

History Department Undergraduate Marking Criteria

Note: These guidelines are derived mainly from the History Benchmarking Statement, approved by the Quality Assurance Agency. They show the expected standard required for each mark band in terms of the following aspects of performance: structure and focus; quality of argument and expression; range of knowledge.

The actual mark awarded will reflect the degree to which the qualities required for the award of a particular class are present.

First Class (70-100)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work which meets most of the following criteria and does not fall far short in other respects will be given a mark in the range 70-74%. • Work which meets all of the following criteria will be given a mark in the range 75-79%. • Work which meets all of the following criteria and is in one or two respects truly exceptional (e.g. in offering striking personal insight and originality, showing extreme sophistication in use of evidence, or developing a compelling line of argument) will be given a mark in the range 80-84%. • Work which meets all of the following criteria and is in several respects truly exceptional, so that it is of publishable or near-publishable standard in the case of dissertations, or of equivalent quality in shorter coursework essays and exam scripts, will be given a mark of 85% or above. 	
<i>Structure and focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engages closely with the question throughout, showing a mature appreciation of its wider implications. - The structure of the argument is lucid and allows for the development of a coherent and cogent argument. - Factual evidence and descriptive material is used to support the writer's argument, and is both concise and relevant.
<i>Quality of Argument and expression</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The writing will be fluent, coherent and accurate. - The writing will go well beyond the effective paraphrasing of the ideas of other historians. It will show that the writer has a good conceptual command of the historical and, where relevant, historiographical issues under discussion. - The work will display originality and imagination, as well as analytical skills of a high order. - The work will demonstrate that the writer can move between generalizations and detailed discussion confidently.
<i>Range of knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The answer demonstrates in-depth reading and critical analysis of the texts, secondary literature and (where relevant) contemporary sources. - The answer demonstrates that the writer has a comprehensive knowledge of the subject and a good understanding of the historical period under discussion. - The writer will demonstrate an ability to evaluate the

	nature and status of the information at their disposal and identify contradictions and attempt a resolution.
Upper Second Class (60-69)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work which meets all of the following criteria will be given a mark in the range 65-69. • Work which meets most of the following criteria and does not fall far short in other respects will be given a mark in the range 60-64. 	
<i>Structure and focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work which displays an understanding of the question, an appreciation of some of its wider implications and tries seriously to engage with the question. - The structure of the answer will facilitate the clear development of the writer's argument. But towards the lower end of this mark band the candidate will not be able to sustain a consistently analytical approach. - The writer will deploy relevant evidence to support the argument. But towards the lower end of this mark band, the writer may not explain the full implications of the evidence cited.
<i>Quality of Argument and expression</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The answer will be clear and generally accurate, and will demonstrate an appreciation of the technical vocabulary used by historians. - The answer will deploy the ideas of other historians and try to move beyond them. It will also show some appreciation of the extent to which historical explanations are contested. - The answer may not demonstrate real originality or imagination, but the writer will present ideas with some degree of intellectual independence, and show an ability to reflect on the past and its interpretations.
<i>Range of knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The answer will display an extensive, but sometimes uneven, range of knowledge. It will demonstrate evidence of considerable reading. - The answer will demonstrate a sense of the nature of historical development. - The writer will demonstrate an ability to move between generalizations and detailed discussions, although there may be a tendency towards either over-generalized or an over-particularised response to the question. - The writer will reflect on the nature of the evidence and sources available to them, and attempt to use it critically. - The answer will demonstrate a secure understanding of the historical period under discussion.

Lower Second Class (50-59)

- Work which meets all of the following criteria will be given a mark in the range 55-59.
- Work which meets most of the following criteria and does not fall far short in other respects will be given a mark in the range 50-54.

Structure and focus

- The work will display some understanding of the question, but it may lack a sustained focus and only a limited understanding of the question's wider implications.
- The structure of the work may be determined largely by the material available to the writer, rather than by the demands of the question. Ideas may be stated, rather than fully developed.
- The writing may include descriptive and factual material, but without the kind of critical reflection characteristic of answers in higher mark bands.

