

GCSE



WJEC GCSE

History

Approved by Qualifications Wales

Guidance for Teaching: Unit 4

Teaching from 2026

For award from 2028

Version 2 - February 2025



This Qualifications Wales regulated qualification is not available to centres in England.

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SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS

Version	Description	Page number
2	Amended to, awarded for the first time in Summer 2028.	1

Introduction

The WJEC GCSE History has been approved by Qualifications Wales and is available to all centres in Wales. It will be awarded for the first time in Summer 2028, using grades A* to G.

Aims of the Guidance for Teaching

The principal aim of the Guidance for Teaching is to support teachers in the delivery of WJEC GCSE History and to offer guidance on the requirements of the qualification and the assessment process. The Guidance for Teaching is **not intended as a comprehensive reference**, but as support for teachers to develop stimulating and exciting courses tailored to the needs and skills of their learners.

Additional ways that WJEC can offer support:

- sample assessment materials and mark schemes
- professional learning events
- examiners' reports on each unit
- direct access to the subject officer
- free online resources
- Exam Results Analysis
- Online Examination Review.

Qualification Structure

WJEC GCSE History consists of four units. The combination of options selected for Units 1, 2 and 3 must include one medieval, one early modern and one modern unit.

In Unit 4, centres can choose to repeat a time period previously studied in Units 1, 2 or 3. **However, the topics chosen for study in Unit 4 must not replicate or overlap with the content of any of the other selected units.**

The qualification is unitised and does not contain tiering. There is no hierarchy to the order the units should be taught.

	Unit title	Type of Assessment	Weighting
Unit 1	An in-depth study on Welsh history	Written examination	30%
Unit 2	An in-depth study on European and/or World history	Non-examination assessment	20%
Unit 3	A study of a period in World history	Written examination	30%
Unit 4	A changing society	Non-examination assessment	20%

Assessment

Summary of Assessment

Unit 4: A changing society

Non-examination assessment: 4 hours 15 minutes

20% of qualification

80 marks

Learners will undertake a study of themed events within a continuous period of c. 75–c.100 years of history. The events studied must be from the islands of Great Britain and/or Ireland.

For the assignment, learners will undertake a historical enquiry, providing an understanding of change across the period.

The topics chosen for non-examination assessment must not replicate or overlap with the content of any of the examined units chosen.

Learners will be assessed through a five-stage historical enquiry, which will centre around **two** of the nine set themes.

WJEC will set the **two** themes to make up the focus on the enquiry, which will change on an annual basis.

The themes will be published on the WJEC portal during the first week of September for assessment in that academic year.

Unit 4 Assessment objectives and weightings

AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding to historical concepts such as cause and consequence, continuity and change, similarity and difference, and significance	5%
AO3	Analyse, evaluate, or make judgements on source material, historical interpretations and historical debates, synthesising these strands where appropriate	5%
AO4	Select, use and apply skills and techniques in practice to undertake historical enquiries.	10%

Overview of Unit 4

A changing society

(20% of the qualification)

The purpose of this unit is to provide an insight into the different experiences of people through the study of themed events within an extended timeframe. The experiences of the people studied are limited to the islands of Great Britain and/or Ireland.

The unit will be based on the following concepts:

- continuity and change
- similarity and difference
- significance and impact
- cause and consequence.

Designing your unit

Centres are responsible for designing their own course of study for Unit 4.

Period

Centres must select a continuous period of approximately 75–100 years. This can be from the Medieval, Early Modern or Modern period.

Location

Centres can decide to cover a small specific area (for example, one city or county) or a broader area (for example, a country or countries) for the course of study in this unit. The location(s) included in this unit must be within the islands of Great Britain and/or Ireland.

Content

The content of this unit must be designed around the nine compulsory themes that can be taught in any order. They are:

- culture
- equality and inequality
- ethnicity
- international relations
- peace and conflict
- politics
- religion
- sex, sexuality and gender
- social and economic issues.

For each theme, learners should understand a discrete historical topic. These topics are identified by the teacher. Please note that you are able to adjust the duration of the timeframe in order to provide learners with an understanding of change. While you are able to slightly exceed the timeframe, you cannot substantially reduce the minimum number of 75 years.

