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Australian History

2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## 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.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

**The more successful responses**

* included a variety of tasks, not just essays and sources analysis
* were not only performed under test conditions
* adhered to performance standards that were appropriate to the task.

**The less successful responses**

* focused on giving information rather than developing an argument and providing an analysis.

Assessment Type 2: Essay

**The more successful responses**

* invited a reasoned historical argument with a counter argument
* researched new areas and not just past examination questions
* were narrow in focus
* demonstrated consistent and appropriate referencing
* used a range of relevant sources.

**The less successful responses**

* were narrative and just presented the facts rather than engaging in an argument.

**General information**

For final moderation:

* include performance standards and task sheets
* include any variation forms.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Part 1: Thematic Study

Topic 1: Contact and Resistance: Indigenous Australians and the Colonial Experience, 1788 to the Present (Questions 1 to 4)

Question *2*

Most of the responses argued that conflict was generally unavoidable. Some responses discussed the nature of conflict and the possible causes of the conflict between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people.

The more successful responses clearly articulated a response that agreed with the proposition and used a number of specific examples. Good use of counter argument and/or thoughtful evaluation was a feature of many strong responses.

Some of the main points discussed included:

* differing views between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people regarding land ownership and its uses and the competition for limited resources. Aboriginal people only took from the land what was necessary to survive, whereas Europeans viewed the land as a resource to be cultivated. The introduction of crops and livestock impacted on traditional land use by Aboriginal people. In response, they destroyed crops and livestock; this created tension with   
  non-Indigenous people who resorted to conflict. These conflicting world views made it difficult for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people to co-exist.
* social Darwinism — the concept of the survival of the fittest
* the fact that Aboriginal people were left in a state of dispossession; therefore, their resistance was inevitable.

The less successful responses gave only superficial arguments.

Topic 3: Australia’s Foreign Policy, 1890 to the Present (Questions 9 to 12)

Question *9*

Many responses showed a good general knowledge of Australia's foreign policy, with the better responses making good use of a range of examples. There was also an impressive use of quotes in some of the stronger responses. The weaker responses were largely narrative accounts.

A number of the responses successfully identified Australia’s allies (e.g. Britain, the United States etc.) and how their expectations shaped Australia’s foreign policy. Most responses indicated that early settlement was shaped by British expectations. Expectations were also viewed as an integral part of friendship between nations. Good responses indicated that although the allies had expectations of Australia in a range of areas (e.g. defence, trade, migration, etc.), Australia also had a number of expectations regarding the allies and this was evident during the Second World War.

Some of the main points discussed included the following.

* In the main, British expectations shaped Australia’s early foreign policy. Examples provided included Australia’s entry into the First World War and quoted Fisher (the Opposition Leader in 1914) referring to the importance of supporting the Mother Country ‘to the last man and the last shilling’.
* Australian colonial subjects were expected to follow the empire.
* Australia gained from these ‘expectations’; not only in trade, but also in defence.
* Loyalty was tantamount and integral to an ally’s expectation.
* Most responses cited Australia looking to the United States during the Second World War (some quoted Curtin’s speech: ‘look to America, free of any pangs … or kinships with the United Kingdom’.). Most focused on the Fall of Singapore and Britain’s ‘failure’ to come to Australia’s assistance.
* Geography also determined a change of alliance during the Second World War, e.g. American influence in the Pacific region.
* The development of the ANZUS treaty as a defence alliance was significant. This treaty addressed each ally’s expectation of one another with regard to overcoming threats from hostile nations in the Pacific region.
* The Treaty of Friendship signed in 1976 between Australia and Japan was also important.
* At times, Australia did shape its own foreign policy and on its own terms; for example, when Whitlam visited China in 1972 this led to a change of focus, with China seen as a potential trading partner. This was viewed as antagonistic by some countries.
* Not all of Australia’s foreign policy was dictated by expectations of the allies.

A couple of responses indicated that sometimes expectations of the allies came with a heavy price; for example, entering into wars that the Australian nation may have been reluctant to become involved in, such as Iraq (this opposition was expressed by the Australian public).

Question *10*

More successful responses argued that economic and defence agreements did serve or protect Australia’s interests; however, they usually came with strings attached. A couple of the better responses concluded that the economic and defence agreements that Australia signed (with its allies) would ultimately help to keep its economy stable and its people safe, thus protecting Australia’s interests.

