

2023 ASSESSMENT REPORT

HSM315117 MODERN HISTORY

Markers' Guiding Comments

Within the framework of the curriculum and the assessment system, protocols for writing responses should be observed. Here are some of the more significant issues that markers had to navigate in no particular order:

- it is recommended to write in blue or black pen, or a darker lead pencil for ease of reading
- give a clear indication of which period is being addressed in the introductory paragraph
- topic sentences are vital
- students should give greater consideration for grammar, spelling, vocabulary and syntax
- write in the past tense
- avoid white-out tape (cross out error and move on)
- use of quotes needs to support the argument
- make enough time to proofread your responses
- beware of outdated theories for the collapse of the Weimar – more nuanced understanding is required
- do not write in the first person – a variance is permitted when stating your individual position based on the evidence you have presented
- only use conventionally accepted abbreviations: e.g., Soviet Union is USSR, not SU
- the correct pronoun for a country is it/its – even for The Fatherland.

Section A

USA

This section invites students to explore cause and effect; better papers were able to identify the laissez-faire administrations of the 20s or the social intervention of FDR's New Deal approach and later the war economy. Candidates attempting this question had a tendency to narrate without discussion, particularly about the Depression. Most candidates tackled the early period. Weaker papers related a generalised view of Jim Crow laws, the Great Migration and the Depression.

Specific evidence and argument were lacking: dot points 2, 3 and 4 of Criteria 3 ask for fact and opinion, as well as analysis and evaluation for top level papers.

Australia

With only five candidates attempting this question, comment is difficult on strengths and weaknesses. A sound knowledge of what happened and when is imperative to being able to construct answers that identify drivers of social, economic and political change. Historical knowledge shown was more general and more often used in a narrative manner rather than to support an argument that sought to address the question. Confusion of key figures also occurred; for example, referring to Jack Lang as the Australian Prime Minister.

While students took a position as to whether Australia during this period was deliberately conservative or not, often they failed to substantiate their argument. Some students did identify challenges to the status quo, such as women's rights and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's advocacy, but again they were only discussed in a general manner. Overall, there was a lack of specific historical evidence used.

Students are advised that they should not use abbreviations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Germany

Germany was the most popular question in Section A. Again, the majority of responses were to the later period – even responses to the early period focussed on Hitler; this is not the focus of this part of the course. Generally, responses to the question were satisfactory.

Students struggle to synthesise their knowledge of events into an argument that responds to the question. They have issues identifying what drivers of change actually are. Students need to ensure they have a good understanding of why things changed, as well as what happened. Many responses were descriptive, and the essay structure was organised around three body paragraphs: political, social and economic. Good responses will outline what caused changes (drivers), and how these changes affected society.

Where a specific stimulus or quote is provided, in this case from Douglas Newton, it does not need to be repeated throughout the response. More thoughtful responses synthesised the meaning of the quote with arguments about particular drivers of change and the impact of them – in the best responses, the quote formed the basis of a well-structured and detailed argument that allowed the respondent to examine and analyse the specific problems Germany faced, how those problems drove change and what impact that change had.

More successful responses adapt what has been studied and revised to the particular requirements of the question asked. For example, they discussed the 'Golden Years' of the Weimar Republic – the role of Stresemann, and cultural change; or the finer detail of social change in the Nazi Germany such as the role of women and youth.

Weaker responses lacked specific detail, merely stating change occurred or was caused by certain events or conditions. Such responses tended towards the 'shopping list' approach – little more than a narrative of key events, with varying degrees of accuracy or context to provide any depth to the discussion.

The majority of responses dealt with the second period, 1933-1945, and there are very specific economic conditions and changes relevant during this period which few responses addressed successfully beyond a simplistic reference to autobahns or Hitler's attitude to trade unions.

While factual accuracy remains essential: Hitler did not become Fuhrer in 1933; the Weimar Republic was not "made" in November 1918; Hitler was never elected President of the Republic, nor did he 'reign'. Better responses included in their discussions arguments and perspectives of others (Criterion 3). There is also conflation of the hyperinflation of 1923 and the effects of the Great Depression.

Criterion 4 requires factual detail to be used and a range of sources (historians' arguments) be used to formulate an argument in response to the question. It is appropriate for the candidate to conclude with their personal position on the issue. Stronger responses achieved this – i.e. referring to specific dates, years, terminology: e.g. German 'President' von Hindenburg instead of just German 'leader' von Hindenburg; defining/noting the precise features of the Nuremberg laws (stripping Jews of German citizenship and banning marriage between Jews and Aryans).

