# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2024 Modern History Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

This subject assessment advice, based on the 2024 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. It provides information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

The Subject Renewal program has introduced changes for many subjects in 2025; these changes are detailed in the change log at the front of each subject outline. When reviewing the 2024 subject assessment advice, it is important to consider any updates to this subject to ensure the feedback in this document remains accurate.

# School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation process and the online process by:

* uploading a learning and assessment plan and a copy of each task sheet
* including marked and annotated rubrics, including comments that detail how performance standard has been assessed for each task
* ensuring the uploaded tasks are legible and in an acceptable format
* ensuring all uploaded tasks are clearly identifiable with the student’s SACE number
* providing detailed reasoning for any special provisions and/or adjustments given for individual students
* ensuring that the grades indicated on the Performance Standards Record (PSR) match the grades given on included rubrics
* ensuring any variations of materials are clearly identified
* removing a task for the entire class rather than just for individual students (if choosing to access subject adjustments).

Assessment Type 1: Historical Skills

Task design continues to be crucial for enabling students to achieve at the higher level of the performance standards, particularly in application and evaluation criteria, by encouraging critical analysis and exploration of historical perspectives. Teachers should focus on the specific features of the analysis criteria, which support studies of Modern Nations and The world since 1945. Effective tasks also provide opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond classroom content. A significant number of schools have applied the permitted subject adjustments, with students providing evidence of their learning through four historical skills assessments, with two assessments from Modern Nations and two assessments from The world since 1945. More schools are studying Topic 9: National self-determination in Southeast Asia and Topic 12: The United Nations and the establishment of a global perspective, which is pleasing. Moderators reported that there had been evident consideration given to assessment design to acknowledge the impact of artificial intelligence engines, which saw the use of more tasks completed under test conditions. It is critical, though, that students still be given the opportunity to demonstrate the application and evaluation performance standards, by showing evidence of historical inquiry and the use of referencing and a bibliography throughout Assessment Type 1.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* encouraging students to focus on developing and demonstrating three to four specific features in each task. These tasks tended to allow students to show evidence at a more sustained level against the higher bands of the performance standards
* designing tasks with clear alignment to learning objectives and assessment criteria, often explicitly referencing this in the task instructions
* offering diverse task types to allow students to demonstrate their historical skills, such as creating source analysis broadsheets, obituaries, advocacy speeches, magazine articles, and podcasts
* including creative activities like newspaper emphatic reports, assessing the accuracy of historical films, conducting live interviews, empathetic letter writing, and exploring historiographical approaches to different periods
* encouraging the application of critical thinking through innovative formats, such as source trails and magazine articles, with supporting visuals
* designing tasks that demonstrate evidence of learning against the analysis performance standards by specifically designing these to address A1 or A2 – through a prompt that includes either the language of the performance standard or includes a time period that allows for short-term (up to 5 years) or long-term (up to 10 years) impact to be discussed.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated understanding of diverse perspectives through empathetic writing tasks, requiring students to write from the viewpoint of one or two individuals, supported by brief biographical details. These tasks elicited strong responses and fostered personal connections
* included at least one source analysis task modelled on end-of-year exam formats. Students excelled in creating their own source analysis tasks, incorporating diverse source types such as film snippets, speeches, and letters. Many tasks focused on themes from Modern Nations or The world since 1945
* featured engaging and increasingly sophisticated tasks, including the study of historical schools of thought and comparisons of specific historians
* required extended responses addressing three or more arguments, including at least one clear counterargument
* made effective use of the application of historical conventions, such as well-structured paragraphs with topic sentences, thorough evidence synthesis, and clear conclusions
* used the TEAL/TEEL/PEEL structures to communicate their ideas in paragraphs
* encouraged students to develop arguments, particularly focusing on the motives of individuals and groups
* demonstrated interconnection between people, ideas, and events
* utilised strong structure in argument, providing evidence to support their position with analysis and evaluation, and signposting back to the original thesis or main point of argument
* explored ideas, people, and events through a relevant social, political, or economic lens
* directly addressed key concepts by defining them; linking them to ideas, people, and events; and outlining their exploration in the introduction
* supported arguments with sources, quotes, and statistics, presenting a thesis and using evidence to substantiate their position
* incorporated rigorous and accurate scholarship in research
* referenced throughout their assessment and included a reference list
* made valid arguments using direct evidence in a variety of ways to support the argument
* used a variety of sources; used books, websites, and academic journals and incorporated primary sources where possible
* made discerning comments about the nature of sources
* flagged terms from the performance standards (e.g. internal, external, short-term, long-term, etc.) into responses
* incorporated a turn of argument or alternative perspectives to show the contestable nature of history
* were specific when discussing individuals and groups — ensuring a range of examples used to add to depth to discussions
* analysed both short-term and long-term impacts
* showed proficiency in applying subject-specific language when addressing concepts such as source origin, nature, bias, perspective, and reliability
* acknowledged and explored alternative viewpoints (often seen in empathetic writing tasks where students write from two or three different perspectives)
* demonstrated evidence of learning against the analysis performance standards by completing tasks that were specifically designed to address these criteria – through a prompt that included either the language of the performance standard or included a time period that allowed for short-term (up to 5 years) or long term (up to 10 years) impact to be discussed
* used consistent and accurate referencing and bibliographical conventions
* were able to use evidence effectively to examine and interpret the writing of historians with different points of view about its causes
* were characterised by the clear synthesis of relevant evidence supporting their conclusions.

