

# GCSE HISTORY

Insight report:  
2019 results at a glance

September 2019

2019

[aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

insights



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# How to use this report

This report provides a snapshot of this summer's results. It contains information on grade boundaries and performance by paper. This report is part of our full results insight series. For extra information on results:

- Access our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool. We've created [two-minute tutorials](#) to show you how.
- Navigate to [e-AQA](#) to download the full report on the exam for a detailed breakdown.
- [Book on](#) to one of our Live lessons webinars. The Head of Curriculum for your subject will take you through this year's results and answer your questions.
- [Book on](#) to a Feedback event. See examples from real scripts from the summer to highlight common areas where students did well and where there's room for improvement.

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# Qualification summary

Senior examiners noted that the vast majority of responses demonstrated increasing levels of confidence with the requirements of the assessment. This was particularly evident in the topics included on paper 1.

Feedback from teachers and students suggests that the additional 15 minutes for each exam was well received and allowed students to engage more thoughtfully with the questions on the papers, particularly with those involving analysis and evaluation of sources and interpretations.

The following sections detail how students most effectively addressed each different question type in both papers of the exam, and also provide suggested areas for improvement. An overview of grade boundaries and entries for each optional topic are also provided.

Conduct your own analysis using data relevant to you [Watch tutorials on using ERA for results analysis](#), or log straight in via [e-AQA](#)

# Grade boundaries

## How to interpret grade boundaries

This year was the second year students sat GCSE History (8145). There are 240 route level boundaries, so it is not possible to itemise all of them here. However, below are the boundaries for one of our most popular routes (8145GC), which includes the following topics:

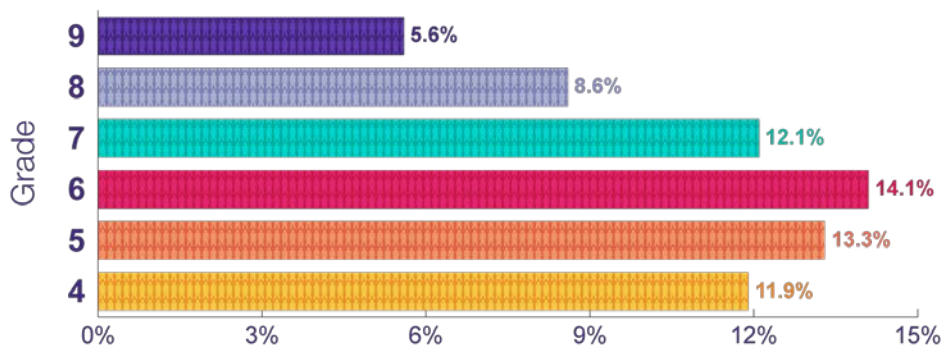
- Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and dictatorship
- Conflict and tension: The Interwar Years, 1918–1939
- Health and the People: c.1000 to the present day
- Elizabethan England, c.1568–1603.

Subject	Max mark	Summer 2019 grade boundaries (raw mark)								
		9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
History 8145	168	119	107	95	84	73	62	44	26	8

Access the full list of [GCSE History grade boundaries](#) in this PDF. We've also provided a tool to help you [work out your entry codes](#)

### Grade summary

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.



Total achieving (3-U = 34.4%).

AQA GCSE History

Grade  
summary

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## Grade boundaries are set using a mix of statistics and expert judgement

Our research team uses a range of statistics to make predictions that suggest the most appropriate grade boundaries. The statistical evidence considers the prior attainment of the given cohort as well as the distribution of marks. Senior examiners then review a script sample to confirm the statistically recommended marks are sensible for the grade.

Boundary setting is overseen by Ofqual. To find more grade boundaries and learn how they are set, visit [aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums](https://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums)

**Watch our two-minute team stories to find out more about how we set grade boundaries and ensure fairness. Visit [aqa.org.uk/team-stories](https://www.aqa.org.uk/team-stories)**