Russia

The question required students to think outside the box and most did not; many wrote the quote but then continued with their own ideas without attempting to grapple with the total revolution Lenin created and Stalin continued. Those that focussed on the question were rewarded.

Stronger answers discussed the reasons for change, what the change actually was and the impact of those changes. Weaker responses showed a lack of particular dates or events and specific historic terminology. There is no need to go overboard but some anchoring is needed – the key is to use the information.

Responses to the early period tended towards story telling. A significant number of students spent too much time discussing the pre-revolutionary period, they also focussed large parts of their response frontloading narrative from the events of 1917 while glossing over major developments in the period up to 1929, or focussing solely on the political changes as Stalin manipulated his way to power.

Less successful responses were rehearsed and failed to adequately address the question. Here candidates were resistant to developing an argument around what they knew, and instead, ploughed on with a planned response. As a result, they lacked depth and analysis or failed to answer the question completely. The word 'machine', too, has several meanings. Tacking on the quote in the introduction and conclusion does not constitute an analysis focussed on the question.

Section B

Japan

Markers felt this question was not well handled this year. There was a tendency to address the first half of the question and avoid the second, certainly as far as assessing the role and impact of individuals or groups. Many candidates presented a narrative of events, some included the authority of Tojo and the apparent reticence of Hirohito to assert Imperial authority.

Most students were able to identify the driving ideologies during this period. Stronger responses were able to connect these ideologies to how the Japanese responded to internal/external threats.

Stronger answers moved away from a narrative retelling and focussed on assessing the situation in the context of within Japan, and on the world stage. Candidates need to ensure they are exploring what internal divisions and external threats Japan faced during this period: What sparked the Ultra-Nationalism? Being a world player without a level playing field caused problems – how did they react?

Keeping the issue in context is crucial both internally and externally. Where candidates were able to look at the one issue through these two separate lenses, argument was much stronger and was duly rewarded.

Weaker papers frequently confused factual detail with both the chronology of events and the structure of Japanese society. Understanding both is important in contextualising this period of their history.

India

The two periods of study in this course pivot on Partition. The course is not about Partition. It is important the early period and the late period are understood in context – leading to Partition and following Partition. A sound knowledge of the course of events underpins any response to the question. Many students blended internal and external threats together, moving between them which created a lack of clarity, and so weaker answers.

Understanding the political systems and ideologies will help students respond to the question of how these influenced responses to perceived threats. Better responses showed a balanced discussion of the two leaders, Nehru and Gandhi and what each represented. Stronger students pointed out the different approaches of Nehru and Gandhi, focussed on the different priorities they faced in terms of internal challenges.

Criteria 3 and 4 require an essay structure that analyses historical events and commentary in context. Structure is important in allowing a consistent focus on the question. Stronger students used clear topic sentences to reconnect with the question. When looking at the two periods, better students could address the following: 1930-47: The British can be viewed as both an internal and external threat, i.e. they are of course the foreign colonial power, but they did initiate political steps/policies that prepared India for eventual independence and British rule also relied on some Indian co-operation (e.g. the Princely States); 1947-84: The internal threats of mass poverty and social (caste) inequality should be explicitly addressed and/or discussed in more detail.

Indonesia

Most respondents to this question wrote about the period 1965-75.

Stronger answers showed a good working knowledge of the key events and people of the period. Better responses were able to analyse the role of significant people and movements in the emergence of Indonesia.

Weaker answers tended to narrate the events of the period and tended to get confused. Dates and names caused a lot of confusion for this group: Sukarno/Suharto, September 30 Movement vs the independence of Timor being the most common confusion. Better answers were able to handle all these with good detail and understanding.

Weaker answers tended to focus more on the New Order rather than the causes and impacts that created it.

China

Note: Current practice for names is to use Pinyin not Wade-Giles – that is Mandarin not Cantonese. Candidates are asked to follow this.

Markers reported a reasonably solid standard for this question, but here was a strong tendency to retell the story among weaker papers. These responses tended to be a chronological historical narrative and did not explore and evaluate internal and external threats to any great extent. Many candidates did not manage both parts of the question. Where the question asked candidates to “Assess the role and impact...” of leaders, discussion was often weak.

Section B questions seek a balance of historical fact and commentary on both what took place and the significance of individuals or groups in achieving the resultant outcomes. Examiners were looking for a clear and succinct response to the question.

Basic answers provided too much frontloading of the period leading up to the 1930s. Students need to stay focussed on the period being examined.