The following main points were discussed.

* Initially, leaders overlooked Australia’s interests and looked to the ‘Mother Country’ (Britain) because Australia was a dominion of the British Empire. However, there were benefits from this relationship such as defence and trade.
* The Statute of Westminster in1931 established the legislative independence of the self-governing dominions of the British Empire from the United Kingdom, thus allowing Australia to consider and to some extent pursue its own interests.
* The Fall of Singapore in 1942 meant that Australia looked to the United States for protection and assistance if under attack. By doing so, Australia was looking after its own interests.
* Postwar presented different challenges, such as the spread of Communism and the ‘Domino Effect’. In response to this, SEATO (the South East Asia Treaty Organisation) was established in 1954, which provided for a collective defence against communism.
* Economic agreements with Indonesia (formerly the Dutch East Indies) were important. In the 1930s, the Australian government led by Joseph Lyons recognised Indonesia prior to its independence. However, the relationship between Australia and Indonesia became strained due to Indonesia’s invasion of East Timor in 1975.

Topic 5: The Unwanted, the Seekers and the Achievers: Migrations to Australia,   
1830 to the Present (Questions 17 to 20)

*Question 17*

This question was generally well answered and responses considered a range of ‘push and pull’ factors regarding why people came to Australia. There was widespread use of the Vietnamese as a case study, with some particularly detailed references to Anh Do.

Main points and counter arguments included the following.

* ‘Push and pull’ factors were discussed, such as: escaping from tyranny and conflict (the Vietnam War was mentioned); wanting to reunite with other family members who had already migrated; skills required for particular projects such as the Snowy River Mountain scheme; obtaining better jobs; and having a better lifestyle.
* A number of responses did not define or demonstrate an adequate understanding of family wellbeing as a primary motivation for moving to Australia; for example, responses just stated that ‘family wellbeing motivated migrants to move to Australia’. There was minimal discussion as to what wellbeing meant for a family and how migrating to Australia would address this issue.

Question *18*

This question was answered reasonably well. Discussion focused on the White Australia Policy (*Immigration Restriction Act 1901*), which largely determined that only migrants of a specific demographic could immigrate.

Topic 8. Remembering Australians in Wartime: Experiences and Myths, 1880 to the Present (Questions 29 to 32)

Question *29*

Students were all able to argue against the proposition that men only went to war to support their mates. The best responses considered a broad range of other reasons as well as thoughtfully discussing the extent to which the statement was at least partly true. A range of wars were considered, with many students citing national service in Vietnam as an example that disproved the proposition.

The main points in support of this proposition were that:

* the Anzac legend may have influenced some men to enlist in the Second World War
* some friends enlisted, so it was important for their friends to support them by also enlisting.

Counter arguments included the following.

* Supporting their mates was one of the reasons men enlisted, but not the main reason.
* Other family members had fought in a war; and this often inspired people to enlist.
* Loyalty and support to the Mother Country (Britain) was a strong factor. In fact, 98% of non-Indigenous people were British born or of British descent. Some responses made reference to the statement by Charles Bean: ‘this was the driving force behind enlistment of many…’.
* There was a fear of being publicly shamed, particularly during the First World War.
* People were inspired to enlist by a sense of adventure.
* The fear of invasion by the Japanese during the Second World War was a motivating factor; this was heightened by the bombing of Darwin.
* Conscription during the Vietnam War forced people to enlist.
* A fear of the spread of Communism made people think they should enlist.

The degree of sophistication of argument varied; some of the responses lacked depth and points were superficially discussed.

Question *30*

The memorials mentioned were typically local, although some perceptive comments were made about the Australian War Memorial. Some of the responses indicated that all creative works, war memorials, and commemorative ceremonies evoke and express emotions.

Main points included the following.

* Memorials are a permanent reminder of the sacrifice made by soldiers.
* Commemorative ceremonies are held only a few times a year; for example, Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. Arguably, emotions expressed are only during these commemorations.
* Emotions are expressed in creative works, but do not necessarily differ from those expressed in memorials and commemorative ceremonies.

Most of the responses were generalised and lacked depth, and did not successfully address the question.

