

History – Student Guide for Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced GCE Specifications

History is not just the study of the past. When we study our ancestors and why they did what they did, we are investigating human behaviour and learning more about ourselves.

Before you start this course

It would be helpful if you have studied GCSE History and achieved at least a Grade C.

Other subjects which go well with History are Politics, English, a foreign language, Economics, Religious Studies or Geography.

With a qualification in History you could go on to Higher Education, not just to study History, but any one of the many Arts and Social Science courses available. With or without a degree, you can use a History qualification to work in a great variety of jobs in business and administration, the police service, the law, journalism and the media (as well as the more obvious careers like teaching or working in museums and libraries).

This subject is made up of 7 different types of units of which you must study one of each of six different types.

To get a certificate for Advanced Subsidiary GCE, you will need to have studied for and been assessed on your performance in the 3 AS units of assessment.

To get a certificate for Advanced GCE, you will need to have studied for and been assessed on your performance in the 3 AS units of assessment, together with 3 A2 units.

The assessment units for AS are:

One of Units 2580 – 2582 Document Study (English, European or American History)

In preparing for this unit you will study a key historical topic at first-hand, through original sources. By doing that, you will also develop your general fundamental skills in evaluating a range of evidence and drawing conclusions from it.

One of Units 2583 – 2584 Period Study (English History) and

One of Units 2585 – 2586 Period Study (European or American History)

You will study two historical periods: one English, the other either European or American. The content varies from one option to another, but the range on offer runs from the Dark Ages to the end of the 20th century. You will be able to study political, social, economic, military and/or religious history. Be imaginative in your choices – don't automatically go for the familiar or something you have already studied in GCSE History. You can use this opportunity to widen your knowledge and understanding of our past.

As well as historical study, preparing for these two units will help to develop your general skills in selecting information and ideas, and then organising them to make a logically argued case.

These 3 units of assessment together form the Advanced Subsidiary GCE qualification.

The assessment units for A2 are:

One of Units 2587 – 2589 Historical Investigation (English, European or American History)

Here you will investigate a current major historical controversy, chosen from a range of options: why historians still argue about the causes of a major event (eg The Cold War) or the motives and behaviour of a major historical figure (eg Charlemagne or Napoleon). Study will develop further the core skill of evaluation. At the same time, it will allow you to get to grips with debate, which is the heart of real historical study.

One of Units 2590 – 2591 Themes in History (English, European or American History)

Here you will be able to stand back and take an overview of an historical period (chosen from a range of options) by studying a single theme over a lengthy period of time. In taking a broad perspective view, you will be able to focus on how and why things change or stay the same. Themes on offer are political, social and economic, cultural, religious and military.

You will develop further the skills of selecting, organising and then applying ideas and information to create a structured and relevant case.

You must choose between either:

Unit 2592: Independent Investigation (Coursework)

You will investigate an historical problem and write an essay of around 2,500 words on it. While the choice of topic is yours (and you can select any historical topic from any period of time), there are two ways you can select your essay title. Either you can pick your own question and have it approved by OCR, or you can take one of the ten general pre-published essay titles set by OCR and then apply it to a period and a country or individual of your choice. The coursework will be marked externally by OCR.

or:

Unit 2593: Independent Investigation (Open Book Examination)

You will start off in the same way as someone working towards Unit 2592. First you choose one of the ten pre-published general essay titles set by OCR and decide which period and country or individual you want to write about. Next you carry out your research.

Only at the next stage is there a difference between Unit 2593 and Unit 2592. Instead of writing up your essay in your own time, you will take your notes and books into the examination room and use them to write your essay there, in the time allowed. Your essay will be marked externally by OCR.

One of Units 2587 – 2589 and one of Units 2590 – 2591, together with either Unit 2592 or Unit 2593, complete the Advanced GCE qualification.

The assessment structure for History is:

