# 2018 Modern History Subject Assessment Advice

## Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s 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. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

# School Assessment

## Assessment Type 1: Historical Skills

It was pleasing to see that more teachers and students made the effort to access the 2018 Subject Assessment Advice, and where appropriate take measures to amend and improve practises based on explicit feedback provided. Teachers should recognise that task design and the types of task being set are critical in providing students with opportunities to attain the highest levels of achievement against each performance standard. There were a number of examples of Folios where teachers clearly provided opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the content being taught in class.

The more successful responses commonly

* allowed students to demonstrate achievement against a limited number of select performance standards in each task
* featured insightful reflection on why people reacted to different events and developments in the way they did, and the impact they had on groups and individuals
* referred to a variety of carefully chosen academic sources
* included a variety of assessment types including research essays, multimodal tasks, sources analysis, and empathy tasks
* allowed students to display critical analysis, develop their own hypothesis and structure critical responses
* demonstrated sophisticated engagement with different historical schools of thought
* included tasks requiring students to compare and contrast specific historians
* included tasks that demonstrated the application of historical conventions
* prompted students to develop reasoned historical arguments which especially focused on the motives of individuals and groups
* encouraged students to identify their own historical topic in relation to the content studied in class, construct their own sources analysis broadsheet and provide answers
* explored how events and ideas shaped nations and the resulting short and long-term impacts.

The less successful responses commonly

* were assessed against too many performance standards in each task resulting in students only providing superficial evidence against the performance standards
* were simplistic resulting in a recount or very basic analysis
* lacked detail and/or analysis (e.g. photo stories that were comprised of images and headings)
* did not analyse the short and long-term impacts of interactions and relationships in the modern world
* lacked complexity and did not provide sufficient scope for achieving at the higher band grades
* were open-ended research and report style tasks which did not provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate evidence of learning against the analysis criteria
* provided limited evidence of research having been undertaken in any of the folio tasks
* were essays and sources analysis completed under test conditions
* lacked application of historical conventions in essays and sources analysis tasks.

### General Comments

There was an over-reliance on Sources Analysis from past SACE examinations that did not link to either area of focus, *Modern Nations* or *The World Since 1945*.

Essay questions which invited a narrative response limited opportunities for students to demonstrate learning at the highest levels of the performance standards. Essay questions which invite the student to explain ‘why’ something has occurred provides more scope for an in-depth and perceptive argument, encourages engagement with sources and evidence, and avoids students providing knowledge in a list fashion.

Assessment Type 2: Historical Study

The formulation and construction of the question is the most critical factor that influences success in this assessment type. Teachers are encouraged to work closely and guide students in the initial stages of this assessment type to help in the formulation of an effective question/hypothesis to form the focus of the historical study. The most effective questions/hypotheses have a very clear specific focus, including time frame and place. The most effective responses were those that used the correct conventions of history essay writing, with clearly defined and relevant arguments and counter-arguments. Students often saw the historical study as an opportunity to construct an independent academic historical inquiry by focusing on an area of particular interest.

The more successful responses commonly:

* evaluated the differing views and perspectives of historians and/or contemporaries
* focused on a historical topic that had a clearly defined and specific scope, including time frame and place
* focused on a question that invited reasoned historical argument; this approach allowed students the opportunity to achieve at the higher grade bands
* demonstrated the use of a variety of primary and secondary sources, including speeches, diaries, film, literature, artwork, propaganda and eyewitness accounts.
* demonstrated a critical understanding of evidence
* drew conclusions and provided evidence to justify them
* compared and contrasted the reliability and limitations of sources
* adopted the structural conventions of history essay writing
* established clearly defined and relevant arguments and offered a clear counter argument
* engaged with and integrated a variety of primary and secondary sources as supporting evidence
* demonstrated a high level of academic research being undertaken evidenced by a sophisticated understanding of and engagement with historiography
* demonstrated careful consideration of the types of sources used including use of academic journals and scholarly works.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were selected from time frames outside “the modern world”
* focused on contemporary issues without establishing sufficient connections with the historical background/nature
* were narrative in nature
* were in response to questions that lead to students simply retelling how events and developments unfolded
* did not effectively conclude or resolve the question
* drew conclusions but provided no evidence to substantiate their findings
* simply presented information without synthesising ideas
* relied on internet sources and did not evaluate their reliability or validity
* were poorly structured and lacked clear topic and closing sentences
* did not actively engage with sources
* lacked a reasoned historical argument including a counter argument.

Assessment Type 3: Examination

The 2018 examination offered students a broad range of questions that provided them with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the modern nation they had studied during the year. Section 2 presented students with a range of sources from Sir Douglas Mawson’s Antarctic Expedition that enabled them to demonstrate their skills in analysis, evaluation, interpretation and communication.

This year’s cohort of students demonstrated a wide range of skills and levels of understanding both of the content and historical concepts (e.g. cause and effect, sources and evidence, significance). However, when writing an essay, a significant proportion of students seemed to lack the skill of constructing and sustaining a coherent argument that addressed the question.

Markers made general observations that:

* while all topics in the first section of the new curriculum were studied in at least one school, Germany was the overwhelming preference
* a few students answered more than one question
* *Question 8* was the most popular, however most responses tended to be a recount or were obviously a prepared response that did not address the proposition
* responses to *Questions a* to *e* in *Section 2* were generally clear and accurate
* there were considerable variations in the standard of responses to *Question f* in *Section 2*
* many students have a simplistic view that primary sources are more useful and reliable for historians than secondary sources
* student judgements on the usefulness of sources were often based on primary sources being contemporary while secondary sources are inferior because the author was not present or alive at the time of the event - students lacked an understanding of the rigorous approach adopted by historians in developing secondary sources
* evaluation of evidence is still heavily based on the real or presumed bias of the author, speaker or creator of the source.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a thorough understanding of the proposition and were able to develop a coherent, well-supported argument based on the extent to which they agreed with it
* clearly articulated what was meant by key words or terms in the question (e.g. ‘plight’, ‘escalated’, ‘counter-revolution’)
* addressed the premise of the question first before engaging in counter-arguments
* contained body paragraphs that started with topic sentences connected to the overall argument, then supported the point with relevant and concise examples and explanations
* expressed judgements and defended them
* were well-structured with a clear argument
* developed a clear counter argument that explored the other factors that had contributed to an outcome
* demonstrated skills in evaluating, interpreting and analysing historical materials
* used subject specific language and clearly understood topic-specific terms (trading partners, liberal experiment, popular appeal, liberalization) and phrases (transformed American society, shaped domestic policy)
* made detailed reference to topic-specific terms and phrases in the context of their argument
* demonstrated a high level of understanding of the role of ideas, people and events
* critically examined the relationships between ideas, people and events, and established how, together, they contributed to outcomes
* viewed people, events, issues and periods of time from a range of perspectives
* identified relevant evidence or examples and used them to support their argument
* identified the origin, usefulness and limitations of the historical evidence in Section 2
* evaluated the reliability and contestability of sources
* distinguished between different types of sources and identified features of them
* critically considered the uses and limitations of primary and secondary sources
* recognised that primary and secondary sources have their own unique features and complement each other, and that they are equally important to achieve a complete and clear understanding of historical events
* understood and separated unintentional and intentional bias
* analysed how bias affected the usefulness of the source
* recognised the internal and external factors that contributed to an event and explored the relationship between them
* provided analysis of how internal and external factors contributed to the progress and outcome of events
* not only had a clear understanding of short-term impacts of decisions and actions but also considered long-term impacts
* clearly distinguished between regional, national, and international interactions and relationships and how they influenced each other
* used relevant examples from sources to support their argument or justify the judgement that a source supported or opposed the proposition.