The less successful responses commonly:

* Understanding and Exploration – simply discussed or recounted events
* Application and Evaluation – made judgments and statements or used statistics and quotes without citing any sources and therefore did not demonstrate where and how information was collected, making it harder to confirm all application and evaluation performance standards
* Analysis – demonstrated these performance standards through implied analysis rather than explicitly addressing the performance standards
* provided limited dates to show evidence of learning against UE2 or overlooked it completely, thus impacting context
* limited analysis and conclusions where required – only recounted or made generalised statements
* in some tasks, relied too heavily on a word count of facts – this was evident in some empathy tasks and newspaper accounts
* provided a recount when the task required an argument in order to meet the performance standards assessed
* some tasks, such as open-ended research and report style tasks, provided limited reflection and evaluation. This was evident in tasks that did not provide students with the opportunity to make connections between events, developments, factors, or individuals
* provided superficial analysis or were largely narrative or 'report' style in nature
* made generic statements
* referred to 'The Nazis' without a specific focus on a particular group within the Nazis or individuals
* used only one or two sources throughout a piece
* partially referenced throughout or did not include a bibliography
* did not ensure that referencing was consistent throughout the sample
* wrote in absolutes rather than suggesting any alternative perspective
* included tasks that assessed five or six specific features, which led to uneven and superficial evidence against some performance standards
* the speed of recording multimodal presentations was clearly sped up in some instances.

Assessment Type 2: Historical Study

Students undertake an individual historical study based on an aspect of the world since 1750. Students inquire into, explore, and research a historical idea, event, person, or group in depth. They interpret and synthesise evidence to support their argument and draw conclusions. The overall standard of submitted historical studies has remained consistent with previous years, with a range of engaging topics focused on, such as national movements in the Balkans, social movements, the Middle East, and decolonisation. In 2024, more teachers opted to encourage students to present their evidence of learning in various ways, including newspaper articles, inquiry report style, and multimodal presentations for the historical study, further diversifying the formats used.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* guiding students in crafting effective questions or thesis and ensuring a strong historical focus. A clear, specific question with a defined focus (time frame, location, ideas, and place) is critical for success
* encouraging the use of varied, high-quality sources and guiding students in analysing their reliability and considering the credibility of sources
* promoting rigorous academic practices, including proper referencing and focusing on historiographical methods
* providing multimodal and other report-style options
* ensuring multimodal or report-style formats incorporate sustained historical arguments and clear connections between evidence and conclusions
* having students focus on either A1 or A2 in this assessment piece, rather than both
* ensuring students adhere to word count or time allocated.

The more successful responses commonly:

