

History internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0-2	3-5	6-8	9-12	13-15	16-19	20-25

The range and suitability of the work submitted:

While the new style IA did not present major issues for most centres, several schools submitted work that followed the old IA format. Also, some candidates complied with the new structure but did not seem to understand what was required of them in each section. This was particularly evident in the treatment of Section 3 (Criterion C – see below).

Topics were, overall, suitable and interesting and included a wide range of issues on international, national and local history. However, some Internal Assessments broke the tenyear rule by focusing on events taking place after 2007. Although most topics were appropriate, many research questions formulated by candidates would have benefitted from a clearer focus.

A few candidates exceeded the word limit of 2,200 words and compromised their performance in Section 3 (Criterion C) as examiners are instructed not to read or award marks for material beyond the word limit.

Candidate performance against each section

Section 1—Criterion A:

In this section candidates are expected to:

- clearly state an appropriate research question
- identify and select appropriate relevant sources
- explain why the sources are relevant to the investigation
- analyse and evaluate two sources with explicit reference to their origin, purpose and content.

A surprising number of candidates did not state the research question as a question on either the title page or within Section 1 and lost marks for this omission. Several research questions were too broad or did not encourage an analytic approach to the topic but a narrative of events. The six key concepts for History (causation, consequence, continuity, change, significance and perspectives) can help candidates think of topics more critically and structure research questions that avoid a narrative approach.

To reach the top band (5–6 marks), candidates must clearly explain the relevance of two selected sources to their investigation. This requirement was met by a small number of candidates only. Most candidates presented their research question and then proceeded to evaluate two sources without explaining the reasons for their choice.

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Although the evaluation of sources is a familiar task, there is still room for improvement in how this is approached. Candidates must use the origins, purpose and content of each source as supporting evidence to evaluate the values and limitations of historical sources for the topic under investigation. There were many candidates who mentioned these elements but only referred to the values and limitations hastily at the end. Some candidates also made a poor choice of sources and claimed that a source was limited in that it offered insufficient information on the topic.

Not all sources evaluated in this Section were identified clearly. Although it is permissible for

candidates to refer to “Source A” or “Source 1” in their evaluation, the full details of each source must be offered within the Section. This can be done either using a heading for each evaluation, the use of footnotes with full details, or by including the full title, author and date of publication explicitly when discussing the origins of each source. Some candidates lacked detailed knowledge of the sources and included unsupported assertions.

Section 2—Criterion B:

In this section, candidates are expected to:

- offer a coherent and effectively organized investigation
- offer well-developed critical analysis that is focused clearly on the research question
- offer evidence from a wide range of sources in support of the arguments
- evaluate perspectives
- arrive at a reasoned and consistent conclusion.

The integration of evidence and analysis into one section was a new feature that worked well. Most candidates produced material that was generally clear and well organized. However, in cases where the research questions were not clearly focused (see Section 1), the investigations were vague and lacked depth. Some candidates included lengthy background material related to the general topic that did not focus on the specific research question. This approach did not allow for the development of critical analysis or encourage consideration of different perspectives and, consequently, did not score well.

The effectiveness of the use of sources as evidence varied considerably. It is important for candidates to understand that the range of sources included in this section must be used effectively to support the arguments offered. While some candidates made efficient use of several sources, offering different perspectives on their investigation, others only summarized the two sources evaluated in Section 1 and included a few citations from other sources. Integration between the evidence from the sources and the analysis should be explicit and sources used effectively in support of the arguments.

Although many candidates offered a consistent conclusion in this section, there were also investigations that presented their conclusion in Section 3 (the reflection), where this is not relevant (see Section 3).

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Section 3—Criterion C:

The purpose of this section is to offer candidates an opportunity to reflect on what their investigation highlighted to them about the methods used by, and challenges facing, the historian. Candidates are expected to focus on:

- what they learned about the methods employed by historians
- the limitations of the methods employed by historians and the challenges historians encounter
- the connections between the investigation and the reflection.

Some candidates did not seem to have understood the requirements of this Section and approached it as a conclusion. This had a negative impact on their marks for both Section 2 (lack of a conclusion) and Section 3 (misunderstanding of the demands of the section).

Other candidates discussed their personal experiences by, for example, explaining the reasons for their interest in the topics or stating that the investigation taught them to be more organized. Such considerations are not relevant to the methods used and challenges faced by historians and must not be part of this section.

Some candidates clearly focused on what the investigation highlighted to them about the methods and challenges of the work of historians and included explicit connections between

the section and the rest of the investigation.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers must ensure that candidates are familiar with the new assessment criteria so that the candidates fully understand what is expected from their work.

The assessment criteria should be made available to candidates early in the process. A group session introducing the Internal Assessment to candidates is highly recommended.

Candidates should be offered guidance in the process of formulating a narrow and focused question that also avoids a narrative approach. If questions are broad, it may become difficult for candidates to effectively address the issue within the word limit.

The 10-year rule means that the event discussed in the Internal Assessment must not have occurred within the previous 10 years. However, the most up-to-date literature and research regarding the event may be used.

The research question should be phrased as a question and included in Section 1.

In Section 1, candidates must explain the relevance to the investigation of the two sources evaluated.

Candidates must explicitly use the origins, purpose and content of each of the sources to evaluate its value and limitations.

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In Section 3, candidates must focus on the ways in which their investigation helped them understand the methods used—and the challenges faced—by historians, offering explicit relations between the reflection and the investigation.

The lack of referencing was noted on some samples. Although there is no separate mark for referencing, to comply with the academic honesty policy, it is expected that candidates credit all sources used in their investigation.

Candidates may only use footnotes to reference the sources used and, where necessary, add the original version of a quotation where they have provided their own translation. Additional factual material should not be used in the footnotes as a means of circumventing the word count.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to include comments to show the reasoning behind the marks they have awarded their candidates' Internal Assessme