# Paper 1 insights

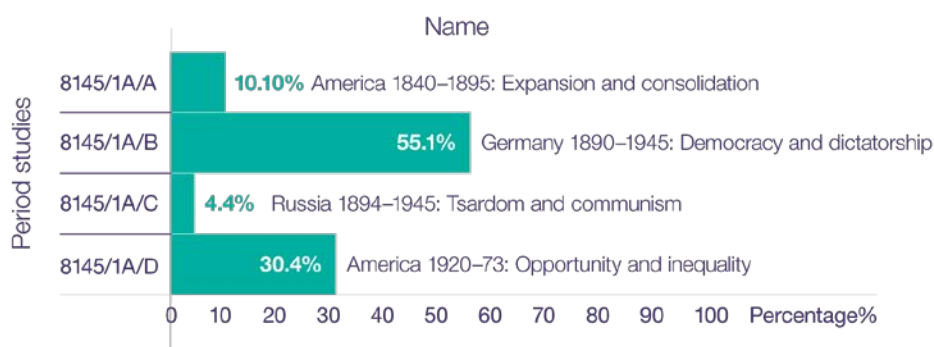
## Section A

This is a snapshot from across all the Period study topics. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in) and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > History/Religious Studies > History (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

### Topic popularity: Paper 1 Section A

Topic popularity,  
Period studies



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## Highlights from summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p><b>Question 1: How do they differ...?</b></p> <p>At the higher level, students were able to explain a difference between the two interpretations about the issue in the question, and supported the explanation of difference using the content of both interpretations.</p> <p>Responses at this level were often specific about a way in which the interpretations differed, or what it is they differed about.</p> <p>It is worth reminding students that only one explanation of difference is required for this question.</p>	<p><b>Question 1: How do they differ...?</b></p> <p>At the lower level, students often struggled to go beyond identifying relevant features of the interpretations. The point of difference was often left implicit.</p> <p>Occasionally, students used the provenance of the interpretation rather than the content. It's worth noting that the wording of this question has been altered slightly for the 2020 exams onwards to direct students to explain a difference using the content, or 'what it says' in the interpretations.</p>

<p><b>Question 2: Why might the authors differ ...?</b></p> <p>At the higher level, students were able to progress from identifying a reason(s) for differences by showing some further supported reasoning to explain the reason(s) for difference, typically by using historical knowledge to explain the motivation or purpose of the authors about the issue in the question.</p>	<p><b>Question 2: Why might the authors differ ...?</b></p> <p>At the lower level, students tended to assert a reason(s) for the differences between the two interpretations, usually referencing one or more aspect of the provenance of the interpretations, eg differences in the time of writing, place, author's experience or beliefs, their access to information, purpose and audience. These answers could identify a relevant reason(s) for the difference, but the reasoning behind their choice was left implicit.</p> <p>Occasionally students focused on how, rather than why, the interpretations differed. It is important that students focus on reasons why the interpretations differed with reference to relevant provenance.</p>
<p><b>Question 3: Which interpretation do you find more convincing...?</b></p> <p>Higher level responses addressed both interpretations. Responses at Level 3 showed developed evaluation by using detailed knowledge and understanding about the issue in the question that was then related to the content of the interpretations. It is worth noting that responses were still credited at Level 3 even if there was some imbalance in the quality of evaluation of both interpretations, eg where treatment of only one of the two interpretations showed developed thinking.</p> <p>In order to show complex thinking at Level 4, students also needed to include a substantiated judgement about which interpretation was more convincing. These judgments tended to focus – as appropriate to the interpretations – on issues such as the typicality of the interpretations, their range, focus or emphasis, comprehensiveness or accuracy about the issue in the question.</p>	<p><b>Question 3: Which interpretation do you find more convincing about...?</b></p> <p>Responses at the lower levels demonstrated simple or basic level of knowledge and understanding about the issue in the question with reference to the interpretation(s). Responses that only addressed one interpretation were limited to the lower levels.</p> <p>Some students based their evaluation on the provenance of the interpretations, which could only be credited in the lower levels. It's worth noting that the wording of this question has been altered slightly for the 2020 exams onwards to encourage students to evaluate the opinion expressed in the content of each interpretation using relevant contextual knowledge.</p>



