

Post-16 Curriculum - History

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	History
Qualification / Specification	GCE A-Level
Awarding Body	AQA
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Nicholas Binfield
Teaching Staff	VLO/PST/RM/IHA
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

The core purpose of History is to foster an enduring interest in the past while equipping learners with a deep understanding of human history across diverse eras, cultures, and contexts. It is explicitly designed to help students comprehend the **significance of historical events**, the nature of change and continuity over time, and the complex causes and consequences of human actions. The curriculum challenges students to think critically about how the past informs the present. It forces them to grapple with open-ended historical problems and recognize that history is a dynamic, debated construct built on evolving interpretations and evidence.

The curriculum acts as a robust bridge to higher-level destinations by deliberately structuring a clear progression in both chronological scope and cognitive challenge. By moving fluidly between **breadth studies** (which track sweeping thematic changes over a century or more) and **depth studies** (which focus on intense, transformative historical moments), students transition seamlessly from foundational knowledge to advanced analytical thinking. Furthermore, the inclusion of the **Historical Investigation (NEA)** provides an authentic taste of undergraduate-level independent research. This coursework element trains students to self-manage extended projects, source their own evidence, and structure lengthy academic arguments—vital competencies whether they are heading to a university lecture hall or embarking on an apprenticeship.

AQA A Level History directly addresses the demands of higher education and employment by cultivating premium, transferable skills that are highly prized in a knowledge-driven economy. Universities appreciate the qualification's rigorous focus on **source evaluation and**

historiographical debate, which ensures incoming undergraduates can dismantle complex academic arguments and write with intellectual discipline. For employers across industries like law, journalism, public policy, and business management, history students are elite assets. They possess exceptional literacy, the ability to synthesize massive volumes of contradictory data, and the critical thinking required to make objective, evidence-based decisions.

For a learner, success in A Level History is defined by the transformation from a passive consumer of facts into an independent, critical historian. Academically, this is demonstrated by the ability to construct **coherent, nuanced, and beautifully structured arguments** that confidently weigh competing historical interpretations. Successful students don't just know *what* happened; they can convincingly articulate *why* it happened, using robust primary evidence and secondary literature to back up their claims. Ultimately, true success means walking away with both the academic credentials (a strong A-level grade) and the lifelong intellectual agility to question assumptions, identify bias, and navigate an increasingly complex information landscape with a balanced, objective mind.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Origins of the Cold War	Factual knowledge of: Post-War Conferences Ideological Differences Conflict over Germany	Establishes the foundations for international rivalry during the second half of the C20th
The Widening Cold War	McCarthyism in the USA The Korean War Eisenhower's New Look Peaceful Co-existence	Demonstrates how the Cold War shifted from being a European to a global confrontation
The Global Cold War	The Origins of Vietnam The Arms Race The Cuban Missile Crisis	Demonstrates how Cold War diplomatic tensions led to military confrontation and possible nuclear war.
Confrontation and Co-operation	Post-Cuba Relations The Vietnam War The Prague Spring	Establishes the foundations of improved relations that allowed for Cold War tensions to reduce
Detente in the 1970s	The End of Vietnam Detente agreements The Afghan War	Demonstrates steady improvement of relations between superpowers in the 70s
The End of the Cold War	The Second Cold War Summit Diplomacy in the 80s The End of the Cold War and Collapse of the Soviet Union	Demonstrates how and why Soviet communism was unable to continue with a Cold War stance and explains the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.
The Development of Imperialism 1857-1890	The expansion of the British Empire in Africa and India Attitudes towards imperialism in Britain	Establishes the key concepts underpinning the British Empire, and how it influenced both the global and domestic histories.

Imperial consolidation and Liberal rule, c1890–1914	The consolidation and expansion of the British Empire in Africa and India. Attitudes towards imperialism in Britain	Demonstrates how the Empire deepened its range across the globe on the lead up to the First World War
Imperialism challenged, 1914–1947	Expansion and contraction of Empire The impact of the First and Second World Wars Independence for India	Develops the impact of war and global economic events on the ability of Britain to retain its empire
The winds of change, 1947–1967	Decolonisation in Africa and Asia	Demonstrates why the empire contracted, and how the empire left its political and cultural mark on Britain

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
To what extent were the US/US responsible for the Cold War?	Establishing causation within large scale historical events	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
Why did the Cold War shift focus from Europe to Asia in the 1950s?	To understand geopolitical nature of historical events and causation of these events	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
How close did the world come to nuclear war in the early 1960s and why?	To understand the consequences of political and international actions.	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
How far did international relations improve during the 1960s against the background of the Vietnam War?	To understand the consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis and impact of the Vietnam War globally	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
To what extent did the concept of detente in the 70s represent a real improvement in international relations?	To establish the foundations for understanding the ending of the Cold War during the following decade	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
Why did the Cold War come to an end between 1989 and 1991. Why did the Soviet Empire and Soviet Union collapse?	To understand the foundations of modern global politics and international relations.	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.