Successful responses made a clear argument and offered detailed evidence in support of it, including reference to primary sources such as contemporary quotes from key figures or historians. They demonstrated an understanding of how Communist ideology shaped responses to threats. Weaker responses merely highlighted a sequence of events and made little attempt to provide context.

Stronger essays on the early period covered the struggle between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Guomindang (GMD) along with their leaders, as well as the invasion by Japan. The US scored a mention in the civil war after 1945, with some commentary on why the Nationalists were defeated. For the later period, the range of events included the Hundred Flowers campaign, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as well as the power struggles within CCP. Superior responses considered external threats to include the Korean War and discussion of how it was a threat to China. Stronger papers also referred to USSR & USA relations. Examiners noted that little was made of the conflict over Formosa in the 1950s, and no-one mentioned the Sino-Indian war of 1962 or conflict with the USSR in 1979. Less erudite responses, particularly with the second period, focussed on China’s internal problems—largely consisting of the policies invoked by Mao and their consequences—with little or no meaningful reference to external problems during this time. A number only focussed on the Cultural revolution, ignoring other internal threats.

Section C

Cold War

This is the question where strong candidates really excel. Articulate responses delve into the complex issues surrounding how events are interpreted and demonstrate a clear understanding of the various contexts. The best papers addressed the specific focus of the question: “Assess whether the Revisionist view is [a] fair and accurate...” There was a tendency to tell the story of the whole of the Cold War,

rather than focussing on the premise that Revisionism is the most valid interpretation, and pre-prepared answers about the three schools of thought predominated, failing to answer the actual question. In these, the main arguments of the three schools are treated too simplistically: 'Orthodox historians blame the Soviets, Revisionists blame the Americans...

Some students who were weak writers were rewarded for their genuine attempts to engage with revisionism; the reverse was also true. Many strong students wrote beautifully about all the different schools of thought but did not really engage with the problems associated with revisionist thinking.

These responses were satisfactory, with most students demonstrating a sound knowledge of both the events of the Cold War and the three main interpretations. Some students, however, seemed to fall into the trap of focusing their responses purely on the Revisionist interpretation. There was scope and potential for students to offer an analysis of all three interpretations and definitively argue for one over the others as the most valid or reliable interpretation. Successful students made some very strong arguments for their interpretation drawing on well-chosen evidence from relevant historians. It is worth noting also that stronger responses to this question synthesise and develop their argument consistently throughout the essay.

Better answers argued a precise response to the question with references to at least three specific incidents, but weaker answers rambled over the other theories or failed to refer to enough incidents. While references to a range of historians were adequate, it would be more inspiring to hear from non-US commentators such as the British academic E.P. Thompson and the Norwegian Odd Arne Westad.

Most students were clearly able to explain the diverging schools of thought, although a number still have issues in fully elaborating their understanding of post revisionism. They provided generalised responses rather than exploring the complexities. The nature of post-revisionism continues to be difficult for students to grasp and to discuss in a generalised way. Post-revisionism is not focussed on both sides being equally to blame, rather it is a spectrum. Many candidates wrote responses along the lines of "Post-revisionists apportion blame equally between both sides" or "Post-revisionists say that the conflict was inevitable." Post-revisionists are not necessarily interested in 'assigning blame' but rather acknowledge the complex interplay of individuals, ideology, geopolitics, political and economic factors, pragmatism, and mutual reactivity.

As with the other questions, conflation of facts surrounding events was common – The Berlin Blockade was thirteen years before the Berlin Wall was built.

Australia and Asia

Some candidates were on track but gave little information to support the premise.

Interpretations, be they commentary or historical, are necessary to answer this question.

Candidates are advised to read the question carefully and respond appropriately.

Credit is given for your views; more credit goes to one who is able to justify their view with evidence.

Terrorism

These essays were well prepared and drew on a wide range of examples. All of the responses drew on David Rapoport's Four Wave theory. Surprisingly no candidate drew on the notion of 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter,' when defining 'terrorism.'

Factual accuracy is vital to any discussion of historical commentary and perspective. Weaknesses in responses were generally the result of this misunderstanding: confusion of detail between IRA and PLO; asserting al-Qaeda is a Shi'a organisation. Other details confounded included: the assertion that Indira Gandhi was assassinated by terrorists in 1948, that Jaffna is the capital of Sri Lanka and that the Taliban are still fighting in Afghanistan.

Migration

There were no respondents for this question.