<p><b>Question 4: Describe two...</b></p> <p>At the higher level, students were able show knowledge of two relevant problems, with further understanding of one or both of these problems evident in the response.</p>	<p><b>Question 4: Describe two...</b></p> <p>At the lower level, students were able to identify some knowledge that addressed the issue in the question, and it was common for lower level answers to supply other information that was extraneous to the question.</p> <p>Some students struggled to identify anything that was relevant to the question asked and were therefore not credited.</p>
<p><b>Question 5: In what ways...</b></p> <p>At the higher levels, students were able to identify more than one change/effect, showing developed explanation with support in the response. Responses that showed some imbalance in the quality of explanation for each point – for example where only one of the explanations were developed – were typically credited at low Level 3.</p> <p>Responses at Level 4 most commonly demonstrated complex understanding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> order concept, eg by differentiating changes by showing that different changes happened at different times, and/or to different groups of people and/or in different places.</p>	<p><b>Question 5: In what ways...</b></p> <p>At the lowest level, students were able to provide information that was relevant to the issue in the question, while those responses that were credited at Level 2 were able to show some simple explanation and/or further relevant support. However, at this level attempted explanations remained implicit, meaning that the explanations were not made explicitly relevant to the 'tail' or focus of the question.</p> <p>Responses that only addressed one change or effect were not able to progress to the higher levels of the mark scheme.</p>

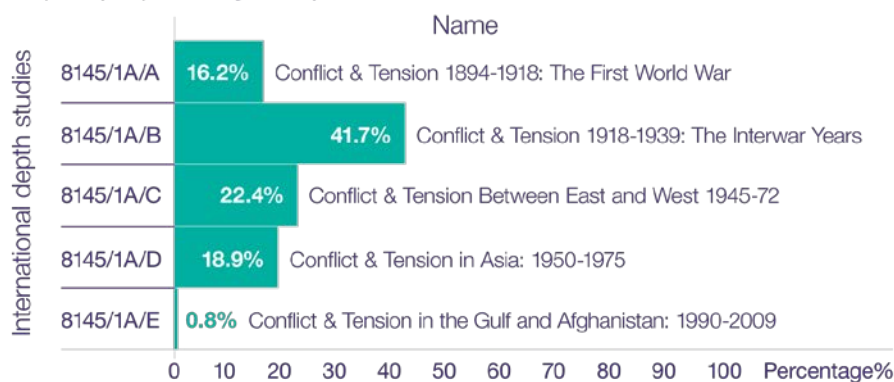
<p><b>Question 6: The ‘bullet-point’ question</b></p> <p>Responses at the higher levels addressed both bullet points. At Level 3, developed explanation had to be present in the answer, and responses were still credited at this level even if there was some imbalance in the quality of explanation for each point, eg where explanation of only one of the two given bullet points was developed.</p> <p>In order to show complex thinking at Level 4, students also needed to include a substantiated judgement about which reason was more important in causing the given issue. This was most commonly seen in answers that explored the relationship or interaction between the bullet points in order to come to a judgement about their relative importance for the issue in the question.</p>	<p><b>Question 6: The ‘bullet-point’ question</b></p> <p>As for Question 5 on this paper, at the lowest level, students were able to provide information that was relevant to the given bullet points and/or the issue in the question.</p> <p>At Level 2, students were able to show some simple explanation of one or both of the bullet points with some further relevant support. However, at this level attempted explanations remained implicit, meaning that these responses were not made explicitly relevant to the ‘tail’ or focus of the question.</p> <p>Responses that only addressed one bullet point were not able to progress in to the higher levels of the mark scheme.</p>
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## Section B

This is a snapshot of all the Wider world depth study options. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in) and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > History/Religious Studies > History (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

### Topic popularity: Paper 1 Section B



Topic popularity,  
International depth  
studies

AQA GCSE History

## Highlights from summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p><b>Question 1: 'How do you know...'</b></p> <p>At the higher level, responses were able to explain the given proposition (eg 'supports'/is critical of') in the question, using specific contextual knowledge to support their analysis of the content and/or provenance of the source.</p>	<p><b>Question 1: 'How do you know...'</b></p> <p>At the lower level, responses were able to identify a relevant feature(s) of the source using the content and/or provenance, sometimes including some generalised knowledge relating to the source in order to make a simple inference.</p> <p>Responses at Level 1 struggled to explain the given proposition in the question, leaving their analysis implicit and/or requiring further supporting contextual knowledge.</p>

