



**Cambridge Assessment
International Education**

Syllabus

**Cambridge International
AS & A Level
History 9489**

Use this syllabus for exams in 2026 and 2027.
Exams are available in the June and November series.



Version 1

For the purposes of screen readers, any mention in this document of Cambridge IGCSE refers to Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education.

**Cambridge
Pathway** 

Why choose Cambridge International?

Cambridge International prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, are rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for students to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources. Learn more about our research at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/

We review all our syllabuses regularly, so they reflect the latest research evidence and professional teaching practice – and take account of the different national contexts in which they are taught.

We consult with teachers to help us design each syllabus around the needs of their learners. Consulting with leading universities has helped us make sure our syllabuses encourage students to master the key concepts in the subject and develop the skills necessary for success in higher education.

We believe education works best when curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment are closely aligned. Our programmes develop deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills, to prepare students for their future. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged – equipped for success in the modern world.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge students from 10 000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

School feedback: ‘We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.’

Feedback from: Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA

Quality management



Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international education programmes and qualifications programmes for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/about-us/our-standards/

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Important: Changes to this syllabus



The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2023. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2021 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

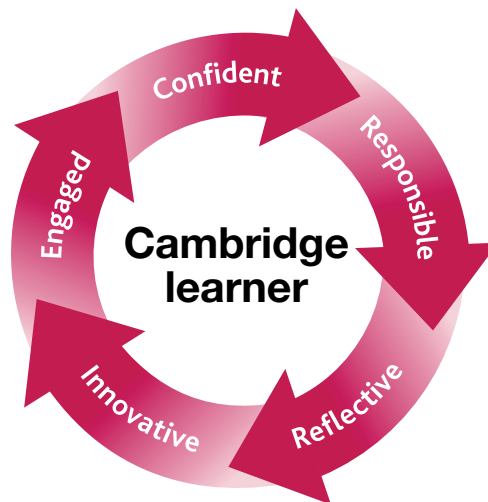
1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

The best motivation for a student is a real passion for the subject they are learning. By offering students a variety of Cambridge International AS & A Levels, you can give them the greatest chance of finding the path of education they most want to follow. With over 50 subjects to choose from, students can select the ones they love and that they are best at, which helps motivate them throughout their studies.

Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme helps students develop abilities which universities value highly, including:

- a deep understanding of their subjects
- higher order thinking skills – analysis, critical thinking, problem solving
- presenting ordered and coherent arguments
- independent learning and research.



Cambridge International AS & A Level History is accepted by universities and employers as proof of knowledge and understanding of History. Successful candidates learn to evaluate historical evidence, present clear and logical arguments, assess different interpretations of an argument and develop an understanding of historical concepts such as cause and effect, similarity and difference and continuity and change.

Our approach in Cambridge International AS & A Level History encourages learners to be:

confident, developing the ability to analyse, explain and evaluate historical issues and arguments

responsible, acquiring knowledge and skills through independent reading and enquiry

reflective, reflecting on their growing understanding of how history works and making links with new areas of study

innovative, improving their historical understanding through dealing with sources and interpretations of past events from different perspectives

engaged, developing their interest in history and broadening their knowledge and understanding of different perspectives.

School feedback: ‘Cambridge students develop a deep understanding of subjects and independent thinking skills.’

Feedback from: Principal, Rockledge High School, USA

Key concepts

Key concepts are essential ideas that help students develop a deep understanding of their subject and make links between different aspects. Key concepts may open up new ways of thinking about, understanding or interpreting the important things to be learned.

Good teaching and learning will incorporate and reinforce a subject's key concepts to help students gain:

- a greater depth as well as breadth of subject knowledge
- confidence, especially in applying knowledge and skills in new situations
- the vocabulary to discuss their subject conceptually and show how different aspects link together
- a level of mastery of their subject to help them enter higher education.

The key concepts identified below, carefully introduced and developed, will help to underpin the course you will teach. You may identify additional key concepts which will also enrich teaching and learning.

The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level History are:

- **Cause and consequence**
The events, circumstances, actions and beliefs that have a direct causal connection to consequential events and developments, circumstances, actions or beliefs. Causes can be both human and non-human.
- **Change and continuity**
The patterns, processes and interplay of change and continuity within a given time frame.
- **Similarity and difference**
The patterns of similarity and difference that exist between people, lived experiences, events and situations in the past.
- **Significance**
The importance attached to an event, individual or entity in the past, whether at the time or subsequent to it. Historical significance is a constructed label that is dependent upon the perspective (context, values, interests and concerns) of the person ascribing significance and is therefore changeable.
- **Interpretations**
How the past has been subsequently reconstructed and presented by historians.

International recognition and acceptance

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world. Every year thousands of students with Cambridge International AS & A Levels gain places at leading universities worldwide. Our programmes and qualifications are valued by top universities around the world including those in the UK, US (including Ivy League universities), Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

UK ENIC, the national agency in the UK for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills, has carried out an independent benchmarking study of Cambridge International AS & A Level and found it to be comparable to the standard of AS & A Level in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge International AS & A Level qualifications are accepted as equivalent, grade for grade, to UK AS & A Levels by leading universities worldwide.

Cambridge International AS Level History makes up the first half of the Cambridge International A Level course in History and provides a foundation for the study of History at Cambridge International A Level. The AS Level can also be delivered as a standalone qualification. Depending on local university entrance requirements, students may be able to use it to progress directly to university courses in History or some other subjects. It is also suitable as part of a course of general education.

Cambridge International A Level History provides a foundation for the study of history or related courses in higher education. Equally it is suitable as part of a course of general education.

For more information about the relationship between the Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level see the 'Assessment overview' section of the Syllabus overview.

We recommend learners check the Cambridge recognition database and university websites to find the most up-to-date entry requirements for courses they wish to study.

Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition

Supporting teachers

We believe education is most effective when curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment are closely aligned. We provide a wide range of resources, detailed guidance, innovative training and targeted professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge International AS & A Level. To find out which resources are available for each syllabus go to www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Support for Cambridge International AS & A Level			
Planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syllabuses Schemes of work Specimen Question Papers and Mark Schemes Teacher guides 	Teaching and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorsed resources Online forums Support for coursework and speaking tests Resource Plus Everyday Science 	Learning and revision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example candidate responses Past papers and mark schemes Specimen paper answers Test Maker 	Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate Results Service Principal examiner reports for teachers

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates

Syllabuses and specimen materials represent the final authority on the content and structure of all of our assessments.

Professional development

Find the next step on your professional development journey.

- Introductory Professional Development – An introduction to Cambridge programmes and qualifications.
- Extension Professional Development – Develop your understanding of Cambridge programmes and qualifications to build confidence in your delivery.
- Enrichment Professional Development – Transform your approach to teaching with our Enrichment workshops.
- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs) – Practice-based programmes that transform professional learning for practising teachers. Available at Certificate and Diploma level.