MODERN HISTORY (HSM315117)

2023 MARKING TOOL

SECTION A – CRITERION 3 – Communicates historical ideas and information.

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Composition of Argument in analytical response	Complex Articulate Fluent Sophisticated	Organised Coherent	Some structure Rambles	Not evident
Clear & logical interpretations & historical arguments	Logical, detailed analysis	Evidence-based	Generalised, but lacking clear support	Not evident
Communicates a range of ideas, arguments and perspectives (own and others')	Coherent Broad range	Generally accurate. A range of views	A limited range	Not evident
Uses a range of sources to develop and communicate interpretation and argument	Synthesizes a wide range Analytical & detailed	A range	A limited range	Not evident

Notes: This criterion assesses the way in which the answer is communicated and therefore the focus should be on the clarity of the expression, the logical presentation and the coherent organisation of the information as well as the use of appropriate vocabulary and the conventions of formal English. Better answers must be articulate and coherently planned. Candidates may be penalized on this criterion if they fail to adequately address the question being asked. Spelling of non-subject specific terms should be considered under this criterion.

SECTION A – CRITERION 4 – Use evidence to support historical interpretation & argument

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Uses historical knowledge to support interpretation	Argues Pertinent Lucid Comprehensive	Discusses Appropriate Accurate Thorough	Some detail Generalized Structured Gaps	Not evident
Uses a range of evidence to critically analyse historical interpretation & arguments of others	Wide range Substantiates	A range Explains	Limited Tells	Not evident
Uses a range of evidence to critically analyse own historical interpretation & arguments	Wide range Substantiates	A range Explains	Limited Tells	Not evident
Position on historical issue	Analytical, coherent & evidence-based	Evidence-based	Limited evidence	Not evident

Notes: This is primarily about factual detail. It **must** be present and not implicit. Superior answers should have accurate and pertinent information.

The key is **use of evidence** as part of the argument. It is not an information dump

SECTION A – CRITERION 5 – Assess drivers of social, economic and political change AND nature & impact of changes in modern history

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Critically assesses drivers of social, economic and political change in the modern history of a chosen country	Analyses and evaluates Evidence based Argument	Assesses Explains	Describes Information dump	Not evident Not evident
Critically discusses the relative significance of drivers of change in the modern history of a selected country	Analyses and evaluates Justifies	Assesses Argues	Explains Tells	Not evident
Explores the causes and impact social, economic and political impacts have had in the modern history of a selected country	Analyses and evaluates Reasons	Assesses Considers	Explains Tells what they know	Not evident

Notes: Students receiving a high award should have explicitly addressed the drivers of change, not just what the changes are. In terms of addressing the ‘social, political and economic’ factors, all three types of change should be addressed, but a certain **emphasis on one is acceptable**.

This criterion should be assessed on its own merits and is distinguishable from C3, and C4.

SECTION B – CRITERION 3 – Communicates historical ideas and information

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Composition of Argument in analytical response	Complex Articulate Fluent Sophisticated	Organised Coherent	Some structure Rambles	Not evident
Clear & logical interpretations & historical arguments	Logical, detailed analysis	Evidence-based	Generalised, but lacking clear support	Not evident
Communicates a range of ideas, arguments and perspectives (own and others')	Coherent Broad range	Generally accurate. A range of views	A limited range	Not evident
Uses a range of sources to develop and communicate interpretation and argument	Synthesizes a wide range Analytical & detailed	A range	A limited range	Not evident

Notes: This criterion assesses the way in which the answer is communicated and therefore the focus should be on the clarity of the expression, the logical presentation and the coherent organisation of the information as well as the use of appropriate vocabulary and the conventions of formal English. Better answers must be articulate and coherently planned. Candidates may be penalized on this criterion if they fail to adequately address the question being asked. Spelling of non-subject specific terms should be considered under this criterion.

SECTION B – CRITERION 4 – Use evidence to support historical interpretation & argument

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Uses historical knowledge to support interpretation	Argues Pertinent Lucid Comprehensive	Discusses Appropriate Accurate Thorough	Some detail Generalized Structured Gaps	Not evident
Uses a range of evidence to critically analyse historical interpretation & arguments of others	Wide range Substantiates	A range Explains	Limited Tells	Not evident
Uses a range of evidence to critically analyse own historical interpretation & arguments	Wide range Substantiates	A range Explains	Limited Tells	Not evident
Position on historical issue	Analytical, coherent & evidence-based	Evidence-based	Limited evidence	Not evident

Notes: This is primarily about factual detail. It **must** be present and not implicit. Superior answers should have accurate and pertinent information.