Question 2: The 'utility' question	Question 2: The 'utility' question
<p>Level 3 responses were able to address both sources and linked their evaluation of one or both of the sources to the issue in the question, using contextual knowledge in support. Responses that offered some developed reasoning about either the content <b>or</b> provenance of one source – with some further simple reasoning about the other source – were credited at the lower mark in the level. Higher Level 3 marks were given when developed evaluation was present for both sources, but the response focused only on the sources' content <b>or</b> provenance.</p> <p>Responses at Level 4 addressed both sources and provided developed evaluation of content <b>and</b> provenance. They often did this by making a developed point about the content of one source and a developed point about the provenance of the other source.</p> <p>A supported judgement about the usefulness of the source for the issue in the question allowed the response to be credited at full marks. This was shown in some responses through complex evaluation of the sources in turn or individually, while in others students showed complex evaluation of the sources by addressing them in combination or as a pair.</p>	<p>Responses at the lowest level tended to be descriptive of one or both sources, while at Level 2 students tended to offer simple or generalised inferences about one or both sources. These inferences required more contextual support and/or focus on the issue in the question to progress beyond the lower levels.</p> <p>Students were often able to engage with the content of the source(s) and link it to the utility of the given issue in the question, but as for the utility question on paper 2, they struggled to analyse provenance as effectively.</p> <p>It's also worth reminding students that, while relevant evaluation of a source's limitations were credited, responses are often more successful when they engage with what is in the source as opposed to listing omissions.</p>

<p><b>Question 3: The ‘write an account’ question</b></p> <p>As for the account question on paper 2, higher level responses were able to progress beyond simple sequencing of the given event or issue by analysing, with support, at least one way in which the given event or issue led to the development or ‘tail’ of the question (eg how it led to problems/disagreements/tension/opposition).</p> <p>Students who were able to analyse more than one way in which the event or issue led to the wider development were placed in Level 4.</p>	<p><b>Question 3: The ‘write an account’ question</b></p> <p>Students at the lower levels were able to give a basic or simple account of the given event. Typically, this entailed students describing or narrating the given event or issue in the question, without linking to the wider development. To progress to the higher levels, it is important that responses link the given event or issue in the question to the wider development with support.</p>
<p><b>Question 4: The 16-mark essay question</b></p> <p>At Level 3, responses addressed more than one reason, and directly addressed the issue in the question with supporting factual knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Responses were still credited at Level 3 even if some imbalance in the quality of explanation for each reason was evident, eg where only one of the explanations was developed.</p> <p>In order to show complex thinking at Level 4, students also needed to include a substantiated judgement about the main reason for the given development. This was most commonly seen in answers that explored the relationship or interaction between the reasons in order to come to a judgement about their relative importance. These judgements typically came at the end of an answer, though they could appear at any point in the answer and be credited.</p>	<p><b>Question 4: The 16-mark essay question</b></p> <p>At the lowest level, students were able to provide information that was relevant to question.</p> <p>At Level 2, students were able to show some simple explanation of one or more reasons with some further relevant support. However at this level, explanations remained implicit, meaning that they were not made explicitly relevant to the given issue in the question.</p>

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# Paper 2

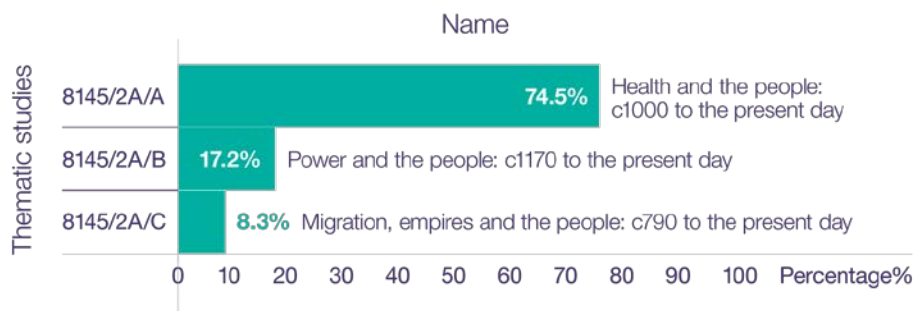
## Section A

This is a snapshot of all the Thematic study options. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in) and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > History/Religious Studies > History (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

