

Australian History

2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

# Australian History

# 2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

There was an overall impression that Australian History students had enjoyed studying their various topics since there was a pleasing tendency to show empathy and understanding of the historical context.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

There were a range of topics and ideas presented in the folios. There was a diversity of assessment items which were well designed and had clearly highlighted assessment criteria, and these allowed for students to reflect on their year-long progress in their knowledge and historical skills.

A range of assessments provided opportunities for students to perform at all levels of the performance standards. However, folio tasks which did not allow or invite much beyond simple recount provided limited achievement against the performance standards. An example of this was: ‘Create a time line of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War’. A better task which would have allowed a student to make a more sophisticated historical judgment is: ‘Create a time line of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. Discuss which events had long-term consequences and why’.

It would also be good to see students being given the opportunity to formulate and ask their own questions, particularly with the sources analysis, perhaps by allowing students to research their own sources and ask appropriate questions.

It was encouraging to see essays and sources analysis performed under supervision included in folios.

Assessment Type 2: Essay

There were a variety of topics with many reflecting the topics chosen in class.

A well-designed question is vital for success and some questions presented difficulties for the students to adequately address and argue. Questions should be narrow in focus and not two-pronged, as this can be difficult for the student to answer adequately.

Most students supported their arguments using up to five sources; however, it was noted that most of the sources were Internet-based and, in some cases, more were cited than necessary. Students using Internet sources need to be selective about using credible historical evidence. It would be advisable for students to seek other sources such as books, newspapers, or journals.

Most students acknowledged their sources, although there is a need to improve the quality of referencing. Either Harvard in-text referencing or footnoting is acceptable. A few students presented reference lists that lacked bibliographic details, or were not arranged alphabetically.

Most students adhered to the word-count and overall the standard was quite good.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Students were clearly better prepared for the examination than last year. There were very few absences and a small number of students who seemed confused about which topics to address (answering more than one question per topic was very rare). There were some who only answered one essay question or did not complete the sources analysis. A number of students did limit their opportunities by writing very little in their essay (two pages or less). It would have been nice to have seen more detail applied by students when answering, particularly for the depth study topics. Very detailed responses with clear examples were required here. Very few students achieved scores in the higher grade band for their essays and this was mainly due to lack of depth of knowledge and analysis.

The responses to the sources analysis were generally of a good standard, especially when compared with the essay responses. There is a need for students to work more closely with sources and to examine the provenance of sources. In some cases basic historical skills were lacking. Greater practice in this area would be an advantage.

Overall, the examination responses were more thorough than in previous years. Many students were able to quote competently or refer to detailed examples; however, there was some confusion of people, places, and sequence of events among weaker responses. The less successful responses often did not directly answer the set question or were very descriptive in their answer. Inquiry and analysis was less well demonstrated and overall this was the quality most lacking. Good responses were able to develop an argument by engaging in critical analysis of the question.

With respect to reflection and evaluation, the better responses generally demonstrated a well-developed understanding of the importance and impact of individuals and groups in some detail.

Communication was generally good and handwriting was in most cases legible. Better responses structured their essays well and had a strong sense of an argument. Spelling of key words and historical terminology was seen as important.

Many depth study essays generally lacked detail and could have analysed and discussed the examples more effectively.

Part 1: Thematic Study

(Questions 1 to 24)

Question1

Generally poorly done, since most students failed to address the concept of ‘harsh environments’, and sometimes ignored it completely. Examples were mainly from Arrernte, Lardil,Yindjibarndi, Pitjantjatjara, Ngarrindjeri. Weaker responses tended to generalise. Students did need to have more than one example.

Question 2

This question saw better responses, perhaps because this question was less of a departure from previous years, so students were better prepared. Good examples showed that students understood a variety of contact experiences but were less clear about relating them to beliefs about both land and resources.

Question 3

Students had difficulty with this question. The concept of futility was dealt with superficially, if at all.

Question 4

Generally well done. The best responses had strong use of wide-ranging examples of specific policies at both state/territory and federal levels and generally argued against the proposition.

*Questions 5–16*

No responses.

