



National Qualifications Review Report

History

Subject Review: History

1 Subject summary

Summary of courses

Intermediate 1	History
Intermediate 2	History
Higher	History
Advanced Higher	History

1.2 Recommendations

Recommendations which can be implemented this session (2001-2002)

- 1. Use of 80 hour unit at Advanced Higher**
The 80 hour unit at Advanced Higher should be retained (see section 2.1).
- 2. Duplication of outcomes at Intermediate and Higher levels**
Investigate the possibility of reducing internal assessment at Intermediate and Higher levels where the outcomes are duplicated (see section 2.3). Recommendations from the investigation would be implemented as soon as is practicable for centres and SQA.
- 3. Penalties for going over word count at Advanced Higher**
Develop a common approach to applying penalties for exceeding word counts across the Advanced Highers in the social subjects. This would include the Dissertations, the Geographical Study and the Critical Evaluations (see section 2.4). The approach would be implemented as soon as is practicable for centres and SQA.

Recommendations which can be implemented for next session (starting August 2002)

- 4. Marking of NAB assessment for the *Historical Special Study* Unit at Higher**
Currently the Unit assessment uses a complex grid marking approach. This will be simplified by moving to a marking scheme with a pass being defined as 15/30 (see section 2.3).
- 5. Marking of Part 2 of NAB assessments for the *Historical Study* unit at Advanced Higher**
Simplify the marking of the unit *Historical Study* at Advanced Higher level. Currently the Unit assessment uses a complex grid marking approach. This will be simplified by moving to a marking scheme with a pass being defined as 20/40 (see section 2.3).
- 6. Marking of the NAB assessment for *Historical Research* unit at AH**
Simplify this assessment and reduce the time it takes to mark by moving to a one-page checklist, containing 8–10 items covering the process of production of the dissertation, rather than the long checklist used currently (see section 2.3).
- 7. Components of external assessment at Int 2**
Instead of a paper of 47 marks, weighted to 75%, introduce a paper out of 50, unweighted. (This simply means adding one mark to one type of question, which appears three times.) This simplifies the scaling required from SQA's perspective and reduces scope for errors (see section 2.4).
- 8. Volume and nature of external assessment at Intermediate 2 and Higher**
Investigate the external assessment approach at Int 2 and Higher for comparability across the social subjects. Currently the volume of external assessment at Intermediate 2 and Higher is greater in History

than in Modern Studies and Geography. In History the course assessment at Intermediate 2 and Higher level includes a question paper and an extended essay of one and two hours respectively (see section 2.4). Recommendations from the investigation would be implemented as soon as is practicable for centres and SQA.

Mid – long term recommendations

9. **Relationship between internal and external assessment at Int 1 and 2**
Review the structure of the internal and external assessment at Intermediate level to improve the correlation between internal and external assessment (see section 2.2).
10. **Range of topics covered by courses at all levels**
Consider removing topics at all levels if there is no/low uptake. For example, currently at Advanced Higher level there are 13 fields of study but 80% of candidates choose four of these. The large number of fields of study at Advanced Higher level leads to high costs in setting of the question paper and a more complex system to standardise marking across the 13 fields of study, as each has different markers. This issue occurs at other levels but is most acute at Advanced Higher level (see section 2.4).
11. **External assessment of Higher History**
Investigate whether or not the external assessment of Higher History (particularly Paper 1 – the essay paper) needs to be redesigned to ensure comparability of demand across the social subjects, particularly at the upper end of the marks scale. There is evidence that more candidates get an A in Modern Studies and Geography than in History. This could be due to the different design of the external assessments across the social subjects, in particular the essay paper in Higher History (see section 2.4).

2 Course report

2.1 Course structure

Component units

Int 1 History

- ◆ Historical Study – Scottish and British (40 hours)
- ◆ Historical Study – European and World (40 hours)
- ◆ Historical Study – Options (40 hours)

Int 2 History

- ◆ Historical Study – Scottish and British (40 hours)
- ◆ Historical Study – European and World (40 hours)
- ◆ Historical Study – Options (40 hours)

Higher History

- ◆ Historical Study – Scottish and British (40 hours)
- ◆ Historical Study – European and World (40 hours)
- ◆ Historical Study - Special Topic (40 hours)

Advanced Higher History

- ◆ Historical Study (80 hours)
- ◆ Historical Research (40 hours)

The Units are the same at Intermediate 1 and 2, though there are three optional contexts that do not feature at Intermediate 1. The rationale was to allow candidates to drop down from Higher, where these contexts feature, but their content was deemed too demanding to be worthwhile areas of study at Intermediate 1. There is little demand for their introduction as yet, but this can be kept under review.