The key is **use of evidence** as part of the argument. It is not an information dump.

SECTION B – CRITERION 6 – Describe and assess internal and external threats on the history of modern nations

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Assesses causes and impacts of internal and external threats in modern history	Analyses and evaluates Evidence based argument	Assesses Explains	Describes Information dump	Not evident
Identifies a range of causes and impacts of internal and external threats in modern history	Wide range of internal AND external threats	A range of internal AND external threats	Limited examples of threats	Not evident
How modern political systems and ideologies shaped national responses to internal and external tensions or issues	Analyses and evaluates Substantiates position	Assesses characteristics Supports with some examples	Explains characteristics Limited reference to responses	Not evident
Explores the relative significance of internal and external threats on modern nations	Analyses and evaluates Reasons	Assesses Considers	Describes	Not evident

Notes: This criterion is assessing the student’s ability to assess the significance of threats – perceived or real – on a nation.

Students may be able to show a strong comprehension in this criterion, connecting the significance of a political ideology with their nation’s history, but not necessarily be able to communicate that particularly well. Conversely, a student with good language skills and a strong grasp of the evidence must offer relevant analysis addressing this criterion to be considered a higher award.

As with criterion 5, this criterion should be assessed on its own merits.

It is distinguishable from C3, and C4.

SECTION C – CRITERION 3 – Communicates historical ideas and information

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Composition of Argument in analytical response	Complex Articulate Fluent Sophisticated	Organised Coherent	Some structure Rambles	Not evident
Clear & logical interpretations & historical arguments	Logical, detailed analysis	Evidence-based	Generalised, but lacking clear support	Not evident
Communicates a range of ideas, arguments and perspectives (own and others')	Coherent Broad range	Generally accurate. A range of views	A limited range	Not evident
Uses a range of sources to develop and communicate interpretation and argument	Synthesizes a wide range Analytical & detailed	A range	A limited range	Not evident

Notes: This criterion assesses the way in which the answer is communicated and therefore the focus should be on the clarity of the expression, the logical presentation and the coherent organisation of the information as well as the use of appropriate vocabulary and the conventions of formal English. Better answers must be articulate and coherently planned. Candidates may be penalized on this criterion if they fail to adequately address the question being asked. Spelling of non-subject specific terms should be considered under this criterion.

SECTION C – CRITERION 4 – Use evidence to support historical interpretation & argument

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Uses historical knowledge to support interpretation	Argues Pertinent Lucid Comprehensive	Discusses Appropriate Accurate Thorough	Some detail Generalized Structured Gaps	Not evident
Uses a range of evidence to critically analyse historical interpretation & arguments of others	Wide range Substantiates	A range Explains	Limited Tells	Not evident
Uses a range of evidence to critically analyse own historical interpretation & arguments	Wide range Substantiates	A range Explains	Limited Tells	Not evident
Position on historical issue	Analytical, coherent & evidence-based	Evidence-based	Limited evidence	Not evident

Notes: This is primarily about factual detail. It **must** be present and not implicit. Superior answers should have accurate and pertinent information.

The key is **use of evidence** as part of the argument. It is not an information dump.

SECTION C – CRITERION 7 – Describe and assess key concepts of differing historical interpretations on issues affecting the modern world

	A+ A A-	B+ B B-	C+ C C-	t+ t t-
Uses conclusions and rationale or line of argument in differing historical interpretations and representations of others	Analyses	Describes	Aware of thoughts of others	Not evident
Uses a range of sources and historical information to support differing historical interpretations and representations of others	Wide range	A range	Limited	Not evident
Understands the impact of origin, purpose and context on reliability, contestability and validity of various sources	Analyses and evaluates	Explains differing positions	Aware of different perspectives	Not evident
Understands the relative merits of differing interpretations and perspectives	Analyses and evaluates	Justifies their position	Aware of different positions	Not evident

Notes: The debate can be strongly opinionated and candidates should not be penalised for their point of view even if it is not orthodox. The best answers are sophisticated and subtle, using historians or commentators to support a point of view. Rehearsed answers and those that simply “name-drop” historians or commentators will be very unlikely to reach “A” standard. There is no set number of historians required and historians can be specifically referred to by name and/or by opinion i.e. “many historians believe ...”, although “A” standard answers on this criterion should have a number of historians referred to by name. An historian can be quoted several times in the same essay. Opinions from contemporaries can also “count” in this criterion.