*Question 31*

The best responses were thoughtful, detailed, and generally argued against the proposition using a range of social, economic, and political examples. Better responses focused on returning soldiers and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, amputees, and soldiers with other disabilities.

Some discussed the war and linked the lasting impacts of war with the establishment of organisations such as Women’s Liberation to carry on the fight or secure gains that had temporarily been given to women during the war (both the First World War and Second World War).

A number of responses did not define or demonstrate an understanding about what was meant by ‘lasting impact’. Moreover, there was a lack of detail regarding what impacted on Australian society after the war. Some responses failed to grasp the notion of change to society, sometimes only focusing on the veterans themselves or discussing change superficially.

Question *32*

This normally popular key area of inquiry was avoided, possibly due to the quite specific focus of the question this year. However, the question did elicit some thoughtful responses about a range of technological features that impacted on the experiences of Australian men and women. The most common points raised were about the impact of television coverage in Vietnam and the developments in other communication and medical technology.

Main points included the following.

* Access to communication devices, medical technology, and television changed people’s experiences of war.
* Television brought the Vietnam War into the home, which meant that people viewed distressing images on a daily basis.
* Communication technology and media kept people informed about the war.
* Medical technology improved people’s wellbeing.
* Communication by telephone kept people informed.

Topic 11: Experiencing the Northern Territory: A Social, Political, Economic, and Cultural History of the Northern Territory, 1824 to the Present (Questions 41 to 44)

Question *41*

This question drew some high quality responses that demonstrated detailed knowledge of population groups but also carefully considered other factors that contributed to the development of the Northern Territory. Some of the responses focused on the establishment of Asian markets in the Territory with reference to Parap and the Mindil markets.

Better responses discussed the establishment of settlements such as Fort Dundas and Port Essington which were initially established (despite ultimately failing) to act as a ‘defence garrison’ for the North as well as a link to markets in Asia.

Main points included the following.

* Discussion of the cattle industry and markets in Asia (e.g. Indonesia), which were significant to the development of the Northern Territory.
* Access to Asian markets was important for the development of the Northern Territory; however, other key factors were more prominent.
* Markets within Australia were a key factor in the growth of the Northern Territory.
* The establishment of infrastructure such as the Overland Telegraph line was important.
* The mining industry factored prominently in the growth of the Northern Territory and led to population growth and economic development.

Question *44*

The best responses were able to demonstrate wide-ranging knowledge of a number of factors that make the Territory diverse. Most responses established that the diverse population makes the Northern Territory unique but that there are other factors that also make the Northern Territory unique. The Northern Territory is home to a range of cultures and backgrounds and is considered unique.

Main points included the following.

* Discussion of first settlements in the Northern Territory which were failed attempts (Fort Wellington and Port Essington). This made the Northern Territory ‘unique’ because perseverance eventually saw the establishment of the permanent settlements of Palmerston and Darwin.
* The arrival of other cultures: the Northern Territory has cultural diversity with a large Aboriginal population, and cultures such as the Chinese, Malays, Vietnamese, and Afghans. There are more nationalities in the Northern Territory than in other Australian capitals, leading to relative harmony.
* Surviving difficult conditions made the Northern Territory unique or different. For example, the harsh climate required ‘unique’ solutions.
* Establishing agriculture was difficult: for example, cultivating crops and raising livestock.
* Distances and climatic conditions made it difficult to source good building materials.
* The Northern Territory is unique because of its proximity to Asia.

Question *45* — Sources Analysis

(a) Students found it easy to gain full marks for this question. All students were able to draw out two suggested requirements for the location of the opera house.

Main points included that the opera house was:

* removed from busy streets
* close to public transport
* had plenty of car-parking space.

(b) This question required students to make observations about a photograph. Most students were able to reach two conclusions, noting that the works were extensive.

Main points about the photograph included:

* the use of large cranes and the evidence of other formwork occurring
* the sheer scale of the construction
* the fact that construction would be time consuming because the architecture was so unique.

(c) Most students were able to state the usefulness of original drawings (as in Source 3) as historical evidence; however, some were not aware of the time frame or did not notice that the drawing was from the time of the competition.