* Application and Evaluation – addressed these performance standards by incorporating a variety of perspectives and evidence into their arguments
* had an inquiry question that allowed students to present an argument from two sides
* covered four or more points (two or more paragraphs arguing for the proposition, followed by at least one counterargument) in order to demonstrate a wider understanding
* argued proposition succinctly with evidence and well-developed topic sentences and conclusions; included evidence of A1 or A2 throughout conclusions
* provided scope in the propositions for argument and/or conclusion or alternative perspectives to show the contestable nature of history
* included historians’ perspectives within arguments and referenced accurately
* applied primary and secondary sources critically, demonstrating a deep understanding of perspectives, reliability, and limitations. Sources such as speeches, diaries, artwork, and scholarly works were used to substantiate arguments
* engaged with historiography, showing sophisticated analysis of historians' viewpoints
* used a variety of sources; used books, websites, and incorporated primary sources where possible
* flagged terms from the performance standards (e.g. internal, external, short-term, long-term, etc.) into responses
* used a consistent form of referencing throughout their assessment and included a bibliography
* used specific examples, explanations, and terminology when discussing individuals and groups
* directly referred to political, social, economic, and cultural factors
* planned paragraphs thoroughly to synthesise evidence: included topic sentences, explained and discussed highly relevant evidence, and summed up what the evidence showed
* constructed a very coherent argument in their study through their focus on the question, outlining of their argument in the introduction, and through the use of connecting words and phrases at the beginning or end of paragraphs
* used TEAL/TEEL/PEE structures to communicate their ideas in paragraphs
* multimodal presentations or report-style formats incorporated references and demonstrated sustained argumentation throughout.

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* investigated a conspiracy theory or popular perspective of a major historical figure, meaning that there was less scope to develop an argument
* chose topics that were too expansive, contemporary, or better suited for other disciplines and often lacked historical depth and relevance – e.g. conspiracies, modern crimes, and legal or philosophy type topics
* had questions that were either self-evident, too vague or broad, or were not really questions, merely topic headings. These responses tended to be narrative in style and lacked discernment
* relied heavily on non-academic sources, including Britannica, history.com, wiki, or similar
* retold events without synthesizing evidence, or lacked counterarguments
* essays without clear topic sentences, transitions, or logical organisation often failed to present coherent arguments
* did not make connections between arguments presented in report style or newspaper tasks
* produced narrative accounts rather than analytical studies, missing the opportunity to develop a thesis
* overused topics and under-researched questions lacked originality and depth
* included speculation, opinion, sweeping statements, and non-historical arguments
* chose topics that were under-sourced
* often did not use the word count and/or time limit effectively, which impacted their ability to meet each performance standard adequately
* did not respond to the question or proposition
* provided a poor question or proposition – e.g. How did? Why did?
* only partially referenced throughout or did not include a bibliography
* wrote in absolutes, rather than suggesting any alternative perspectives
* wrote outside the time period – either too recent, for example, from 2015 onwards, or before 1750
* incorporated images without a reference or referred to within the piece
* had questions that were either self-evident, too vague or broad, or were not really questions, merely topic headings. These responses tended to be narrative in style and lacked discernment.

# External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Once again, there was a noticeable improvement in the average of student results. The quality of high-end responses to Question 1 indicates that those students’ ability to develop and execute a cohesive and relevant argument continues to improve. The majority of students demonstrated at least a considered level of understanding, exploration, and analysis of their chosen topic. The trend from previous years of more students attempting to develop an argumentative response continued.

While the overall quality of the essay responses improved, the gap between top end and bottom end essay responses was wider. An observation from markers was that they saw more pre-prepared responses that, while they fit within the selected focus area in most cases, they did not adequately address the proposition to which they were responding; hence, students reverted to providing a completely unconnected response. Students are encouraged to attempt to address the proposition in order to showcase their ability to analyse, apply, and evaluate relevant information, no matter how much information they include.

Another prevalent observation highlighted an imbalanced understanding of all three focus areas within the topic. This was particularly noticeable in responses to the three most popular questions, all in the Germany topic. Teachers are reminded that they should give equal weight to all the dot points within each focus area under the subject outline. The examination questions create opportunities for students to showcase the breadth and depth of their learning.

Overall, students engaged strongly with the Trail of Tears sources as demonstrated by their responses in Part B. Many students still have difficulty with the skill of drawing a conclusion from a source. Once again, responses to Question (f) continued to show better clarity and structure.

Markers’ overall observations were that:

* successful students incorporated key terms from the question or proposition into their responses in Parts A and B
* only a very small proportion of essays were in the high-grade band
* a significant number of students seemed to struggle in deconstructing the proposition
* students overall were more successful in their responses in Part B of the exam than they were in Part A.

Part A

Questions 7 and 8 continue to be by far the most popular questions.