### Topic popularity: Paper 2 Section A

Topic popularity,  
Thematic studies



AQA GCSE History

## Highlights from summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p><b>Question 1: The ‘utility’ question</b></p> <p>At the higher levels, students were able to develop evaluation of the usefulness of the source for the issue in the question, with reference to either the content <b>or</b> the provenance of the source, using contextual knowledge to support their evaluation.</p> <p>To progress to Level 4, developed reasoning about the content <b>and</b> provenance was required. For example, students were able to access lower Level 4 by making one developed point about the content of the source and one developed point about provenance. Full marks were given to responses that included a supported judgement about the usefulness of the source for the issue in the question.</p>	<p><b>Question 1: The ‘utility’ question</b></p> <p>As for the utility question on paper 1, responses at the lowest level tended to be descriptive of the source, while at Level 2 students tended to offer simple or generalised inferences that required more contextual support and/or focus on the issue in the question.</p> <p>Sources will have lots of different avenues to explore, so it’s worth reminding your students that responses at the highest level only need to evaluate one aspect of the content and one aspect of the provenance.</p> <p>It’s always worth reminding your students that it’s better to engage with what is in the source as opposed to listing the omissions.</p>
<p><b>Question 2: The ‘significance’ question</b></p> <p>At the higher levels, students were able to develop explanations of more than one aspect of significance with good factual support. Developed reasoning was shown where students made a point about significance and supported it with explanation and evidence that was relevant to the focus of the question. Responses were still credited at Level 3 even if some imbalance in the quality of explanation for each aspect of significance was evident, eg where only one of the two explanations of significance was developed.</p> <p>Complex thinking at Level 4 was shown in answers that were able to differentiate significance according to time (eg short-term/long term) or, less commonly, location.</p>	<p><b>Question 2: The ‘significance’ question</b></p> <p>At the lowest level, students were able to provide information about the given issue in the question.</p> <p>At Level 2, students were able to show some simple explanation of one or more aspects of significance with some further relevant support. However, answers at this level struggled to explicitly link their answer to significance.</p>

<p><b>Question 3: The ‘Similarity’ question</b></p> <p>At the higher levels, students were able to identify and explain two similarities with relevant supporting knowledge and understanding relating to both individuals or developments in the question. As for the other 8-mark AO1/AO2 questions, responses that contained developed explanation, but also showed imbalance in the quality of explanation of each similarity, were generally placed at the bottom of Level 3.</p> <p>Students who were able to place their similarities in the broader historical context of the thematic were placed at Level 4. This was most commonly seen in responses that addressed a wider chronology in terms of causes and/or impact, and/or used their understanding of the thematic factors to frame the identified similarities.</p>	<p><b>Question 3: The ‘Similarity’ question</b></p> <p>At the lowest level, responses tended to describe the individuals or developments referenced in the question, with only implicit comparisons in evidence.</p> <p>Students who could identify a relevant similarity and offer simple support were able to progress to Level 2.</p> <p>It’s worth noting that the wording of this question has been altered slightly for the 2020 exams onwards to further encourage students to focus on the similarities between the given individuals/groups, events or developments.</p>
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**Question 4: The essay question using factors**

At the higher levels, students needed to use a range of examples across their answer, meaning that students needed to provide evidence sampled from at least three out of four parts of the thematic specification. There is no expectation that all examples will be developed to the same level of detail, but some knowledge and understanding of more than two of the specification's four parts, which is relevant to the question, is required at Level 3 and above.

Students who were able to show developed explanation of the main factor and at least one other factor in relation to the issue in the question were awarded Level 3. In order to show complex thinking at Level 4, students also needed to include a substantiated judgement about the main factor in the given development. This was most commonly seen in answers that explored the relationship or interaction between the factors in order to come to a judgement about their relative importance.

**Question 4: The essay question using factors**

At the lowest level, students were able to provide information that was relevant to the given factor and the issue in the question. At Level 2, students were able to show some simple explanation of one or more factor with some further relevant support. However, at this level, attempted explanations remained implicit, meaning that these responses were not made explicitly relevant to the given development.

As this question encompasses the entire thematic course of study, students should attempt to draw on a range of examples from across the course.