Find out more at:

www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/professional-development/



Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers. Find out more at: www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

2 Syllabus overview

Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to develop:

- an interest in the past and an appreciation of human endeavour
- a greater knowledge and understanding of historical periods or themes
- a greater awareness of historical concepts such as cause and consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, significance and interpretations
- an appreciation of the nature and diversity of historical sources available, and the methods used by historians
- an exploration of a variety of approaches to different aspects of history and different interpretations of particular historical issues
- the ability to think independently and make informed judgements on issues
- an empathy with people living in different places and at different times
- a firm foundation for further study of History.

Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The contents of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.



Content overview

AS Level

For Papers 1 and 2 Candidates study one of the following options:

European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921

- France, 1774–1814
- The Industrial Revolution in Britain, 1750–1850
- Liberalism and nationalism in Germany, 1815–71
- The Russian Revolution, 1894–1921

American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941

- The origins of the Civil War, 1820–61
- Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861–77
- The Gilded Age and Progressive Era, 1870s to 1920
- The Great Crash, The Great Depression and the New Deal policies, 1920–41

International option: International history, 1870–1945

- Empire and the emergence of world powers, 1870–1919
- The League of Nations and international relations in the 1920s
- The League of Nations and international relations in the 1930s
- China and Japan, 1912–45

Note: AS Level topics rotate between papers 1 and 2 year-on-year. The prescribed topic for Paper 1 in any given year is not used for Paper 2. For more information, please refer to section 4.

A Level

Paper 3

- **Topic 1: The origins of the First World War**
- **Topic 2: The Holocaust**
- **Topic 3: The origins and development of the Cold War**

Paper 4

- **European option, Depth study 1: European history in the interwar years, 1919–41**
 - Theme 1: Mussolini's Italy, 1919–41
 - Theme 2: Stalin's Russia, 1924–41
 - Theme 3: Hitler's Germany, 1929–41
 - Theme 4: Britain, 1919–39
- **American option, Depth study 2: The USA, 1944–92**
 - Theme 1: The late 1940s and 1950s
 - Theme 2: The 1960s and the 1970s
 - Theme 3: The 1980s and early 1990s
 - Theme 4: Foreign policy, 1944–92

- **International option, Depth study 3: International history, 1945–92**

- Theme 1: US–Soviet relations during the Cold War, 1950–91
- Theme 2: The spread of communism in East and Southeast Asia, 1945–91
- Theme 3: Decolonisation, the Cold War and the UN in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–92
- Theme 4: Conflict in the Middle East, 1948–91

School feedback: ‘Cambridge International AS & A Levels prepare students well for university because they’ve learnt to go into a subject in considerable depth. There’s that ability to really understand the depth and richness and the detail of a subject. It’s a wonderful preparation for what they are going to face at university.’

Feedback from: US Higher Education Advisory Council

Assessment overview

Paper 1

Document question 1 hour 15 minutes

40 marks

1 Question

Candidates answer one two-part document question on one of the options given.

Candidates must answer both parts of the question they choose.

Externally assessed

40% of the AS Level

20% of the A Level

Paper 3

Interpretations question 1 hour 15 minutes

40 marks

1 Question

Candidates answer one interpretations question on one of the options given in the syllabus.

Externally assessed

20% of the A Level

Paper 2

Outline study 1 hour 45 minutes

60 marks

2 questions

Candidates answer two two-part questions from three on one of the options given.

Candidates must answer both parts of the questions they choose.

Externally assessed

60% of the AS Level

30% of the A Level

Paper 4

Depth study 1 hour 45 minutes

60 marks

2 questions

Candidates answer two questions on their chosen depth study.

Externally assessed

30% of the A Level

Information on availability is in the **Before you start** section.

There are three routes for Cambridge International AS & A Level History:

Route	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
1 AS Level only (Candidates take all AS components in the same exam series)	yes	yes	no	no
2 A Level (staged over two years)				
Year 1 AS Level*	yes	yes	no	no
Year 2 Complete the A Level	no	no	yes	yes
3 A Level (Candidates take all components in the same exam series)	yes	yes	yes	yes

* Candidates carry forward their AS Level result subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*. See **Making entries** for more information on carry forward of results.

Candidates following an AS Level route are eligible for grades a–e. Candidates following an A Level route are eligible for grades A*–E.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1

Recall, select and deploy historical knowledge appropriately and effectively.

AO2

Demonstrate an understanding of the past through explanation, analysis and a substantiated judgement of key concepts: causation, consequence, continuity, change and significance within an historical context, the relationships between key features and characteristics of the periods studied.

AO3

Analyse, evaluate and interpret a range of appropriate source material.

AO4

Analyse and evaluate how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented.

Weighting for assessment objectives

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in AS Level %	Weighting in A Level %
AO1	40	45
AO2	30	30
AO3	30	15
AO4	0	10
Total	100	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %			
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
AO1	25	50	50	50
AO2	0	50	0	50
AO3	75	0	0	0
AO4	0	0	50	0
Total	100	100	100	100

3 Subject content

This syllabus gives you the flexibility to design a course that will interest, challenge and engage your learners. Where appropriate you are responsible for selecting options, topics and resources and examples to support your learners' study. These should be appropriate for the learners' age, cultural background and learning context as well as complying with your school policies and local legal requirements.

It is suggested that you select one of the three options at AS Level (European, American or International). At A Level you can select any of the three options for Paper 3 and Paper 4. There is no relationship between your choices on these two Papers.

Paper 1 and 2

Topics within each of the AS options rotate year-on-year so that one topic is assessed via Paper 1 and the remaining three via Paper 2. The prescribed topic for Paper 1 in any given year is not assessed within Paper 2 for that year. Therefore, each topic will be the prescribed topic for Paper 1 every four years. For more details, please refer to section 4.

Each topic is divided into four key questions. Each key question is accompanied by content that candidates are expected to understand and deploy when addressing the key question.

There will be some key questions and content defined below (a small proportion) which will, to a degree, relate to the period before or after the date range of the section in which they appear. This is to ensure candidates have sufficient understanding of the causes and impact of key events.

For clarification, where 'including' is used in the syllabus, candidates must study everything in the list and also study other relevant aspects. Where examples are given (denoted by 'for example', 'e.g.' or 'such as') these are for illustrative purposes only.

European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921

France, 1774–1814

Candidates will not be expected to study foreign policy in detail but should be able to show an understanding of the effects within France of foreign policy.

Key questions

What were the causes and immediate outcomes of the 1789 Revolution?

Why were French governments unstable from 1790 to 1795?

Content

- The Ancien Régime: problems and policies of Louis XVI and Jacques Necker
- Pressures for change (social, economic and political including the Enlightenment)
- The reaction of Louis XVI to attempts at reform
- Responses to Louis XVI's actions, e.g. Storming of the Bastille, March of the Women, Declaration of the Rights of Man, The August Decrees
- Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary groups: their views and aims
- Changes in government from 1790 to 1795
- Economic problems
- Foreign threats and the impact of war on France

France, 1774–1814 continued

Why was Napoleon Bonaparte able to overthrow the Directory in 1799?