Question 17

Mixed responses. Some very strong responses demonstrated a wide-ranging knowledge of relevant government policies, and push and pull factors, as well a range of migrant groups. British, Italian, German, Chinese, and Vietnamese migrants all featured prominently and assisted migrant schemes were discussed in detail. Weaker responses tended to just recount the migrant experiences.

Question 18

Very limited responses to this question. Here the students would have needed to look at all three groups (men, women, and children) and give examples of numbers.

Question 19

Knowledge of relevant policies was well demonstrated and students made good use of detailed examples. Some of the responses were narratives, but student knowledge of the finer details of migrants’ lives was evident.

Question 20

Most responses were poor and most students only wrote about the contributions that migrants made to Australian cuisine. A few were able to show quite good knowledge of the economic contribution made by migrants and make a balanced assessment of this against specific examples of social/cultural influence. Also, the concept of ‘acceptance’ needed to be considered.

Questions 21–24

No responses.

Part 2: Depth Study

(Questions 25 to 44)

Questions 25–26

Only four very limited responses with no depth.

Questions 27–28

No responses.

Question 29

This was the most popular question in the examination paper. Better responses used a wide range of examples and quotes that showed a good understanding of personal motivations. Knowledge of more than one war was probably an advantage. Responses limited to the Vietnam War were generally not as good as responses that included references to other conflicts. Weaker responses tended to be more narrative in approach.

Question 30

There were a number of very good responses to this question which allowed students to demonstrate their knowledge and present an argument. Students tended to argue in support of the proposition of the issue of ‘horror’. Strong use of specific examples helped. These included references to specific songs such as *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* and *I was Only Nineteen*, films such as *Kokoda*, and local memorials such as those in Gawler.

Question 31

Those students who completed this question tended to focus more on the experiences of people, rather than on how the war or conflict changed Australian society.

Question 32

This question was generally well answered. Students drew on a wide range of conflicts and individual experiences. However, for some students it was just an opportunity to retell everything they knew. One tendency was to focus on ‘worst experiences’ such as life in the trenches, rather than how war brought out the worst aspects of human nature. Students generally addressed the ‘best’ more strongly, with references to heroism, self-sacrifice, and mateship, as well as the dedication of nurses.

Questions 33–39

No responses or too few to comment on.

Question 40

Students argued both for and against the proposition. Good use of examples, especially related to mineral wealth.

*Questions 41–42*

No responses.

Question 43

The best examples for this question displayed a detailed knowledge of several individuals and groups whose contributions were discussed in depth.

Question 44

No responses.

Part 3: Sources Analysis

(Question 45)

It was evident that, regardless of whether students attempted the sources analysis first, second, or last, most of them allocated an appropriate amount of time to it. However, some students only attempted one essay and the sources analysis.

1. Most students achieved full marks. Students tended to make observations about Mr Holt’s demeanour and apparent enjoyment of the outdoor lifestyle and spearfishing. A number of students wrote far too much for 1 mark.
2. Students had difficulty with this question. Many tried to draw conclusions that were not relevant to the implications of Holt’s disappearance. Some just recounted the content. Students needed to give two clear examples.
3. Many students also had difficulty with this question. Most were able to gain 1 mark easily, but cross-referencing of both sources for full marks was lacking. Students needed to also make a judgment as to what extent the sources supported each other or not.
4. This was another question that students had difficulty with, often failing to answer in sufficient depth or to provide clearly differentiated advantages and disadvantages. Most students could gain 2 marks for this but struggled to find enough clear advantages or disadvantages for full marks.
5. For most students, this was the most difficult question. A number of students could see no usefulness at all and said little. Many only commented on the questionable mystical nature of the source and/or the fact this it shows that the disappearance of Holt was a matter of international interest. Very few could see advantages. Very few students really examined the provenance of the source.
6. Most students were able to answer strongly, although full marks eluded all but a few. A number of students merely recounted the content of the sources. Where students failed to gain full marks, it was typically for not making explicit use of the sources. Most students wrote a reasonable amount but a number only managed a few lines.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Australian History

Chief Assessor