Why did the British Empire grow and contract?	To understand the impact that the British Empire has had across the globe. To establish causes and consequences of such global events.	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
What part did economic factors play in the development of the British Empire?	To dive into a key factor of a global event and to assess its influence over a 100 year period	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
How did the Empire influence British attitudes and culture?	To understand how a global event can impact upon British culture - literature, politics, music, media.	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
How did the indigenous peoples respond to British rule?	To understand the impact that the British Empire had on people in Africa and India and how they reacted to it	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.
How important was the role of key individuals and groups	To develop knowledge of key individuals in the history of the Britain and the globe - including Rhodes, Livingstone, Disraeli, Gandhi, Lloyd George, Churchill, Mandela, MacMillan, Nasser, Mosley.	Extract analysis in the form of examination style questions. Focus on content and context of extracts. Essay writing skills within examination context - initial focus on Introduction, then paragraph and then full essay writing tasks. Q+A during classroom discussion.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Yr 12 - Autumn 1	Origins of Cold War	Factual knowledge of: Post-War Conferences Ideological Differences	Why did the Cold War start and who was responsible?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	The Development of Imperialism 1857-1890	The expansion of the British Empire in Africa and India	Why did the British Empire grow?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 12 - Autumn 2	Origins of the Cold War	Conflict over Germany	Why did the Cold War start and who was responsible?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	The Development of	Attitudes towards imperialism in Britain.	Why did the British Empire grow?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly

	Imperialism 1857-1890	The importance of economic factors		
Yr 12 - Spring 1	The Widening Cold War	McCarthyism The Korean War The Origins of Vietnam	Why did the Cold War become a global event?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	Imperial consolidation and Liberal rule, c1890-1914	The consolidation and expansion of the British Empire in Africa and India.	How effective was the challenge to imperialism?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 12 - Spring 2	The Widening Cold War Global Confrontation	Eisenhower's New Look The Arms Race The Berlin Wall	What was the impact of the arms race on international relations?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	Imperial consolidation and Liberal rule, c1890-1914	Attitudes towards imperialism in Britain. The importance of economic factors	Did the economic importance to the Empire increase or decrease?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 12 - Summer 1	Global Confrontation Confrontation and Co-operation during the 60s	The Cuban Missile Crisis Post-Cuba Co-operation	How close did the world come to nuclear war and why? What were the consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	The High Water Mark of the British Empire, c1857-1914	A breadth review of the first half of the course	Why and how did the British Empire grow?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 12 - Summer 2	Co-operation during the 60s	Prague Spring The Vietnam War	How far did relations between the superpowers improve during the 1960s against a background of the Vietnam War?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	The impact of the First World War on the British Empire	WW1 was more than the Western Front - it was a global event	A war fought across the globe including new technologies: Air, naval, Africa, India	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 13 - Autumn 1	Detente during the 70s	Detente agreements Ostpolitik	To what extent was detente a real international development during the 1970s?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly

	Imperialism challenged, 1914–1947	Expansion and contraction of Empire after WW1 Imperialism in Africa and the Middle East	How important was World War One in the growth and contraction of the Empire?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 13 - Autumn 2	Detente during the 70s The End of the Cold War	The Second Cold War Summit Diplomacy	Why did the Cold War come to an end? Who was responsible for the end of the Cold War?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	Imperialism challenged, 1914–1947	Contraction of the Empire - Independence for India and parts of the Middle East	Was the contraction of the Empire due to economic reasons, impact of war, or rise of nationalism?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
Yr 13 - Spring 1	The End of the Cold War	The Collapse of the Soviet Empire and Union	Why did the Soviet Empire and Union collapse and who was responsible for this?	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly
	The winds of change, 1947–1967	Decolonisation of the Empire in Africa and Asia	Rise of nationalism in Africa, Suez Crisis, influence of the Empire on British culture	Weekly class based Q+A Extract analysis tasks - weekly Exam practice tasks - fortnightly

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic	To assess baseline understanding of broad topics and key factual points within those topics.	Every lesson
Formative	To assess understanding of key factual knowledge base	Every lesson
Summative	To apply analytical techniques of essay writing and extract use	Fortnightly class/homework tasks Yr12/13 Mock examinations
Synoptic	To understand process of writing full essays and applying factual/analytical knowledge to contextual nature of extracts	Once per topic area. Yr12/13 Mock Examinations