- The aims and rule of the Directory
- The reputation of, and opposition to, the Directory
- The military reputation and political ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte
- The coup of 1799

What were Napoleon Bonaparte's domestic aims and achievements from 1799 to 1814?

- Napoleon's initiatives as first consul
- The inauguration of the Empire
- Nature and impact of reforms (legal, educational, social and financial)
- Napoleon's use of propaganda and other means of control

The Industrial Revolution in Britain, 1750–1850

Key questions

What were the causes of the Industrial Revolution?

Content

- The agricultural revolution
- Development of capitalism: investment, trade and commerce, the slave trade
- Early mechanisation: steam engines and spinning machines
- Early developments in transport: canals and roads

Why was there a rapid growth of industrialisation after 1780?

- Development of the factory system: steam power and machines
- Developments in transport: canals, railways and steam ships
- Raw materials, e.g. iron and coal
- Growth of markets (domestic and international) and growth of free trade

Why, and with what consequences, did urbanisation result from industrialisation?

- Growth of towns and impact on living conditions, e.g. housing and health
- Working conditions, e.g. child labour, hours, pay and safety
- Impacts on different social classes
- Government responses to the consequences of industrialisation: early moves towards regulation and control of working and living conditions

The Industrial Revolution in Britain, 1750–1850 continued

Why, and with what consequences, did industrialisation result in popular protest and political change?

- Reactions to mechanisation and economic change, e.g. Luddites and Captain Swing riots
- Demands for political reform including Chartists
- Origins of organised labour, e.g. trade unions and cooperative societies
- Government reaction to demands for change

Liberalism and nationalism in Germany, 1815–71

Key questions

What were the causes of the Revolutions in 1848–49?

Content

- The impact of Metternich's System on the States of Germany
- The influence of liberal ideas and the emergence of a middle class
- Growth of nationalist ideas
- The impact of the Zollverein
- Social and economic problems in the 1840s

What were the consequences of the 1848–49 Revolutions?

- Initial responses of the German States to the 1848–49 Revolutions
- The collapse of the Frankfurt Parliament
- Reassertion of Austrian power: the perceived 'humiliation of Olmütz'
- Economic developments after 1849: the growth of industrialisation and the Zollverein

What were Bismarck's intentions for Prussia and Germany from 1862 to 1866?

- Reasons for Bismarck's appointment as Minister President: his attitudes towards Liberalism and Nationalism
- Bismarck's impact on Prussian politics: relations with William I and the Landtag
- Relations with, and policies towards, Austria: war with Denmark (1864), Austria (1866)
- Outcomes of the Austro–Prussian War: Treaty of Prague and the North German Confederation

How and why was the unification of Germany achieved by 1871?

- Bismarck's diplomacy towards France
- The Hohenzollern candidature and the outbreak of war
- Reasons for the Prussian victory in the Franco–Prussian War (1870–71)
- Creation of the German Empire (1871)

The Russian Revolution, 1894–1921

Key questions

What were the causes and outcomes of the 1905 Revolution up to 1914?

What were the causes and immediate outcomes of the February Revolution in 1917?

How and why did the Bolsheviks gain power in October 1917?

How were the Bolsheviks able to consolidate their power up to 1921?

Content

- The nature of the Tsarist regime: pressures for change (social, economic and political) and the reaction of Nicholas II to them
 - Key events of the Revolution, e.g. ‘Bloody Sunday’, wider risings and the October Manifesto
 - The reassertion of Tsarist authority: the Dumas and Stolypin’s reforms
 - The extent of opposition to the Tsarist rule
-
- Political, social and economic effects of the First World War, impact of military defeats
 - Nicholas II as a war leader: implications of personal leadership of the war effort
 - The Revolution of February and the abdication of Nicholas II
 - The formation and purpose of the Provisional Government
-
- Crises of the Provisional Government
 - Lenin’s leadership of the Bolsheviks
 - The role of Trotsky and the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC)
 - The key events of the October Revolution
-
- Bolshevik reforms and the establishment of a dictatorship
 - The impact of Brest–Litovsk
 - Reasons for the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War including War Communism
 - Kronstadt and the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP)

American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941**The origins of the Civil War, 1820–61****Key questions**

How was the issue of slavery addressed between 1820 and 1850?

Content

- Political system (practical application of the US Constitution) and the balance of sectional interests in 1820
- Impact of territorial expansion: westward expansion and absorption of Texas
- Impact of population growth and movement
- Attempts at compromise including the Missouri Compromise (1820) and the Compromise of 1850

How and why did sectional divisions widen between 1850 and 1856?

- Problems arising from the implementation of the Compromise of 1850 and the application of the Fugitive Slave Act
- The issue of Kansas and its impact
- Changes in the party-political system: rapid decline of the Whig Party and the rise of the Republican Party
- Significance of States' Rights

Why did the Republicans win the 1860 presidential election?

- Growing strength of abolitionism, e.g. John Brown
- Emerging notion of 'slave power', e.g. Dred Scott
- Increasing confrontation within and between the North and the South
- The Lincoln–Douglas Debates (1858)
- The election campaign of 1860 and the divisions of the Democratic Party

Why did the Civil War begin in April 1861?

- Reactions to the 1860 presidential election results
- Secession of the seven Deep South States
- The Battle of Fort Sumter and its impacts
- The aims of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis

Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861–77

Key questions

Why did the Civil War last four years?

How significant was the immediate impact of the Civil War (1861–65)?

What were the aims and outcomes of Reconstruction?

How successful was Reconstruction?

Content

- Changing military strategies
 - Changing approaches of political and military leadership
 - Resources available
 - Impact of foreign influences (Britain and France)
-
- Limitations on civil liberties during the War
 - Reasons for and responses to the Emancipation Proclamation (1863)
 - Life in the Confederate States including the responses of slaves
 - The nature of democracy in the North and the South
-
- Presidential Reconstruction: Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson
 - Radical Reconstruction from Congress
 - Reasons for and passage of Constitutional Amendments 13th, 14th and 15th
-
- Changing position of ex-slaves
 - Responses of the White South
 - Grant's Reconstruction policies
 - The Compromise of 1877 and the end of Reconstruction

The Gilded Age and Progressive Era, 1870s to 1920

Key questions

Why was the late nineteenth century an age of rapid industrialisation?

How significant were the consequences of rapid economic growth in the late nineteenth century?

What were the main aims and policies of the Progressive Movement and how popular were they?

How successful was the Progressive Movement up to 1920?