Quality of Argument and expression

- The writing will be sufficiently accurate to convey the writer's meaning, but it may lack fluency and command of the scholarly idioms used by historians. It may be clumsy in places.
- The writing will show some understanding of historians' ideas. But it may not reflect critically upon them. The problematic nature of historical explanations may not be fully understood.
- The answer is unlikely to show any intentional originality, and may tend towards the assertion of essentially derivative ideas.

Range of knowledge

- The answer will show significant knowledge, but it may be limited or patchy. It will be sound, but may contain some inaccuracies. The range of reading will be limited.
- The answer will show only limited awareness of historical development.
- The writer may show a proneness to present too much narrative or descriptive material, and may present information without reference to the precise requirements of the question.
- Information may be presented uncritically and there will be little attempt to evaluate its status or significance.
- The answer will demonstrate some appreciation of the nature of the historical period under discussion.

Third Class (40-49)

- Work which meets all of the following criteria will be given a mark in the range 45-49.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work which meets most of the following criteria and does not fall far short in other respects will be given a mark in the range 40-44. 	
<i>Structure and focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work that displays little understanding of the question and the writer may tend to write indiscriminately around it. - The answer will have a structure, but it may be underdeveloped, and the argument may be incomplete and developed in a haphazard and undisciplined manner. - Some descriptive material will be deployed, but without any critical reflection on its significance or relevance.
<i>Quality of Argument and expression</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The writing may not always be grammatical, and it may lack the sophisticated vocabulary or construction needed to sustain a complex historical argument. In places it may lack clarity and felicity of expression. - There will be little appreciation of the contested and problematic nature of historical explanations. - The answer will show no intentional originality of approach.
<i>Range of knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There will be sufficient knowledge to frame a basic answer, but it will be patchy and limited. There are likely to be some inaccuracies. - There will be some understanding of historical development, but it will be underdeveloped, and the ideas of historians and others may be muddled or misunderstood. - There will be an argument, but the writer may be prone to excessive narrative, and the argument may be signposted by bald assertions rather than informed generalizations. - Information will be employed uncritically as if it was always self-explanatory. - The answer will demonstrate only a rudimentary appreciation of the historical period under discussion.
Referral (35-39)	
<i>Structure and focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work that displays very limited understanding of the question and in many places displays a tendency to write indiscriminately around it - The answer will have a weak structure, that is poorly developed. There is only a limited and somewhat incoherent argument. - Only a limited amount of descriptive material will be deployed, usually without any critical reflection on its significance or relevance.
<i>Quality of Argument and expression</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The writing will frequently be ungrammatical, and will not

	<p>be such as is required to sustain a complex historical argument. It will often lack clarity and felicity of expression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There will be almost no appreciation of the contested and problematic nature of historical explanations. - The answer will show no intentional originality of approach.
<i>Range of knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There will only be sufficient knowledge to frame a very basic answer. It will contain many inaccuracies. There will be only a limited understanding of historical development. - There will be only very limited evidence of an argument. - Information will be employed uncritically and as if it was always self-explanatory. - The answer will demonstrate only a very rudimentary and extremely limited appreciation of the historical period under discussion.
Fail (0-34)	
<i>Structure and focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work that displays little or no real understanding of the question. - The answer will have a weak structure, that is poorly developed. There is no coherent argument. - Only a very limited amount of descriptive material will be deployed, without any critical reflection on its significance or relevance. Some of it will be irrelevant.
<i>Quality of Argument and expression</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The writing will be ungrammatical. Ideas will sometimes be presented in note form. - There will be no appreciation of the contested and problematic nature of historical explanations. - The answer will show no intentional originality of approach.
<i>Range of knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There will not be sufficient knowledge to frame even a basic answer. - There will be no real understanding of historical development. - There will be little if any evidence of an argument. - It will contain little relevant information. - The answer will demonstrate no real appreciation of the historical period under discussion.