The role and responsibilities of the teacher are set out in the specification. It is worthwhile emphasising that the teacher must confirm that each historical investigation submitted is the work of the individual student. Teachers are reminded that providing specific comments to students on how to improve NEA constitutes teacher malpractice.

JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) rules identify the following as unacceptable levels of guidance:

- having reviewed the candidate's NEA giving (either to individual candidates or to groups) detailed advice and suggestions as to how the work may be improved in order to meet the assessment criteria
- giving detailed indications of errors or omissions which leave the candidate no opportunity for individual initiative
- giving advice on specific improvements needed to meet the assessment criteria
- providing writing frames specific to the NEA task (eg outlines, paragraph headings or section headings)
- intervening personally to improve the presentation or content of the NEA.

Full details are available in the JCQ document, [Instructions for Conducting Coursework](#).