Content

- Growth of trusts, corporations and robber barons
- Technological innovations, e.g. electrical power and the telephone
- Growth of the railroads
- Trade policies and protectionism

- New immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe
- Industrial growth and periods of economic recession, e.g. the Panic of 1873
- Impact of urbanisation on living conditions, e.g. housing, health, safety
- Rise of organised labour in industry and agriculture, e.g. Granger Movement, labor unions

- Limits on party machines and bosses
- Temperance and Prohibition
- Female emancipation
- Regulation of private corporations

- Achievements of the Progressive presidents
- Constitutional reforms
- State vs. federal successes
- Limits of the Progressive Movement

The Great Crash, the Great Depression and the New Deal policies, 1920–41

Key questions

What were the causes of the Great Crash?

Content

- Structural weaknesses in the US economy in the 1920s, e.g. disparity between agriculture, traditional and new industries
- Growth of consumerism, e.g. hire purchase and buying on the margin
- Mass production and oversupply
- Impact of government policies

What were the causes and impacts of the Great Depression?

- The main features of the Great Crash (October 1929)
- Responses of Hoover government and industry to the Great Crash
- Collapse of the financial system
- Mass unemployment and its social impact, e.g. Hoovervilles and employment discrimination

How effective were Roosevelt's strategies to deal with the domestic problems facing the USA in the 1930s?

- Roosevelt's First Hundred Days
- Development of New Deal policies and the need for the Second New Deal
- Roosevelt's political strategies, e.g. the New Deal Coalition
- Reasons for the Roosevelt Depression/ Recession (1937–38)

Why was there opposition to the New Deal policies and what impact did it have?

- Opposition from the liberal left
- Opposition from the conservative right
- Opposition from the Supreme Court
- Roosevelt's responses to opposition

International option: International history, 1870–1945**Empire and the emergence of world powers, 1870–1919****Key questions**

Why was imperialism a significant force for late nineteenth century Europe?

What was the impact of imperial expansion on international relations?

Why did Japan emerge as a world power and what was the impact on international relations?

Why did the USA emerge as a world power and what was the impact on international relations?

Content

- Economic and political motives for imperial expansion
- The emergence of ‘New imperialism’
- Nature and purpose of the ‘Scramble for Africa’
- Reasons for and extent of domestic support for overseas expansion in Britain, France and Germany
- Disputes with China over imperial expansion, the Boxer Rebellion
- Tension between Britain and Germany over South Africa
- Attempts to resolve tensions between imperial nations, the Berlin Conference (1884–85)
- Reasons for rapid modernisation and military development
- International recognition of Japan as a world power, wars with China (1894–95) and Russia (1905), treaty with Britain (1902)
- Japan’s role in the First World War and global position by 1918
- Impact of the closing of the frontier on US foreign policy
- Economic growth and the need for trade in the late nineteenth century
- Reasons for, and impact of, the Spanish–American War (1898)
- Reasons for, and impact of, the USA’s entry into the First World War

The League of Nations and international relations in the 1920s

Key questions

Why was there dissatisfaction with the peace settlements of 1919–20?

Content

- Key terms and implications of the peace treaties (Versailles, Trianon, Neuilly, Saint Germain, Sèvres)
- Reparations
- Reactions of victors and defeated powers, e.g. Germany's 'Diktat'
- Problems in 'successor states' created by the post-war settlements

How and why did international tensions remain high in the period between 1920 and 1923?

- Crises and tensions, e.g. the Ruhr Crisis; Corfu Incident; German hyperinflation
- Aims and impact of international treaties and conferences: Washington Conference (1921–22); Genoa Conference (1922); Rapallo Pact (1922); Treaty of Lausanne (1923);
- Changing relations between the major powers: Britain, France, Germany, the USSR and USA

How successful were attempts to improve international relations from 1924–29?

- Economic recovery and improved relations
- Aims and impact of international treaties and conferences: Dawes Plan (1924); Locarno Treaties (1925); Kellogg–Briand (1928), Young Plan (1929)
- Changing relations between the major powers: Britain, France, Germany, the USSR and USA

How successful was the League of Nations during the 1920s?

- Aims, membership and structure of the League
- Collective security and the League's involvement in the resolution of disputes, e.g. Aaland Islands, Vilna, Upper Silesia
- Weaknesses of the League
- Role and impact of the Agencies

The League of Nations and international relations in the 1930s

Key questions

How did the rise of extremism affect international relations?

Content

- Impact of the Great Depression on political ideologies
- Impact of the rise of dictatorships on relations between powers
- Foreign responses to the Civil War in Spain
- Aims and impact of Hitler's expansionist policies: Rearmament, remilitarisation of the Rhineland (1936); Anschluss (1938), Sudetenland (1938), Czechoslovakia (1939) and Poland (1939)

Why did the League of Nations fail to keep the peace in the 1930s?

- The failure of disarmament
- Reasons for, and actions taken in response to, the crises in Manchuria and Abyssinia
- Changing attitudes of major powers towards the League of Nations

Why, and with what effects, did Britain and France pursue a policy of appeasement?

- Impact of economic and military considerations for foreign policy
- Changing nature of relations with the USSR and impact on foreign policy
- Actions taken to appease Hitler (e.g. attitude towards rearmament, the Rhineland, Anschluss)
- Czechoslovakia and the Munich Crisis

Why did war break out in 1939?

- British rearmament in response to Germany's expansionism
- The British guarantee to Poland and the failure of appeasement
- Reasons for the Nazi–Soviet Pact
- The invasion of Poland

China and Japan, 1912–45

Key questions

What were the implications of the ‘warlord era’ which affected China from 1916–27?

How effectively did Chiang Kai-shek deal with the communists in the period 1927–36?

Why did the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gain support up to 1945?

Why did Japan become a military dictatorship in the 1930s and with what consequences?

Content

- Issues facing China, e.g. Yuan Shih-kai and the disintegration of China
- Reasons for and impact of the May the Fourth Movement
- Reasons for the growth of the Kuomintang Party under Sun Yat-sen (including the Three Principles)
- The Northern Expedition
- The Shanghai Massacre and the Extermination Campaigns
- The Long March 1934–35
- The Xi’an Incident 1936
- Attempts at modernisation and reform
- Results of the Long March and the leadership of Mao Zedong
- Establishment of the Yan’an Soviet, land reform and Mao’s Rectification Campaign (1941–44)
- Impact of war with Japan after 1937
- Unpopularity of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang
- Japan’s international status in 1919 and its reactions to the Paris peace settlements
- Political and economic factors in the failure of democracy
- Implications of military rule for Japanese expansionism
- Reasons for involvement in the Second World War

Topics assessed on Paper 1 and Paper 2

Topics within each of the AS options rotate year-on-year so that one topic is assessed via Paper 1 and the remaining three via Paper 2. The prescribed topic for Paper 1 in any given year is not assessed within Paper 2 for that year. Therefore, each topic will be the prescribed topic for Paper 1 every four years. For more details, please refer to section 4.