The more successful responses commonly:

* explicitly integrated key words and terms from the proposition throughout their responses
* provided breadth of exploration in their argument and counterargument
* discussed short- and long-term features and factors
* considered social, political, and/or economic factors where relevant
* considered internal and external forces related to the proposition where appropriate
* provided an introduction that provided context, clearly stated their position with reasons, and outlined a counterargument with reasons
* connected factors and forces to strengthen their argument and counterargument
* demonstrated an understanding of historical concepts (e.g. cause and effect, continuity and change, significance, evidence)
* effectively used topic sentences to signpost the aspect of argument being developed in each paragraph
* contained a comprehensive conclusion that summarised the key points made in the preceding paragraphs
* presented a clear counterargument, adding depth and balance to their argument
* applied concise, relevant, and accurate evidence to illustrate the points being made
* made detailed, direct, and nuanced connections and judgements about ideas, events, and/or people and their impacts in relation to the proposition.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not address the complete proposition or any part of the proposition
* lacked any counterargument
* included information from outside the time frame of proposition or focus area
* contained unsupported generalisations
* began with a long, rambling introduction.

Part B

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* were well-structured
* provided appropriate detail
* contained relevant evidence from sources when required.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided responses without reference to any evidence from the source
* stated that sources are limited without reasoning
* did not address the nature of sources clearly
* did not explain how the nature and origin of the sources were a strength or limitation.

Essays

Question 1

There were few responses to this question.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* considered more than one example of hardship
* provided examples of government responses to those experiencing hardship.

The less successful responses commonly:

* lacked detail about government support and non-government support available
* failed to differentiate between groups needing government support
* lacked a counterargument.

Question 2

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 3

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 4

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 5

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* considered the lack of trust in Hoover based on his responses to the onset of the Great Depression
* discussed responses by different groups (e.g. farmers, tradespeople, elderly) to Roosevelt’s actions.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided a general description without responding to the proposition
* struggled to provide detailed examples of decisions or actions that influenced public trust in the Federal Government.

Question 6

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* showed a clear understanding of the differences between isolationism and interventionism
* demonstrated a variety of ways that America was involved in the Second World War (e.g. diplomatic efforts, military capacity on multiple fronts, economic adaptability, technological developments)
* included examples of ‘involvement’ (e.g. Lend-Lease agreement, use of atomic bombs)
* explained how their level of involvement and types of involvement changed throughout the war.

The less successful responses commonly:

* considered USA only as an economic superpower and failed to identify the role that the atomic bomb had in developing its political or military superpower status
* contained largely irrelevant information that bore little relation to the specifics of the question
* used information outside the scope of the question and its time period (e.g. post-war)
* contradicted statements made in the introduction and/or conclusion
* discussed events and development after the Second World War
* focused primarily on political efforts while neglecting military and economic factors.

Question 7

Was the most popular question but with a great range in the quality of the responses.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* provided detailed examples of art movements and concepts, including examples of specific artists (e.g. Brecht, Dix) and their work
* linked these developments with broader social changes (e.g. freedom of expression, women’s rights, freedoms)
* noted that these changes predominantly occurred in major urban centres
* connected economic changes with the changing nature of Weimar society as part of their counterargument
* acknowledged that these changes antagonised a significant proportion of the population (e.g. rural traditionalists, conservatives)
* articulated changes to culture (e.g. artistic movement, architecture, attitudes), then discussed how they reflected changes to the nature of society (e.g. financial struggles, changing attitudes to government and politics).

The less successful responses commonly:

* failed to clearly explain how the changing nature of society was reflected by cultural developments
* discussed how cultural developments caused social changes
* did not seem to clearly understand the differences between culture and the arts
* interchanged the terms ‘culture’ and ‘society’
* presented a narrative of the social, political, and economic changes in Weimar Germany (e.g. hyperinflation, Treaty of Versailles, impacts of the Great Depression)
* outlined or discussed the social and political issues of the period
* provided a counterargument that lacked structure and clarity
* failed to identify or discuss cultural changes
* wrote an introduction and conclusion that did not align with their argument or each other
* wrote an introduction that contained information and examples that should be included in body paragraphs.

Question 8

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* clearly identified groups and individuals who constituted the ‘majority’ and how they actively supported the Nazi State (e.g. remained part of the judiciary, volunteered for the armed forces, joined organisations such as Hitler Youth, reported ‘enemies’ of the Nazi State)
* noted examples of passive support (e.g. conforming to laws, accepting information provided by the media, Faith and Beauty Movement, Mother’s Cross, acceptance of loans)
* identified individuals and groups who chose to resist or not support the Nazi State.