The less successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated limited understanding of historical concepts (sources and evidence, cause and effect, continuity and change, etc.)
* tended to be a recount of events
* did not address the proposition
* were too narrowly focused
* provided information that had no relevance to the proposition or made limited attempts to connect the information to the proposition
* lacked a counter argument
* lacked a clear understanding of key words and terms contained in the proposition (plight, counter-revolution, etc.)
* described events rather than explain their relevance to the question
* contained no counter-argument or only referred to it in their introduction and conclusion
* made broad generalisations about ‘the people’ without giving consideration to the circumstances of different groups (urban, rural, soldiers, intellectuals, women, etc.)
* presumed that intentional bias is present in sources
* demonstrated only a superficial understanding of the process of creating primary and secondary sources. This tended to distort their view of any bias contained in the sources
* adopted the view that primary sources are more useful and reliable than secondary sources.

### Specific comments about commonly answered questions

**Essay**

Question 2

Less successful responses

* listed some benefits though analysis was superficial
* answers were too brief and lacked factual support
* did not identify groups that benefitted or the social policies that were introduced.

Question 4

More successful responses

* showed how the New Deal brought about transformations such as increased federal government role in the economy and the end of laissez-faire but did not improve conditions for blacks or women
* considered American society more generally
* discussed political changes, economic impacts, ideological influences and racial discrimination
* discussed policies of Hoover compared to Roosevelt to show how and to what extent American society had changed
* showed that many people suffered and lost wealth and employment.

Less successful responses

* ignored or overlooked specific terms such as ‘fundamentally transformed’ or ‘society’ and so dealt with them very briefly and superficially, if at all
* did not explain what American society had transformed from during the years of the Great Depression
* claimed that New Deal Acts (e.g. Emergency Relief Act, Social Security Act) transformed American society without explaining their impacts on American society
* failed to identify specific socio-economic groups
* considered some policies put into place as counter-measures (particularly the Hoover Dam) as well as difficulties that people (particularly women and African Americans) had in finding employment but did not connect the facts with the proposition
* mentioned a revival of the Ku Klux Klan, anti-immigration and racism without stating whether or not it was part of a transformation
* considered the general impact of the Great Depression on the American economy
* did not consider less radical or short-term changes that were not transformative.

Question 5

More successful responses

* clearly identified decisions and actions (e.g. Cash and Carry, Lend-Lease, Atlantic Charter) taken by Roosevelt as either supporting or opposing the isolationist policy
* argued that the USA’s involvement in Latin America, particularly Haiti, was anti-isolationist prior to and during Roosevelt’s presidency
* recognised the role of Congress and the public in creating and supporting the isolationist policy
* stated that Roosevelt bent the policy while trying to maintain support for his New Deal measures
* identified that isolationism ended with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Less successful responses

* surveyed US foreign policy from 1918 in too much narrative, chronological detail rather than focus clearly on the general nature of the policy of isolation and detailed discussion of Roosevelt’s actions and why he took these
* used general knowledge rather than enough detailed examples of various policies
* focussed on America’s isolationist policy rather than Roosevelt’s actions and whether or not they undermined the policy
* argued that involvement in the Pacific and European conflicts was a back-down in the isolationist policies of the past
* did not clearly identify that there were two separate wars being fought at this time, and equated the war in Asia with the war in Europe
* made Roosevelt responsible for actions prior to his presidency (e.g. the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the Washington Naval Conference).

Question 6

More successful responses

* identified the role of nuclear weapons technology in creating a sense of fear within nations leading to the acceptance of the USA as a world superpower.
* recognised that a superpower possesses technological, economic, military, diplomatic and cultural strengths
* explained that production of weapons and other war materials also enabled the USA to become a superpower
* explained that the USA escaped war damage which enabled it to become a superpower
* considered the ability of the USA to supply weapons and funds to Britain and Russia who became reliant on the USA that contributed to it becoming a superpower
* showed examples of the USA being able to exert influence in many places simultaneously.

Less successful responses

* suggested that improved women’s rights and black rights enabled the USA to become a superpower
* claimed that by simply possessing atomic weapons the USA became a superpower
* focussed on events before the Second World War.