The topics for each paper will rotate on a yearly basis, as follows:

Topics assessed in 2026

Paper 1	Paper 2
<p>European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Russian Revolution, 1894–1921 	<p>European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> France, 1774–1814 The Industrial Revolution in Britain, 1750–1850 Liberalism and nationalism in Germany, 1815–71
<p>American option: The History of the USA, 1820–1941</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861–77 	<p>American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The origins of the Civil War, 1820–61 The Gilded Age and Progressive Era, 1870s to 1920 The Great Crash, the Great Depression and the New Deal policies, 1920–41
<p>International option: International history, 1870–1945</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> China and Japan, 1912–45 	<p>International option: International history, 1870–1945</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empire and the emergence of world powers, 1870–1919 The League of Nations and international relations in the 1920s The League of Nations and international relations in the 1930s

Topics assessed in 2027

Paper 1	Paper 2
<p>European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> France, 1774–1814 	<p>European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Industrial Revolution in Britain, 1750–1850 Liberalism and nationalism in Germany, 1815–71 The Russian Revolution, 1894–1921
<p>American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gilded Age and Progressive Era, 1870s to 1920 	<p>American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The origins of the Civil War, 1820–61 Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861–77 The Great Crash, the Great Depression and the New Deal policies, 1920–41

Paper 1 continued

International option: International history, 1870–1945

- Empire and the emergence of world powers, 1870–1919

Paper 2 continued

International option: International history, 1870–1945

- The League of Nations and international relations in the 1920s
- The League of Nations and international relations in the 1930s
- China and Japan, 1912–45

Paper 3

Topic 1: The origins of the First World War

Candidates will study the following content and the differing interpretations that historians have produced, with particular focus on the over-arching key question, ‘Who was to blame for the First World War?’

Content

This topic covers the following events and developments in the evolution of the First World War c.1890–1914:

- Tensions between the Great Powers including the Moroccan Crises
- The alliance system
- The growth of militarism
- The arms race
- Instability in the Balkans
- War plans
- The assassination at Sarajevo and the July crisis
- Mobilisation and declarations of war

Key approaches

Candidates should explore the following issues through the interpretations and approaches of different historians:

- How far was tension between the Great Powers likely to lead to war?
- How important were the decisions taken by key individuals in leading to war?
- How did Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles shape the debate about responsibility for war?
- How and why did the idea of ‘shared responsibility’ arise?
- How did the Second World War affect the debate?
- The Fischer thesis
- The German reaction to Fischer
- Challenges to Fischer
- Modern interpretations exploring the responsibility of nations other than Germany
- Relative importance of long and short-term factors
- How the centenary of the First World War affected the debate: the importance of contingency over motive

Topic 2: The Holocaust

Candidates will study the following content and the differing interpretations that historians have produced, with a particular focus on the over-arching key question, ‘Why did the Holocaust occur?’

Content

This topic covers the following events and developments:

- The background of European and German anti-Semitism and racist theories
- Nazi anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jews, 1933–41
- The impact of war on Nazi policy towards the Jews
- Ghettoisation and Jewish responses to the Holocaust
- The development of Nazi extermination policies towards Jews and other minorities
- Contemporary reactions to the Holocaust

Key approaches

Candidates should explore the following issues through the interpretations and approaches of different historians:

- How far was the Holocaust a consequence of racist ideas which existed before the Nazis?
- The Intentionalist approach and the role of Hitler: was the Holocaust planned in advance by Hitler?
- The Structuralist approach: how far did the nature of the Nazi state determine how the Holocaust developed?
- The Functionalist approach: how far did contingent factors such as war determine how the Holocaust developed?
- Synthesis interpretations which aim to reconcile the Intentionalist and Functionalist viewpoints
- Perpetrators: who carried out the Holocaust, and why? Was murderous behaviour the exception or were many involved? Why did non-Germans participate in the killings?
- Victims: How far did Jews resist the Holocaust, and how can resistance be defined? Did men and women experience the Holocaust in different ways? Should definitions of the Holocaust include victims other than Jews?
- Bystanders: How did the USA and Britain respond to the Holocaust at the time?

Topic 3: The origins and development of the Cold War

Candidates will study the following content and the differing interpretations that historians have produced, with a particular focus on the over-arching key question, ‘Who was to blame for the Cold War?’

Content

This topic covers the following events and developments in the evolution of the Cold War in Europe, 1941–50

- Tensions in the wartime alliance against the Axis powers
- Peace-making at the end of the Second World War
- Increasing tensions in a divided Europe
- The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan
- The Berlin Blockade and Airlift

Key approaches

Candidates should explore the following issues through the interpretations and approaches of different historians:

- How far were inherent tensions between East and West bound to resurface in 1945?
- How important were the personalities of the leaders of the Great Powers in shaping the Cold War?
- How far were ideology, security and economics the factors which created Cold War tensions?
- The Traditional approach
- The Revisionist approach
- Post-Revisionist approaches
- How have the perspectives on the Cold War of Russian historians differed from those in the West?
- Reinterpretations of the Cold War in the light of new archival sources
- The emergence of the ‘New’ Cold War history

Paper 4

European option, Depth study 1: European history in the interwar years, 1919–41

Candidates should consider foreign policy in the domestic context including understanding its impact on domestic policy and public opinion.

Theme 1: Mussolini's Italy, 1919–41

Key questions

Why did Mussolini gain power in 1922?

Content

- Problems facing Italy after the First World War: dissatisfaction with the peace settlement; social and economic
- Problems of democratic government
- Appeal of Fascism
- Reasons for Mussolini's appointment as prime minister

How was Italy governed under Mussolini?

- Mussolini's aims in government and his leadership
- Establishment of a dictatorship, repression of opposition
- Use of propaganda
- Aims and impact of foreign policy

How far were Mussolini's economic policies a success?

- Economic aims
- The Corporate State
- Responses to the Great Depression
- Effectiveness of economic policies (industrial and agricultural, the Battle for Grain)

How far did society change because of Mussolini's regime?

- Dealings with the Church
- Key social policies including education
- Impact of policies on different social groups including women and young people
- Level of support for Mussolini's regime

Theme 2: Stalin's Russia, 1924–41**Key questions**

Why did Stalin gain power from 1924?

Content

- Lenin's legacy and problems of leadership
- Stalin's position in the Party
- Stalin's relations with Trotsky and other Soviet leaders
- Stalin's control and manipulation within the Party

How was the USSR governed under Stalin?

- Stalin's aims in government and administration
- 'Building socialism in one country'
- Causes and impact of the Great Terror and use of purges and show trials
- Aims and impact of foreign policy

How effective were Stalin's economic policies?

- Stalin's aims for the economy
- The Five Year Plans
- Reasons for, and impacts of, collectivisation
- Reasons for, and impacts of, industrialisation

How far did society change because of Stalin's regime?

- Impact of policies towards women and families
- Impact of policies towards non-Russian nationalities
- Impact of economic changes on workers
- Impact of propaganda and the personality cult

Theme 3: Hitler's Germany, 1929–41**Key questions**

Why did Hitler gain power in 1933?