Main points noted by students were that Source 3:

* was a primary resource
* could be unreliable; a couple of responses stated that it might be a computer copy or could be tampered with
* showed the architect’s thinking
* as a drawing had few details
* was just a drawing for a competition and served as a starting point before more detailed plans were drawn up.

(d) Most students answered this question competently and stated that the sources did agree to a large extent. A number of astute students were able to point out significant differences between the sources. Responses to this question demonstrated a higher degree of historical literacy among students than those of last year.

Most points included the following.

* Both sources highlighted the lack of planning (specifically Source 4 discusses how the opera house was being built without plans, estimates, or knowledge of costs) and preparation (specifically Source 5 showed that there was a lack of thorough preparation).
* The high cost of building before (in both sources) and the escalating costs (Source 5) were significant. Thirty million pounds was highlighted as being a scandalous cost (Source 4).
* Source 4 is far more negative than Source 5.
* Source 5 is more positive recognising that the ‘Sydney Opera House is the most outstanding building of the Twentieth Century’; praising Utzon’s ‘remarkable original political vision’ which lifts ‘the spirits and the hearts of others’.
* Many of the responses did conclude that Sources 4 and 5 supported each other to a great or substantial extent. However, there were still a few responses that did not address to what extent they supported each other.

(e) Better responses (and there were quite a few) identified each source as an excerpt from a newspaper and a letter to a newspaper and were able to discuss the reliability, usefulness, and bias of each source.

Main points included the following.

* Comments came from a respected Australian newspaper *The Canberra Times,* which sourced *The Guardian* (a respected English newspaper) and thus added to its reliability.
* Source 6 highlights structural inconsistencies and Source 7 focuses on changes to the design.
* Both Source 6 and 7 are only excerpts. The full article and letter are not supplied; so the historian cannot know what information is missing (note the use of ellipsis).
* Both sources are written from different time periods, so they have different perspectives. Both sources were written some time after the fact.
* Reliability can be questioned as there is always bias in any source. Newspapers can distort and change facts in order to sell a story. Both sources are from newspapers.
* The letter is written from the grandson of the designer, who wants to ensure or preserve his grandfather’s legacy. So there may be an element of bias.

(f) Most students were able to answer this question strongly; the format of this question was also an advantage because it led most students to respond appropriately in a mini-essay format. Not all sources were referred to or discussed. Better responses used the mini-essay format and used evidence from the sources to support their argument. Such responses were able to identify that there were positive and negative comments about the building of the Sydney Opera House. Quite a number of responses concluded that it was a visionary success, but also highlighted poor planning and significant costs underpinning perceived failure.

Less successful responses did not fully address the statement, with not all sources referred to or discussed. Some provided a summary without an introduction or conclusion and simply discussed each source in sequential order.

**General information**

The standard this year was variable, with some responses only covering certain aspects of the examination, while others made a good effort at the whole examination. In the main, most students made a reasonable attempt to address the questions and apply their knowledge and understanding. As always, good historical skills are required and students who ably demonstrated such skills were generally rewarded for their efforts.

* Most students engaged with the questions in the examination and responded to topics that they had studied during the year.
* There was a reasonable attempt by most students to make reference or link back to the question. Poorer responses referred to the question only in the introduction and/or conclusion.
* It was pleasing to see that most students managed to finish the exam. Only a handful of students did not finish.
* Some students needed to use reading time more effectively so that appropriate questions were selected and answered.
* Most essay responses were two to two half pages, with a few extending to three and more. In some cases, not enough was written (a page or page and a half).
* Wider reading needs to be encouraged. There seems to be a lack of engagement of students with historiography (the critical examination of resources). The few responses that used quotes and referenced historians were commendable.
* Grammatical errors and poor expression hindered some responses.
* The awkward use of phrases and generalisations let down some responses. For example, discussion of a whole nation rather than recognising that any other groups/divisions might have existed.
* Spelling errors such as ‘Golf War’, ‘immagration’, ‘orignol’, ‘allie’, ‘decent’ (should be descent), ‘Asain’, ‘John Curtain’ affected the quality of some responses.
* There were problems with some students’ use of past tenses, as demonstrated by the lack of suffixes. For example, bias (biased), change (changed), bring (bringing) also let down the responses.
* Handwriting is still an issue — a few responses were difficult to read but, generally, there was less material crossed out than in the previous year.

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