Question 7

More successful responses

* described or showed an understanding of ‘the liberal experiment’, the in-built flaws in the Constitution (e.g. the lack of democratic history, widespread opposition to the system, constitutional flaws such as Article 48 and proportional representation leading to a series of coalition governments)
* explained the mixed support for the new system from different groups
* included mixed public reaction to more liberal behaviour especially in conservative rural areas
* highlighted the positive aspects of the liberal experiment in Germany (e.g. the influence on culture and the Arts, painters, such as Otto Dix) as the Golden Years
* linked internal and external factors
* mentioned the lack of political unity that allowed excessive influence of extremist parties (e.g. Spartacists, Nazis and Communists)
* recognised that the Weimar Government’s ability to survive these events demonstrated political success rather than failure
* acknowledged successes and political stability of 1925-29
* claimed that the use of the Freikorps indicated political failure because the Weimar Government was not strong enough to defend itself
* discussed both the economic and psychological impact of the Treaty of Versailles
* considered the role of individuals in securing the republic, particularly Ebert and Stresemann
* identified the influence of the Dawes and Young Plans in providing economic security and linked this to political stability
* demonstrated a very high level of understanding of the political (both national and international) aspects, as well as the economic, social and cultural factors which affected the politics of this era and challenged its politicians.

Less successful responses

* highlighted mistakes made by the Weimar government (e.g. poor economic decisions) rather than flaws in the system
* described the problems Germany faced without clarifying what the liberal experiment was
* referred to the impact of the Great Depression but did not connect it to the failure of the liberal experiment
* failed to show how Stresemann’s economic reforms were part of the liberal experiment even though they helped make the government more popular
* ignored the successes of the liberal experiment
* did not focus on political failure, but wrote generally about the Weimar republic’s weaknesses and failures
* made little attempt to provide criteria to judge whether it was a political failure or not, or to what degree
* ignored factors which caused problems in favour of selecting certain events (e.g. attempted 1920 coup in Berlin) between 1918 and 1933
* didn’t clearly address the perspective of a political failure, but instead a failure in general
* provided answers that seemed prepared.

Question 8

More successful responses

* made clear reference to the instability of successive Weimar governments leading to their unpopularity and a growing public desire for different political leadership
* distinguished between different groups (e.g. middle class, Freikorps, industrialists, rural population, workers) who supported the Nazis for different reasons
* referred to the differing facets of the Nazi Party
* identified the multi-factorial nature of violence and propaganda being instrumental in their rise to power, including both short-term and long-term factors, such as the disillusionment of the Germans with the Treaty of Versailles
* considered Nazi Party policies as well as their terror tactics
* discussed the role of Hindenburg and Von Papen as contributing factors and the fact that other parties could not form a coalition
* explained how the Nazis exploited existing anti-Semitic views
* discussed the political, economic and social factors operating within Germany, especially between 1929 and 1933
* explained how other factors (e.g. the mistakes of the Weimar government, the devastation the Great Depression) helped the Nazis gain power
* illustrated the clever, professional way the Nazi leadership used fear of communism, economic distress and political frustration to successfully present themselves as Germany’s ‘last hope’
* discussed ‘cultural dissonance’ within Germany between the traditional values of Imperial Germany and the modern values evident, particularly in Berlin, during the Weimar era
* highlighted the naïve, tolerant response by the Weimar governments to the Nazi Party, with German political and elites showing little understanding of the nature of this new political force and of its methods and ideology
* showed how the popularity of the Nazi Party gave them a foothold in the Reichstag which then allowed them to manipulate politicians to promote Hitler and helped raise the Nazi profile.