Nevertheless the long-term aim is to reduce the number of topics across levels, consistent with meeting demands in an effective manner.

The Unit titles at Higher do not follow on from Intermediate. The *Historical Study - Options* Unit does not appear at Higher, where the *Historical Study Special Topic* Unit replaces it. While this can lead to problems of crediting unit achievement when candidates drop down from Higher, any re-design would cause major problems with the Course construction.

Uptake in 2001 (figures in brackets are for 2000)

Intermediate 1	371 (174)
Intermediate 2	1,665 (1,106)
Higher	7,903 (7,523)
Advanced Higher	483 and 323 entries for CSYS

Do the courses meet the design criteria (1-7)?

Yes, at Int 1 – H

No, at AH – it uses an 80 hour Unit

Issues and recommendations

1. Issue: use of 80 hour Unit at Advanced Higher

Any change here would probably produce discontinuity in delivery. The only other option is to split the Unit into the essay questions (Part 1) and the source-based items (Part 2). It is unlikely these would balance out as two 40-hour units; the balance of teaching would result in a 60 or 50-hour unit, and a 20 or 30-hour unit, which would be little improvement. Perception may also be that the number of assessments was being increased, when in fact it is not.

Recommendation: use of 80 hour Unit at Advanced Higher

The 80-hour unit at Advanced Higher should be retained.

2.2 Assessment rationale

History aims to acquaint candidates with a variety of historical issues, political, social and economic, in the contexts of Scotland, the United Kingdom, individual other countries and the international community. These issues are examined critically, in the light of the candidates' own knowledge and of source material which is presented to them.

The assessment rationale reflects these aims. Candidates are required to display recalled knowledge of the issues, to analyse presented issues and come to appropriate conclusions, and to evaluate source materials and integrate them into their responses as appropriate.

Assessment items usually focus on one of these skills, as defined in the unit Outcomes and Course Grade Descriptions. Particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher, as evidenced in the extended essay (at Higher) and the dissertation (at Advanced Higher), these tasks require considerable integration of such skills. The source-based items at all levels also require this.

The extended response at Intermediate 2 is a useful preparation for the higher-order skills, and serves to illustrate the progression that is built in through levels. Marking schemes and strategies also illustrate this progression.

Relationship between internal and external assessment

Internal assessment is a valuable contributor to this overall strategy on progression. Internal items often mirror those used in the external examination, but are supportive of candidates in that they allow more time, if necessary, and some include prompts to indicate to candidates the nature of the required response. The style and quality of response are similar.

There are differences between internal and external assessments, to a minimal extent at Higher, to a slightly larger degree at Intermediate 1 and Advanced Higher, and to a larger degree at Intermediate 2.

With modification[IMG1], internal items may be combined together into preliminary examinations that replicate the demands of the external examination.

Does the assessment rationale meet assessment criterion 8?

Yes, at H and AH

No, at Int 1 and 2 - issue outlined below.

Issues and recommendations

1. Issue: Relationship between internal and external assessment at Int 1 and 2

There is a degree of mismatch between the internal NAB assessments and the external assessment. This means that the NAB is not necessarily a good predictor of performance in the external assessment. The differences are:

- ◆ there is a short essay question in the external assessment that is not included in the NAB assessment
- ◆ a descriptive recall-based item appears in each unit context in the external assessment, but not the internal
- ◆ there are two source evaluation items in each NAB - these are only sampled once for each unit in the external assessment

Recommendation: Relationship between internal and external assessment at Int 1 and 2

Review the structure of the internal and external assessment at Intermediate level to improve the correlation between internal and external assessment.