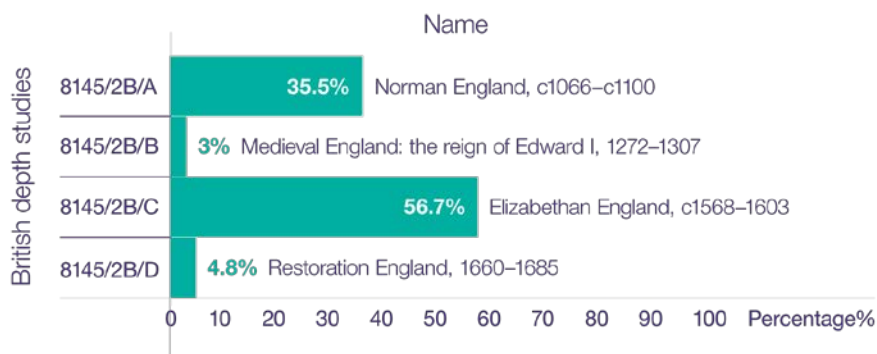
## Section B

This is a snapshot of the British depth study topics. Learn more about every question from the summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit [aqa.org.uk/log-in](http://aqa.org.uk/log-in) and follow:

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### Topic popularity: Paper 2 Section B

Topic popularity,  
British depth studies



AQA GCSE History

## Highlights from summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<p><b>Question 1: ‘How convincing...’</b></p> <p>At Level 3, responses were able to address more than one aspect of the interpretation and support their evaluation with specific and relevant knowledge. Responses that showed imbalance in the quality of evaluation could still be credited at this level.</p> <p>Points of support and challenge were credited, but it is worth noting that students tended to be more successful when they sought to evaluate what the interpretation said about the issue in the question rather than what was not said or omitted.</p> <p>At Level 4, the most successful responses tended to recognise and evaluate the broader argument in the interpretation as relevant to the question.</p>	<p><b>Question 1: ‘How convincing...’</b></p> <p>At the lower level, students were often able to show some basic or simple knowledge and understanding as relevant to the interpretation, though the evaluation often remained implicit or in need of further support.</p> <p>It’s really important that students use their own knowledge and understanding of the given issue in the question to evaluate the <b>content</b> of the interpretation. It’s worth noting that the wording of this question has been altered slightly for the 2020 exams onwards to direct students to use ‘what it says’ in the interpretation.</p>
<p><b>Question 2: The ‘explain the importance’ question</b></p> <p>At the higher levels students were able to provide developed explanation of two points of importance relevant to the question, with relevant factual support. As with other 8-mark AO1/AO2 questions, responses that contained developed explanation but showed imbalance in the quality of the explanation of each point of importance were generally placed at the bottom of the level.</p> <p>Responses that placed at least one of their explanations in the broader historical context were credited at Level 4.</p>	<p><b>Question 2: The ‘explain the importance’ question</b></p> <p>At the lowest level, students were able to identify relevant points or provide information about the given issue in the question.</p> <p>At Level 2, students were able to show some simple explanation of one or more reasons with some further relevant support. However, responses at this level struggled to progress beyond implicit or generalised explanation.</p>

<p><b>Question 3: The ‘write an account’ question</b></p> <p>Higher level responses were able to go beyond providing a simple narrative or description of the given issue and engaged with the development or ‘tail’ of the question (eg how it was dealt with/changed/grew).</p> <p>To progress from Level 3 to Level 4, responses were able to support analysis of more than one way in which the given issue was dealt with/changed/grew.</p>	<p><b>Question 3: The ‘write an account’ question</b></p> <p>Students at the lower levels were able to give a basic or simple narrative of the given issue but were unable to analyse or link their account to the development or ‘tail’ of the question. This is a key differentiator between lower and higher level marks for this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 4: The ‘Historic Environment’ essay question</b></p> <p>Responses at the higher levels focused more specifically on the wording of the question. In order to progress to Level 3, responses had to show developed explanation of the given issue or consequence in the question and at least one other issue/consequence, though students typically sought to address three issues associated with the site.</p> <p>In order to show complex thinking at Level 4, students also needed to include a substantiated judgement about the main consequence associated with the site. This was most commonly seen in answers that explored the relationship or interaction between themes or issues explored in the question in order to come to a judgement about their relative importance. As for the other AO1/AO2 questions that require a judgement, these typically came at the end of an answer, though they could appear at any point in the answer and be credited.</p>	<p><b>Question 4: The ‘Historic Environment’ essay question</b></p> <p>At the lowest level, students were able to provide information that was relevant to the question and/or the site, though typically knowledge of the site was very limited at Level 1.</p> <p>At Level 2, students were able to show some simple explanation of one or more relevant consequence with some further relevant support with reference to the site. However, at this level, attempted explanations remained generalised or required further specific evidence from the site.</p>

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## Next steps

### Access our full suite of insight resources:

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