Less successful responses

* wrote narrative answers about what happened between 1919 and 1933 with few links to question
* equated Hitler with the Nazis
* generalised about ‘the people’
* overemphasised Hitler’s oratory skills to improve the popularity of the Nazi Party
* favoured a discussion of Hitler, which narrowed the focus and depth of argument
* wrote mainly about the Weimar government rather than how the Nazis popular appeal helped them to come to power
* did not seem to know what was meant by ‘popular appeal’ and so dismissed or ignored it
* tended to give their prepared answer to the rise of the Nazis
* Included factors or events after 1933
* approached the question in a very general sense but didn’t really understand the intricacies of gaining power in 1933
* focused solely on what made the Nazi’s (or Hitler) popular and were not able to show how that popularity enabled then to gain power
* used information beyond 1933 (e.g. Night of the Long Knives, death of Hindenburg)
* did not include a clear qualifying judgement statement
* used modern slang (e.g. Hitler was a ‘German fan-boy’ and a ‘low grade thug’).

Question 10

More successful responses

* discussed Khrushchev’s reforms of the Soviet economy to some degree
* discussed political, economic and social improvements that women experienced.

Less successful responses

* contained little specific knowledge or focus on the impact of these on the lives of women
* made generalised comments and connections
* were unable to identify specific economic policies.

Question 11

More successful responses

* argued using examples from specific countries
* identified the role of the Soviet-Afghan War in developing the conditions for separatist movements.

Less successful responses

* discussed separatist movements in general.

Question 13

More successful answers

* showed how Suharto took advantage of/exploited the divisions caused by Sukarno
* identified a range of factors (e.g. anti-Japanese tensions, rise of Indonesian nationalism, Suharto created a public fear of communist threat)
* connected the failures of Sukarno with Suharto’s success.

Less successful answers

* used casual language (e.g. ‘bump off Sukarno’)

Question 16

More successful responses

* explained that Mao had to be practical because of decades of war
* explained that his policies were aimed at maintaining and strengthening his control over the CCP and China
* included examples of practical policies with a look at the Great Leap Forward versus ideological policies that caused the great loss of life
* showed knowledge of Mao Zedong’s economic policies.

Less successful responses

* did not seem to clearly understand the differences between ‘practical’ and ‘ideological’
* did not clearly identify Mao’s economic policies
* contained reference to ideological motive for economic policies with developing an argument
* did not explain how his economic policies were practical and what needed to be improved
* described the Great Leap Forward, the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the culling of sparrows without connecting those events to the question
* provided a broad description of generalised ideas.

Question 17

More successful responses

* described how Deng’s economic pragmatism softened internal and external forces to his political goals
* discussed the Four Modernisations, the Open Door policy and the Special Economic Zones versus lack of political reform that included Tiananmen Square Massacre
* remained focused on the time frame of this question and provided relevant evidence
* explained the government’s reaction to Tiananmen Square protests in developing their responses
* argued that Deng’s political goals were also achieved through other means, particularly the repression of political dissent.

Less successful responses

* showed little or no understanding of political goals and economic reforms
* described the economic reforms and/or political goals but most failed to explain the relationship between them
* were unable to discuss Deng’s national and international political goals very clearly.

Question 18

More successful responses

* highlighted efforts to unify the population by discriminating against fringe groups (e.g. Uighurs) and continuing to suppress freedom of speech.

Less successful responses

* did not clarify their meanings of the terms ‘social cohesion’ and ‘domestic policy’
* focused on external rather than domestic policies
* claimed that the 2008 Olympic Games were evidence of social cohesion without explaining how they created or symbolised social cohesion.

## Sources Analysis

Question a

More successful responses

* briefly stated two aims of the expedition in a sentence.

Less successful responses

* included too much detail.

Question b

More successful responses

* were able to come to two conclusions (e.g. resilient, tenacious, resourceful) and provide clear support for their decision.

Less successful responses

* interpreted his altruism or selflessness demonstrated by remaining behind to look for missing members of the team when, in reality, he was stuck there because he missed the Aurora and he knew that his colleagues were dead. (This misinterpretation reappeared in answers to Question d and at times to Question f.)
* did not distinguish conclusions from evidence, and gave evidence as conclusions
* drew conclusions that were not about Mawson (e.g. Mertz died or the expedition was dangerous)
* concluded that Mawson survived.