2.3 Internal assessment of units

Description of the overall approach to internal assessment

At **Int 1**, each of the three units has a one-hour test, comprising six short response questions, related to topics studied in the Unit. Each question is marked PC by PC, and a candidate has to meet all PCs to pass. To pass, candidates must pass three out of six questions (which between them cover all the PCs). The advantage of the present system is that candidates have two chances to pass each PC. A pass in a question can be translated into a numerical mark. A cut-down version of an assessment of each unit can be combined with two others to replicate the external examination, and is a reasonably good predictor of performance in the external examination. Fortunately there is little demand for change, as a large number of NABs would require amendment.

At **Int 2**, each of the three units has a 1-hour test, comprising three short response questions, related to topics studied in the Unit. Each question is marked PC by PC, and to pass the unit candidates must pass all three questions. A pass in a question can be translated into a numerical mark. Prompts were introduced for certain items to clarify the demands for candidates. These items do not match the style of the external examination closely. The external assessment samples, has different mark allocations, and introduces two different styles of questions, which do not appear in the NABs. An informal consultation by the Lead Officer in the summer of 2000 failed to resolve these differences.

At **Higher**, two of the units have a 45-minute test, comprising one essay from a choice of five. These are marked according to criteria developed from those used by the external examination marking team. Marks can be assigned if desired, with 13/25 deemed a pass. The third unit, the *Historical Special Topic* has a test of one hour and 30 minutes, comprising five questions using different sources with a series of short response questions. The five questions, which are related to the specialist topic unit, are marked PC by PC, often using a complex grid system. A pass in a question can be translated into a numerical mark. Prompts were introduced for certain items to clarify the demands for candidates. That apart, the internal assessments replicate the external, and are good predictors of external performance.

At **Advanced Higher**, the 80 hour *Historical Study* Unit has a NAB assessment of two parts, lasting up to 2.5 hours if required. (This can be broken down into more manageable chunks.) The first part of the NAB assessment is essay-based, with the Outcomes and Grade Descriptions closely aligned. Part 2 of the assessment is source-based, with three questions worth a total of 40 marks. These questions are marked PC by PC, often using a complex grid system. A pass in a question can be translated into a numerical mark. Prompts were introduced for certain items to clarify the demands for candidates. The format is similar, but not identical to, the external examination. The *Historical Research* unit assesses the process of producing the dissertation. The dissertation report forms part of the external assessment.

Does the internal assessment of the units meet assessment criterion 9?

No - issues are outlined below

Issues and recommendations

- Issue: Marking of the NAB assessments for the *Historical Special Study* Unit at Higher**
These NAB assessments are currently marked using a complex grid system, PC by PC. Centres have found this approach time-consuming, and candidates find it complex to understand.

Recommendation: Marking of the NAB assessments for the *Historical Special Study* Unit at Higher
Move to a simpler system where the NAB assessments for the unit *Historical Special Study* (Higher) are marked using a marking scheme, with a pass being defined as 15/30.
- Issue: Marking of Part 2 of NAB assessments for the *Historical Study* Unit at Advanced Higher**
These NAB assessments are often currently marked using a complex grid system, PC by PC. Centres have found this approach time-consuming and candidates find it complex to understand.

Recommendation: Marking of Part 2 of NAB assessments for the *Historical Study* Unit at Advanced Higher
Simplify the marking of the Unit *Historical Study* at Advanced Higher level. Currently, the Unit assessment uses a complex grid marking approach. This will be simplified by moving to a marking scheme with a pass being defined as 20/40.
- Issue: Marking of the NAB assessment for the *Historical Research* Unit at Advanced Higher**
Currently the assessment of the *Historical Research* unit at AH is complex and time-consuming for teachers/lecturers and candidates to understand. The guidelines for the procedure run to several pages.

Recommendation: Marking of the NAB assessment for the *Historical Research* Unit at Advanced Higher
Simplify and reduce the time that this assessment takes to mark by moving to a one-page checklist, containing 8-10 items, covering the process of production of the dissertation, rather than the long checklist used currently.
- Issue: Duplication of Outcomes at Intermediate and Higher levels**
Outcomes across units *Historical Study – Scottish and British* and *Historical Study – European and World* are the same at all three levels. The outcomes for the *Historical Study – Options* unit, at Int 1 and 2, are also the same. This is seen as unnecessary duplication of internal assessment.