Content

- Problems facing Weimar politicians from 1929
- Growth of support for Nazism after 1929
- Hitler's appointment as Chancellor
- Consolidation of power, 1933–34

How was Germany governed by Hitler?

- Hitler's aims in government and administration: establishing the Nazi state
- Means of control, e.g. use of propaganda and use of terror
- Persecution of Jews and other minorities
- Aims of, and developments in, foreign policy

How effective were Hitler's economic policies?

- Changing priorities of economic policy
- Responses to the Great Depression
- Key policies in agriculture and industry
- Impact of foreign policy on the economy

How far did society change because of Hitler's regime?

- Reasons for, and impact of, policies towards women and children
- Policies towards religion
- Life under the Nazi regime, e.g. standard of living, consumer goods, leisure time
- Level of support for the Nazi regime

Theme 4: Britain, 1919–39**Key questions**

How and why did politics change in this period?

Content

- The growth and periods in power of the Labour Party and its leadership
- The changing fortunes of the Conservative and Liberal Parties and leadership
- Reasons for, and impact, of the National Government
- Reasons for, and consequences of, the growth of extremism both on the political left and right

How did the economy develop in this period?

- The state of the economy following the First World War
- The General Strike (1926), and the problems facing the traditional industries, e.g. mining, textiles, ship building
- The impact of the Great Depression
- Growth of new industries, e.g. electrical goods, new materials, motor vehicles

How and why did society change?

- Reasons for changing living standards, e.g. housing and health
- The changing roles and status of women: employment, birth control, suffrage
- Impact of social welfare policies including national insurance, means testing
- Regional differences: North–South divide

How effectively did Britain prepare for the approach of war 1934–39?

- Public attitude towards war: pacifism (peace ballot), the League of Nations, impact of the Spanish Civil War
- Rearmament policies
- Reasons for, and public responses to, appeasement
- Civilian preparations for war, e.g. ration cards, conscription, gas masks, child evacuation, emergency shelters

American option, Depth study 2: The USA, 1944–92

Candidates who make valid links between themes will be credited where material is relevant to the question.

Theme 1: The late 1940s and 1950s**Key questions**

Why and how were the late 1940s and 1950s a time of economic prosperity?

Content

- US economic developments, 1945–60
- The growth of consumerism
- The role of federal government's economic policies
- The impact of full employment on industrial growth

How far did society change in the late 1940s and the 1950s?

- Impact of the aftermath of the Second World War on various social groups including women
- Changing patterns of urbanisation and of migration patterns across the USA
- Growth of a distinct youth culture, e.g. teenagers
- Increased social mobility

How far were the late 1940s and 1950s a time of party political stability?

- Reasons for Truman's election in 1948
- The challenge of McCarthyism and the Red Scare
- Reasons for Eisenhower's election victories in 1952 and 1956
- Eisenhower's domestic policies

How effective was the civil rights movement in the 1950s?

- Impact of key civil rights groups including the NAACP and SCLC
- The role of leading African Americans
- The response of the peoples and governments of Southern states
- The responses of federal institutions, i.e. Congress, President and Supreme Court

Theme 2: The 1960s and the 1970s

Key questions

Why and how did the USA experience a deteriorating economic situation in the 1960s and 1970s?

How great were the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s?

How far were the 1960s and 1970s a time of party political instability?

How far did the position of ethnic minorities improve in the 1960s and 1970s?

Content

- Economic impact of involvement in Vietnam
 - Failure of post-war economic doctrines
 - The impact of external challenges including foreign competition, oil crises of 1973 and 1979 and the Cold War
 - Stagflation
-
- Changes in the social class system
 - Growth and impact of feminism
 - Impact of the counter-culture movement
 - Growth and impact of the gay rights movement, e.g. Stonewall 1969
-
- Domestic policies of the various Presidents: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter
 - Impact of the Vietnam War on party politics
 - The rise and fall of the 'imperial presidency' including Nixon and Watergate
 - Role and impact of the mass media
-
- The responses of federal institutions, Civil Rights Act 1964
 - The role of civil rights leaders and groups, e.g. Martin Luther King Jr, SNCC, CORE, La Raza and American Indian Movement (AIM)
 - The growth and impact of the Black Power movement
 - Reasons for, and impact of, Affirmative Action

Theme 3: The 1980s and early 1990s**Key questions**

How far did the US economy improve in the 1980s and early 1990s?

How effective were responses to the social challenges facing the USA in the 1980s?

How and why did the 1980s and early 1990s mark a return of party political stability?

How far did the position of ethnic minorities improve in the 1980s?

Content

- Reaganomics
- Impact of foreign competition
- Reasons for, and extent of, changes in living standards
- The twin deficits: budget and trade

- The ‘war on drugs’
- Attempts to respond to the outbreak of AIDS
- On-going issue of gender inequality
- The rise of the religious right

- Conservatism: the rise of the New Right
- Reasons for the electoral success of the Republicans in the 1980s
- The impact of the Iran–Contra Affair (1985–87) on Reagan’s presidency
- The fluctuating fortunes of the Democrats, reasons for the election of Clinton in 1992

- The developing nature of identity politics and multiculturalism
- The formation of the Rainbow Coalition in the mid-1980s
- The social impact of Reaganomics
- Affirmative Action and Supreme Court judgements in practice

Theme 4: Foreign policy 1944–92

Key questions

How did US leadership of the global economy develop and change from 1944 to 1970?

Was US foreign policy towards communism between 1950 and 1963 a policy of containment or a policy of rollback?

Why, and with what success, did the USA follow a policy of détente between 1963 and 1979?

How far did the USA change its policies towards the communist world between 1980 and 1991?

Content

- Establishing the Bretton Woods system from 1944: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
 - Rebuilding the economies of Japan (the Dodge Line and the Korean War) and Western Europe (the Marshall Plan)
 - Implementing the Bretton Woods system in the 1950s, e.g. GATT agreements.
 - Challenges to US leadership of the global economy up to 1970, e.g. competition from Japan and West Germany
-
- Relations with USSR and China
 - Reasons for, and impact of, involvement in Korea
 - Nuclear arms race
 - Reasons for, and significance of, the Cuban Missile Crisis
-
- Reasons for changing policies towards Vietnam
 - The Nixon Doctrine
 - Attempts at nuclear arms limitation
 - Changing relations with the USSR and with China
-
- Failure of détente and the Second Cold War
 - The 'Reagan Doctrine' in theory and practice
 - Changing relations with the USSR
 - The roles of Reagan and Bush (Snr)

International option, Depth study 3: International history, 1945–92

Candidates will not be expected to have detailed knowledge of domestic policies, but will need to be aware of how domestic issues inform and affect international relations.

Theme 1: US–Soviet relations during the Cold War, 1950–91**Key questions**

How did US–Soviet relations develop between 1950 and 1980?