Question c

More successful responses

* commented on the usefulness of obituaries
* identified the limitations of bias and omitted information in an obituary

Less successful responses

* evaluated the source without addressing how useful obituaries generally are
* omitted to say how or why obituaries are not a useful source for historians
* understood what an obituary was but often did not say how useful it was
* did not provide a quantifier on the usefulness of obituaries
* misused ‘bias’ and ‘biased’
* referred to this obituary rather than obituaries in general
* did not say why an obituary is biased
* described what Mawson’s obituary contained.

Question d

More successful responses

* included a quantifying statement (e.g. good extent, great extent, limited extent, low extent, no extent, greatly, reasonable extent)
* contained quite good cross-referencing with students finding clear similarities and differences.

Less successful responses

* were non-committal about the extent to which the information in Source 2 supported that of Source 3 (e.g. an extent, some extent, certain extent)
* didn’t mention the degree to which one source supported the other
* included statements about support from the sources but did not support or illustrate them with details from the sources
* did not identify the type of sources
* did not comment on limitations, focussing just on usefulness
* contained statements showing little understanding of bias and how to write about it (e.g.” This is by an historian and is unlikely to be biased.”)
* evaluated usefulness and limitations of the source type
* described the sources without comparing them.

Question e

Many markers noted that this was the most poorly answered question.

More successful responses

* evaluated the limitations of bias within each source
* discussed the bias individually, less successful students simply stated that both sources were biased without providing evidence or acknowledging that the differing purposes or audiences influenced these biases
* commented on the reliability of the historian and the credibility of both sources (i.e. one being reflective of popular perspectives and the other using evidence from multiple sources)
* noted the primary and secondary nature of each source
* explained when the sources were published and identified how this created usefulness or limitations.

Less successful responses

* stated that a source could be biased without explaining how they could tell that a source was biased
* did not discuss the nature of the sources beyond simplistically claiming that primary sources are good while secondary sources are bad
* claimed that a source is biased or could be biased without producing evidence for this claim
* misinterpreted the use of ellipses to indicate censorship and bias
* ignored the word ‘nature’ and simply discussed the content
* dealt with the two sources entirely separately
* provided superficial reasons for the strength or limitation of each source (e.g. when it was written)
* stated that the main purpose of a newspaper is to ‘entertain’ rather than ‘inform’
* restated content from each source
* commented that a reason secondary sources are limited and inaccurate is because the authors were not present at the time of the event
* overlooked the fact that the source contained part of an official speech
* evaluated the incorrect source
* spent time by explaining, recounting, or comparing/contrasting the content of the sources rather than evaluating the sources.

Question f

More successful responses

* presented well-structured answers (i.e. introduction and/or conclusion plus body paragraphs that synthesised information from multiple sources) backed with clear and appropriate examples from the sources
* included a clear evaluation in the conclusion
* referred to all the sources to support their answer, often combining sources that presented one side of the argument
* identified features of sources (e.g. Source 1) that contained information that both supported (scientific knowledge such weather, climate, magnetism, mapping) and opposed the proposition (commercial opportunities such as sealing and whaling, coal, minerals, health resorts)
* included an additional paragraph discussing Source 3 if they believed that it didn’t contain any information to support or oppose the proposition
* were able to cross-reference deductions across more than one source.

Less successful responses

* described how each source in order supported or opposed the proposition
* lacked quotes or direct references to each source to support their judgement
* contained an introduction that was one sentence long (e.g. ‘Mawson was highly motivated in his quest for scientific knowledge because the majority of sources support the view.’)
* lacked a qualifying statement or used non-specific phrases like ‘some extent’ or ‘certain extent’
* included comments on usefulness and limitations of sources in their answers
* did not refer to all sources
* ignored Source 3 if there was no obvious link to the proposition that they could evaluate
* were incomplete suggesting poor time-management
* debated one side of the proposition.