Recommendation: Duplication of Outcomes at Intermediate and Higher levels
Investigate the possibility of reducing internal assessment at Intermediate and Higher levels where the Outcomes are duplicated. Recommendations from the investigation would be implemented as soon as is practicable for centres and SQA.

2.4 External assessment of the course

Description of the overall approach to external assessment

The Intermediate 1 Course is assessed by Question Paper. The other Courses also use a Question Paper, with the addition of an extended response at Intermediate 2, an extended essay at Higher level, and a dissertation at AH.

Int 1 — question paper of 1 hour and 30 minutes, worth a total of 42 marks. The Question Paper has three sections that mirror the three Units/topics of the course. For each Unit, there are 14 marks allocated, with 4 questions asked per Unit. The type of questions and coverage are similar to the type used in the internal assessment of the Units.

Int 2 — there is a question paper and extended response, weighted 75% to 25% respectively. The question paper is 1 hour and 45 minutes long and worth a total of 47 marks, which is scaled to 60 marks. The Question Paper counts for 75% of the external assessment. The Question Paper has a short essay worth eight marks, and three sections covering the units/topics worth 13 marks each, in each of which there are three questions, two of which are source-based, and one is purely knowledge-based.

In addition, there is the extended response which counts for 25% of the external assessment. Candidates are expected to spend around eight hours of class time researching their question prior to drawing up a plan of 150 words. They are then asked to write up their extended response under controlled conditions using their plan, within an hour. The responses are marked by SQA.

Higher — there are two question papers and an extended essay. Paper I is 1 hour and 20 minutes long and is worth 50 marks. Candidates are asked to write two essays from a choice of nine topics covering the *Scottish and British*, and *European and World* units. Paper II is 1 hour and 25 minutes long and is worth 30 marks in total. This paper assesses candidates' skill in evaluating historical sources.

In addition, there is an extended essay worth a total of 30 marks. Candidates are expected to spend around eight hours of class time researching their question prior to drawing up a plan of 200 words. They are then asked to write up their essay under controlled conditions using their plan, within a 2-hour period. The essays are marked by SQA.

Advanced Higher — there is a question paper and dissertation. The question paper has two parts, with a total time of 3 hours. Part I is worth 50 marks and candidates choose two essays from a choice of six. Part 2 comprises three questions, which are resource-based and worth 12 marks each. Part 2 is scaled to 40 by the marker.

In addition there is a dissertation which is worth 50 marks. It should be no longer than 4000 words. This is done in class/at home, and candidates may spend as much time on it as they deem fit. The dissertation is marked by SQA.

The final award is based on a mark out of 140.

Note on comparability with other courses in the same broad subject area

The approach taken in History is broadly comparable with that used in Modern Studies, although the volume of external assessment at Int 2 and Higher is greater in History than in Modern Studies and Geography. This is due to the extended essay/response, where candidates are also asked to undertake an essay equivalent to 8 hours of preparation in class time to be written up in controlled conditions in 1 and 2 hours respectively for Int 2 and Higher. This is a popular part of the course, and is often candidates' highest-scoring component. In History, the external assessment is based on question papers of approximately the same length as Modern Studies and Geography, though at Intermediate 2 the History paper is shortest. There are no adverse comments on this, and indeed the Intermediate 2 exam is being lengthened by 15 minutes in 2002 in response to stakeholders' requests.

A summary of the external assessment of the social subjects is given in Appendix 1.

Does the external assessment of the courses meet assessment criterion 10?

No - issues are outlined below.

The question papers are largely accepted by stakeholders, though there is a perception that Paper I of the Higher (the essay paper) is too demanding. They generally match the internal assessments, and both assess the objectives of the courses fairly well.

The other components (extended response/essay and dissertation) give candidates an opportunity to develop the skills of historical research, and to produce a piece of extended writing on a theme/issue of their own choice. These are usually the highest scoring components of the external assessment. They also appear in similar guises in other subjects — the dissertation in AH Modern Studies, and the extended essay in Higher RMPS.