The less successful responses commonly:

* made overly generalised statements without supporting explanation or examples
* often lacked details
* focused on the methods used by Hitler to consolidate and maintain control (e.g. fear, propaganda)
* claimed that resistance was prevalent without providing evidence
* discussed events and features within Germany before 1933
* explained the rise of the Nazi Party
* provided examples of support in the introduction.

Question 9

Very few responses successfully addressed this question.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* considered a range of diverse factors (e.g. the shifting roles of women in the workforce and society, the changing face of manufacturing industries, rationing, and the nation changing to a war footing)
* addressed the basic features and systems within Germany that did or didn’t change during the war years
* drew connections between those changes and Germany’s fortunes during the war.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not clarify or seem to understand the term ‘de-Nazification’
* seemed not to understand the process of de-Nazification.

Question 10

There were few responses to this question. They were limited in their success.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* showed an understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship between the two key terms.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not clarify their understanding of economic liberalisation
* focused on social liberalisation.

Question 11

There were few responses to this question. They were limited in their success.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* provided examples of stagnation.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not provide a clear understanding of stagnation
* failed to provide a clear argument.

Question 12

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 13

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 14

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 15

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 16

There were few responses to this question. They were generally well answered.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* provided specific evidence of social equality and inequality during the Great Leap Forward.

Question 17

There were few responses to this question.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* outlined positive impacts of the Cultural Revolution on women
* explained how most benefits were superficial and temporary.

The less successful responses commonly:

* discussed the impacts on women under Mao.

Question 18

There were insufficient responses to this question to provide meaningful feedback.

Sources Analysis

Question a)

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* were able to identify one way that the Cherokee people were devastated
* provided an answer in one or two sentences.

The less successful responses commonly:

* unnecessarily provided more than one way that the Cherokee people were devastated.

Question b)

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* provided two valid reasons concisely.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not provide evidence as instructed in the question
* referred to the role of the British in the removal process, perhaps based on misinterpretation from the line ’they got their title from the British’.

Question c)

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* provided a valid conclusion (e.g. the Cherokee people received widespread and diverse support) with supporting evidence from the source.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not provide evidence as instructed in the question
* failed to provide a conclusion
* summarised aspects of the source.

Question d)

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* qualified the extent to which one source supported the other by using appropriate terms (e.g. greatly, considerably, slightly)
* demonstrated at least one point of similarity and one point of difference
* justified assertions with evidence
* provided more points of similarity when claiming a strong level of extent (e.g. largely)
* provided more points of difference when claiming a low level of extent (e.g. slightly)
* signposted their answers by using key words.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not state the extent to which the information in Source 4 supported the information in Source 5
* provided a meaningless qualifier (e.g. ‘some’, ‘an’, ‘certain’)
* only provided similarities or differences
* provided a poorly structured response which made it difficult for markers to clearly identify the answers
* the extent stated was contradicted by the explanation provided
* summarised information in Source ?5 without connecting it to information in Source 4.

Question e)

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* clearly identified the origin and nature of each source
* addressed the strengths and limitations of the sources’ nature and origin rather than their content
* provided examples from the content to support their statements
* provided clear responses by using separate paragraphs, each with a clear focus (e.g. strengths of each source, strengths, and limitations of one source).

The less successful responses commonly:

* discussed similarities and differences between the sources
* assessed the strengths and limitations of each source based on their content rather than their nature and origin
* described strengths and weaknesses of a source based on its nature and origin without providing supporting examples from each source
* unnecessarily argued that one source was better than the other
* placed too much emphasis on Source 6 being an extract rather than a speech
* claimed that the visual nature of Source 5 was a strength without substantiating the assertion
* responses were too brief.

Question f)

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* understood that the Treaty of New Echota was an example of willing participation in removal
* clearly identified each source by number or nature (e.g. speech, article, painting)
* referred to all sources
* produced well-structured paragraphs with topic sentence (e.g. ’The majority of sources support the proposition’, ’However, parts of Source 2 challenge the proposition.’)
* provided succinct and relevant evidence from the sources
* took time to plan their response to ensure clarity and both an argument and counterargument.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided an extended single paragraph rather than separate distinct paragraphs
* listed the sources in order with no clear construction of an argument
* provided an overview of the content of a source with no specific evidence and no clear connection to the proposition
* failed to name or number the sources to which they were referring
* showed responses that were too brief
* provided a brief counterargument or no counterargument at all.