Content

- Impact of the death of Stalin
- Peaceful coexistence
- Impact of key events in Asia and Europe, e.g. Korea, Hungary, Berlin, the Prague Spring
- Détente and the outbreak of the Second Cold War

Why was there a crisis over Cuba in the 1960s and how did it affect the US–Soviet relations?

- US reaction to the Cuban revolution
- Khrushchev’s aims in Cuba
- The crisis and its resolution
- Consequences of the conflict, e.g. hotline, Test Ban Treaty

How did the arms race affect US–Soviet relations?

- The development of the nuclear arms race
- The impact of the arms race on US–Soviet relations
- The successes and failures of attempts to control nuclear weapons, e.g. NPT, SALT and START

Why did the Cold War come to an end in 1989?

- Problems facing the USSR: economic and political stagnation, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe
- The impact of Reagan and Gorbachev
- The collapse of the Soviet system

Theme 2: The spread of communism in East and Southeast Asia, 1945–91

Key questions

What was the impact of the end of the Second World War on this region?

Why was there war in Korea and what were its consequences?

Why did the US intervene in Vietnam and what were the consequences?

How did the Cold War affect Sino–US relations?

Content

- Attempts to re-establish colonial control (British, Dutch and French)
 - Growth of nationalist movements
 - The establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)
 - Changing Sino–Soviet relations
-
- Division of Korea and subsequent tensions
 - US reaction to the invasion of South Korea
 - International involvement, e.g. UN, PRC
 - Growing US presence in the Eastern Pacific including the formation of SEATO
-
- Reasons for growing US involvement in Vietnam
 - Importance of support from PRC and USSR for North Vietnam
 - Reasons for US withdrawal, e.g. military failings, heavy losses, public opinion
 - Unification of Vietnam (1975) and its implications
-
- Ideological divides
 - Issues over Taiwan
 - Impact of Korean and Vietnam Wars
 - Improvement of relations in the 1970s and 1980s including ‘ping pong diplomacy’

Theme 3: Decolonisation, the Cold War and the UN in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–92**Key questions**

How did African nations gain their independence from the colonial powers?

What problems faced the newly independent nations?

In what ways were African countries affected by Cold War tensions?

How effective was UN peacekeeping in Africa?

Content

- The rise of nationalist movements
- The attitude of the colonial powers
- The importance of leadership (Nkrumah, Azikiwe, Senghor, Kenyatta) and mass support
- Establishing governments, one-party / multi-party states
- Economic challenges, agriculture, mineral resources, dependence on ex-colonial trading partners
- Social challenges, urban/rural divide, education
- Superpower involvement in disputes (Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique)
- Chinese influence: support for nationalist movements in southern Africa
- Non-alignment and Pan-Africanism
- Nature and extent of UN involvement
- Reasons for, and impact of, UN involvement in the Congo
- Reasons for UN failure in Somalia

Theme 4: Conflict in the Middle East, 1948–91**Key questions**

How and why was the state of Israel created?

Content

- Long-term factors: Arab unity; strategic importance of the Middle East; foreign involvement; persecution of Jews
- Jewish resistance to the British mandate
- Reasons for, and effects of, the UN decision to partition Palestine
- Involvement of the USA

How did the Arab–Israeli conflict develop between 1948 and 1979?

- Challenges to the state of Israel between 1948 and 1973: Arab–Israeli War (1948–49), Suez Crisis (1956); Six-Day War (1967); Yom Kippur War (1973)
- The role of key individuals including Nasser, Ben Gurion, Sadat, Meir
- Consequences of the wars for Arabs and Israelis
- Reasons for the growth of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the changing role of Arafat
- Attempts at reconciliation and peace agreements

What impact did the Cold War have on the conflict in the Middle East?

- Reasons for superpower involvement including oil
- American policies and their impact
- Soviet policies and their impact

What additional factors led to the de-stabilisation of the Middle East between 1975 and 1991?

- The Iranian Revolution (1979): causes and outcomes for Iran and the region
- Iran–Iraq War (1980–88): causes and outcomes for the region
- Gulf War (1990–91): causes and immediate results for the region

4 Details of the assessment

Paper 1 Document question

Written paper, 1 hour 15 minutes, 40 marks

Candidates will complete one document question on one of these options:

- European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921
- American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941
- International option: International history, 1870–1945

The topics within these options will rotate year-on-year. Please refer to the instructions on pages 26–27 to check which topics are assessed in each year.

There will be two parts to each question.

Part (a) Candidates will be expected to consider two sources on one aspect of the material.

Part (b) Candidates will be expected to use all the sources and their knowledge of the period to address how far the sources support a given statement.

Candidates must answer both parts of the question they choose.

Sources will contain a maximum of 600 words and there will be at least three sources on a specific issue.

Evidence will contain material from a range of documentary sources.

Paper 2 Outline study

Written paper, 1 hour 45 minutes, 60 marks

Candidates will select two questions from one of these options:

- European option: Modern Europe, 1750–1921
- American option: The history of the USA, 1820–1941
- International option: International history, 1870–1945

The topics within these options will rotate year-on-year. Please refer to the instructions on pages 26–27 to check which topics are assessed in each year.

There will be two parts to each question.

Part (a) requires a causal explanation: consideration of the significance of factors and connections between causes.

Part (b) requires consideration of significance and weighing the relative importance of factors.

Candidates must answer both parts of the question they choose.

Paper 3 Interpretations question

Written paper, 1 hour 15 minutes, 40 marks

Candidates will select one question from one of these options:

- Topic 1: The origins of the First World War
- Topic 2: The Holocaust
- Topic 3: The origins and development of the Cold War

One extract of no more than 600 words in length from an historian's writing will be set on each of the topics. The author of the extract will not be identified, nor will candidates be asked to identify the author.

There will be a single question, asking candidates what they can learn from the extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it.

They will be expected to show knowledge and understanding of the events and developments included in the topic (Assessment Objective 1), but the purpose of the study will be for them to develop the ability to analyse and evaluate how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented (Assessment Objective 4).

While candidates will be expected to have an awareness of different interpretations, their study of the topic should not be simply historiographical. Rather, by considering different interpretations, candidates should develop an understanding of the nature of the discipline of History, and the ways in which History is produced.

In particular, through studying their chosen topic, candidates will need to consider **why historians produce different interpretations** of the same events, including:

- the fragmentary nature of historical evidence
- the selection and interpretation of evidence
- the ways that the passage of time can change the focus of historians' views, with the emergence of new evidence or new interpretations of other historians
- the ways that historians are influenced by the time and place in which they work.

They will also need to develop an awareness of **the different approaches historians adopt** to their work, including:

- how different historians ask different questions about their field of study
- how historians' approaches are influenced by their own ideology and beliefs (e.g. by focusing on issues of class, gender, the role of structures)
- the inter-relationship between historians' interpretations and approaches.

In the context of this question paper, the meaning of **interpretation** is what the historian says in the extract, the nature of the claims made and the conclusions drawn. It is not what the extract says: it is what can be inferred from the extract.