Issues and recommendations

1. Issue: Volume and nature of external assessment at Int 2 and Higher

The volume of external assessment is greater for Intermediate 2 and Higher History than for the same levels of course in Modern Studies and Geography. At Int 2, the lengths of external assessment are: History – 2 hours 45 minutes, Modern Studies – 2 hours, and Geography 1 hour 30 minutes. At Higher, the lengths of external assessment are: History – 4 hours 45 minutes, Modern Studies – 2 hours 45 minutes and Geography 2 hours 45 minutes. This means that the total volume of external assessment is greater for History at Int 2 and Higher than for the other social subjects.

The current arrangements are popular and not seen as an issue by centres. At Intermediate 2, the external examination is still shorter than in Modern Studies, despite having been lengthened after stakeholder demand. The extended essay is overwhelmingly candidates' highest scoring component.

Recommendation: Volume and nature of external assessment at Int 2 and Higher

Investigate the external assessment approach at Int 2 and Higher in order to address the issue of comparability across the social subjects. Currently the volume of external assessment in History is greater at Intermediate 2 and Higher than it is in Modern Studies and Geography. In History the Course assessment at Intermediate 2 and Higher level includes a Question Paper and an extended essay, of one and two hours respectively. Recommendations from the investigation would be implemented as soon as is practicable for centres and SQA.

2. Issue: Components of external assessment at Intermediate 2

The weightings applied to the components of external assessment at Intermediate 2 introduce unneeded complexity and scope for error.

Recommendation: Components of external assessment at Intermediate 2

Instead of a paper of 47 marks, weighted to 75%, introduce a paper out of 50, unweighted. (This simply means adding one mark to one type of question, which appears three times.) This simplifies the scaling required from SQA's perspective and reduces scope for errors.

3. Issue: External assessment of Higher History

There is some evidence that at Higher level it is easier to get an A in Modern Studies and Geography than in History. For example in 2001, 15% of candidates got an A grade in History compared to 19% and 21% in Geography and Modern Studies respectively. This may be due to the different design of the external assessments across the social subjects, in particular the essay paper in Higher History. Investigation of this issue would include further statistical analysis of candidate performance in the social subjects at Higher compared to previous performances at Standard Grade.

Recommendation: External assessment of Higher History

Investigate whether or not the external assessment of Higher History (particularly Paper I – the essay paper) needs to be redesigned to ensure comparability across the social subjects, particularly at the upper end of the marks scale. There is evidence that more candidates get an A in Modern Studies and Geography than in History. This could be due to the different design of the external assessments across the social subjects, in particular the essay paper in Higher History.

4. Issue: Penalties for going over word count at Advanced Higher

Currently, different penalties are applied in History, Modern Studies and elsewhere for going over the word counts for dissertations/studies/evaluations. In Geography, candidates going over a specific number of sides of A4 paper will be penalised by the loss of up to 25% of the marks available. In History, over-long dissertations may be penalised by up to 10% of total marks. In Modern Studies, no penalties are applied at present for going over the word count.

Recommendation: Penalties for going over word count at Advanced Higher

Develop a common approach to applying penalties for exceeding word counts across the Advanced Highers in the social subjects. This would include the dissertations, the Geographical Study and the critical evaluations. The approach would be implemented as soon as is practicable for centres and SQA.

5. Issue: Range of topics covered by courses at all levels

Currently, the History courses cover a range of topics from which the centre/candidate can choose. This leads to long question papers eg at Int 2 the papers run to about 40 pages in length, which the candidates have to read through. The problem is most acute at Advanced Higher level where there are 13 fields of study. Given the specialist nature of study at this level, a very large setting team is used to develop the question paper. Currently the setting team consists of a Principal Assessor plus 26 setters (the norm is PA plus 2–4 setters). This makes the question paper very expensive to set and also makes marker check and standardisation processes complex, long and expensive. There are also issues about the administrative complexity of standardisation of marking across the fields of study. This necessitates the use of spreadsheets to keep track of all of this — this has been raised as an issue by the SQA Data Management Unit. Currently around 80% of candidates use four of the fields of study.

Recommendation: Range of topics covered by Courses at all levels

Consider removing topics at all levels if there is no/low uptake. For example, currently at Advanced Higher level there are 13 fields of study but 80% of candidates choose 4 of the fields of study. The large number of fields of study at Advanced Higher level leads to high costs in setting of the question paper and a more complex system to standardise marking across the 13 fields of study, as each field has different markers. This issue occurs at other levels but is most acute at Advanced Higher level.