The **approach** is what the historian brings to their study of the topic, what they are interested in, the questions they ask and the methods they use.

Interpretation and approach are closely interrelated. No distinction between interpretation and approach is required, as the interpretation will emerge from the approach. Candidates are not required to distinguish between the two.

Paper 4 Depth study

Written paper, 1 hour 45 minutes, 60 marks

Candidates will select two questions on their chosen depth study:

- European option, Depth study 1: European history in the interwar years, 1919–41
- American option, Depth study 2: The USA, 1944–92
- International option, Depth study 3: International history, 1945–92

Command words

Command words and their meanings help candidates know what is expected from them in the exams. The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
Assess	make an informed judgement
Compare	identify/comment on similarities and/or differences
Contrast	identify/comment on differences
Discuss	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
Evaluate	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount, or value of something
Explain	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things clear / say why and/or how and support with relevant evidence

Phrases such as 'How far do you agree ...?' and 'To what extent ...?' may also be seen in the assessment for this syllabus.

5 What else you need to know

This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Before you start

Previous study

We recommend that learners starting this course should have completed a course in History equivalent to Cambridge IGCSE™ or Cambridge O Level.

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge International AS & A Level syllabuses to require about 180 guided learning hours for each Cambridge International AS Level and about 360 guided learning hours for a Cambridge International A Level. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to each school and the learners' previous experience of the subject.

Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to an administrative zone. Each zone has a specific timetable. Find your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/adminzone

You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables

You can enter candidates in the June and November exam series.

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus. For more information, please refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Group awards: Cambridge AICE

Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge International AS & A Level. It encourages schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass exams in a range of different subjects.

Candidates can use up to two History credits towards their Cambridge AICE Diploma. They can achieve the two credits by taking:

- the full A Level
- two AS Levels on different historical topics (European, American or International History) over two or more series within a 25-month period. For example, candidates could answer questions from the European section of both papers in the June series, and then answer questions from the American section of both papers in the November series.

For candidates taking two History AS Levels, the following rules apply:

- Each topic (European, American or International History) can only contribute one credit towards the Cambridge AICE Diploma. For example, if a candidate answers questions from the European section of a paper in more than one series, only one credit will count.
- If a candidate achieves a 'mixed' AS Level by answering questions on one topic in the first paper and questions on a different topic in the second paper, this AS Level only counts as one credit towards the Cambridge AICE Diploma. It cannot be combined with another AS Level in History from another series to make up two credits.

Teachers should explain these rules to candidates taking the Cambridge AICE Diploma, as candidates must select the questions they answer carefully to meet these requirements.

Learn more about Cambridge AICE at www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice

Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has access to this guide.

Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to one administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable.

Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Retakes and carrying forward marks

Candidates can retake Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level as many times as they want to. Information on retake entries is at www.cambridgeinternational.org/retakes

Candidates can carry forward the result of their Cambridge International AS Level assessment from one series to complete the Cambridge International A Level in a following series. The rules, time limits and regulations for carry-forward entries for staged assessment can be found in the *Cambridge Handbook* for the relevant year of assessment at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

To confirm what entry options are available for this syllabus, refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries* for the relevant series.

Language

This syllabus and the related assessment materials are available in English only.

Accessibility and equality

Syllabus and assessment design

At Cambridge International, we work to avoid direct or indirect discrimination in our syllabuses and assessment materials. We aim to maximise inclusivity for candidates of all national, cultural or social backgrounds and candidates with protected characteristics, which include special educational needs and disability, religion and belief, and characteristics related to gender and identity. We also aim to make our materials as accessible as possible by using accessible language and applying accessible design principles. This gives all candidates the fairest possible opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and helps to minimise the requirement to make reasonable adjustments during the assessment process.

Access arrangements

Access arrangements (including modified papers) are the principal way in which Cambridge International complies with our duty, as guided by the UK Equality Act (2010), to make 'reasonable adjustments' for candidates with special educational needs (SEN), disability, illness or injury. Where a candidate would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate with no SEN, disability, illness or injury, we may be able to agree pre-examination access arrangements. These arrangements help a candidate by minimising accessibility barriers and maximising their opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in an assessment.

Important:

Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate's barrier to assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working at school. This is explained in the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

- For Cambridge International to approve an access arrangement, we will need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment, involves reasonable cost and timeframe and does not affect the security and integrity of the assessment.
- Availability of access arrangements should be checked by centres at the start of the course. Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Please contact us at the start of the course to find out if we are able to approve an arrangement that is not included in the list of standard access arrangements.
- Candidates who cannot access parts of the assessment may be able to receive an award based on the parts they have completed.

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades a, b, c, d or e indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International AS Level. 'a' is the highest and 'e' is the lowest grade.

Grades A*, A, B, C, D or E indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International A Level. A* is the highest and E is the lowest grade.

'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for the lowest grade (E or e). 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (PENDING)
- X (NO RESULT).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

If a candidate takes a Cambridge International A Level and fails to achieve grade E or higher, a Cambridge International AS Level grade will be awarded if both of the following apply:

- the components taken for the Cambridge International A Level by the candidate in that series included all the components making up a Cambridge International AS Level
- the candidate's performance on the AS Level components was sufficient to merit the award of a Cambridge International AS Level grade.

On the statement of results and certificates, Cambridge International AS & A Levels are shown as General Certificates of Education, GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (GCE AS Level) and GCE Advanced Level (GCE A Level).

School feedback: 'Cambridge International A Levels are the 'gold standard' qualification. They are based on rigorous, academic syllabuses that are accessible to students from a wide range of abilities yet have the capacity to stretch our most able.'

Feedback from: Director of Studies, Auckland Grammar School, New Zealand

How students, teachers and higher education can use the grades

Cambridge International A Level

Assessment at Cambridge International A Level has two purposes:

- 1 to measure learning and achievement
The assessment confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.
- 2 to show likely future success
The outcomes help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful.
The outcomes help students choose the most suitable course or career

Cambridge International AS Level

Assessment at Cambridge International AS Level has two purposes:

- 1 to measure learning and achievement
The assessment confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.
- 2 to show likely future success
The outcomes help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful.
The outcomes help students choose the most suitable course or career
The outcomes help decide whether students part way through a Cambridge International A Level course are making enough progress to continue
The outcomes guide teaching and learning in the next stages of the Cambridge International A Level course.

Changes to this syllabus for 2026 and 2027

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2023.

You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme. We review our syllabuses regularly to make sure they continue to meet the needs of our schools. In updating this syllabus, we have made it easier for teachers and students to understand, keeping the familiar features that teachers and schools value.

Changes to availability

- This syllabus is no longer available for exams in the March series.
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Significant changes to the syllabus are indicated by black vertical lines either side of the text.



Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2021 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

School feedback: 'While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.'

Feedback from: Zhai Xiaoning, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We are always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we are not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at **info@cambridgeinternational.org** with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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