2.5 Quality Assurance

Description of the overall approach to quality assurance

SQA's standard setting, vetting and marking procedures apply.

Do the quality assurance arrangements of the courses meet criterion 11?

Yes, although the 13 fields of study at Advanced Higher raise considerable complexities at the standardisation stage of marking.

Issues and recommendations

Discussed in section 2.4

2.6 Administration

Issues

None

3 Summary of review process and issues raised

Who	Mechanism	Issues
Subject specialists	<p>History Assessment Panel met on 19 September.</p> <p>Comments received from stakeholders.</p>	<p>Generally, level of internal assessment is acceptable, but consideration should be given to reducing duplicate assessments at Higher and Int 1/2. Serious concern over the relatively lower share of A passes at Higher compared to Modern Studies or Geography.</p> <p>A separate collation will be provided.</p>
SQA co-ordinators	SQA SAMs and CRMs	No specific issues raised
Principal Assessors and Senior Moderators	Consultation by e-mail and telephone	Feedback incorporated into recommendations
Units within SQA	<p>Data management</p> <p>Appointments</p>	<p>Spreadsheet has to be used at AH - a problem. So too is the lengthy standardisation procedure due to the 13 fields of study and separate markers.</p> <p>High costs of AH Examining Team given size to cover the 13 fields of study.</p>
Candidates and parents	SPTC survey	No specific issues raised
Other surveys and reports	HMIE – (August 2001)	Some departments identified problems in trying to teach Int 2 and H courses in History in a single class.

Appendix 1: Comparative information on the social subjects

1. External assessment

Course & level	Ext ass component 1	Ext ass component 2	Ext ass component 3
Int 1 History	QP – 1 hour 30 minutes, maximum mark 42, 100%		
Int 1 Modern St	QP – 1 hour 30 minutes, 100% - 60 marks maximum		
Int 1 Geography	QP – 1 hour 15 minutes, 100%, maximum mark 60		
Int 2 History	QP – 1 hour 45 minutes, 75%	Essay - 8hours preparation & 1 hour under controlled conditions – 25%	
Int 2 Modern St	QP – 2 hours, 100%, maximum mark 70		
Int 2 Geography	QP – 1 hour 30 minutes, 100%, maximum mark 60		
H History	QP – 2 hours 45 minutes, 73%	Essay - 8hours preparation & 2 hours under controlled conditions, 27%	
H Modern St	QP – 2 hours 45 minutes, 100%, maximum mark 80		
H Geography	QP 1 – 1 hour 25 minutes, maximum mark 40	QP 2 - 1 hour and 20 minutes, maximum mark 50	
AH History	QP- 3 hours, 64%	Dissertation – approximately 40hours preparation, 4000 words, 36%	
AH Modern St	QP- 3 hours, 67%, maximum mark 90	Dissertation – approximately 40hours preparation, 4000 words, 33%	
AH Geography	QP – 2hours, 20%	Geographical Study - 3000 word report, 40%	Critical evaluation – 2 @ 1,500 words each, 40%

2. Internal Unit Assessment

Course & level	Summary of unit assessment
Int 1 History Modern Studies Geography	3 NAB tests of approximately 1 hour each 3 NAB tests of approximately 1 hour each 3 NAB tests of approximately 45 minutes each
Int2 History Modern Studies Geography	3 NAB tests of approximately 1 hour each 3 NAB tests of approximately 1 hour each 3 NAB tests of approximately 45 minutes each
Higher History Modern Studies Geography	2 NAB tests of approximately 45 minutes & 1 NAB test of 1hour 30 minutes 2 NAB tests of approximately 45 minutes & 1 NAB test of 2 hours 15 minutes (to be reduced to 1 hour as part of the review) 2 NAB tests of 75 minutes & 1 NAB test of 2hours 15 minutes
AH History Modern Studies Geography	1 NAB test of 2.5 hours & assessment of process of dissertation production 1 NAB test of 2 hours & assessment of process of dissertation production 3 NABs assess process of production of Geographical Study and Geography critical evaluations (no prescribed timings)