For Medieval History, you may want to teach the impact of the Norman Conquest on the island of Great Britain. To do this, you would decide the specific period that you would like to focus on. This could be the period between c. 1060 and c.1153, which is then divided into nine discrete historical topics. These will all contribute to an understanding of how Wales and England were transformed across this period.

For Early Modern History, you may want to teach how the Tudors changed Wales and England. To do this, you would decide the specific period that you would like to focus on. This could be the period between c.1450 and c.1600, which is then divided into nine discrete historical topics. These will all contribute to an understanding of how politics, society and religion in Wales and England evolved across this period.

For Modern History, you may want to teach The Twentieth Century – A Social Revolution? To do this, you would decide the specific period that you would like to focus on. This could be the period between 1900 and 1980, which is then divided into nine discrete historical topics. These will all contribute to an understanding of social change across this period.

See information about classroom packs for these examples on page 10.

The historical topics selected must not overlap with the historical topic selected for Unit 1. For example, if learners have studied 1.1 Rhys ap Gruffudd, Prince of Deheubarth c.1132–c.1197 for Unit 1, they cannot also study this historical topic in Unit 4.

The teaching of each theme should be supported by four items¹ (made up of **two** sources and **two** historical interpretations), totalling to 36 items across the Unit. For the assessment, teachers will then select **fifteen** of these taught items, in line with the assessment preparation guidance in this document, for learners to use.

It should be possible to deliver the teaching of this unit within approximately 20 hours (not including assessment time). This should be considered when selecting historical topics per theme.

¹ **Items** is the term used in assessments to label specific pieces of content, covering both contemporary sources and historical interpretations. Learners need to be able to identify what is a source and what is an interpretation.

Curriculum for Wales considerations

When making decisions on historical topics to include, centres can consider how it might be appropriate to integrate the following cross-cutting themes into this unit, in line with their school's curriculum.

Local, National & International Contexts

In this unit, learners will develop their knowledge and understanding of specific historical events across an extended period on a local, national and/or international scale. Centres may decide to select historical topics that extend learners' understanding and appreciation of the identity, heritage and history of Wales and the world and to develop a sense of cynefin.²

Sustainability

Centres should consider whether there are appropriate opportunities to consider sustainability within the range of topics selected.

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Centres can incorporate the cross-cutting theme of Relationships and Sexuality Education through the focus on themes of sex, sexuality and gender, and equality and inequality within this unit.

Human Rights Education and Diversity

Centres can incorporate the cross-cutting theme of Human Rights Education and Diversity through the focus on themes of ethnicity, religion, equality and inequality, culture and international relations.

Careers and Work-Related Experiences

Centres can incorporate the cross-cutting theme of Careers and Work-Related Experiences through the focus on the theme of social and economic issues, allowing learners to learn about careers of the past.

Learners will also develop transferrable skills that will help prepare them for future study and the world of work. For example, in Unit 4, the independent nature of this assessment will allow learners to develop resilience. Learners will develop their ability to solve problems, to think logically and make decisions. By reflecting on their performance, learners will learn from experience.

² "Cynefin" is a Welsh term defined by Curriculum for Wales as 'the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable.'

Finding appropriate evidence

It is important to incorporate a range of item types within and across the teaching pack (the pack of 36 items), so that learners are familiar with, and equipped to analyse and evaluate, different sources and interpretations.

WJEC defines sources as pieces of evidence that are contemporaneous with the issue or event being discussed. However, depending on the period in question, there are some differences in categorisation:

- for modern history questions, sources must have been created at the specific time of the event
- for early modern history questions, sources must have been created in the near period of the event
- for medieval and early history questions, sources must have been created in the wider period of the event.

Sources can take a variety of forms, for example written documents, pictorial evidence, or oral accounts; however, they must adhere to the guidelines relevant to the period of history selected for Unit 4.

WJEC defines interpretations as viewpoints on an issue of historical debate

- they may, but do not have to, offer the views of an established school of thought
- they may, but do not have to, be the views of an established historian
- interpretations may be those of, for example, politicians, journalists, documentary makers, writers, or directors
- interpretations should offer a reflection on the event/issue in the question that demonstrates that a period of time has elapsed between the event and the formation of the interpretation.

Adapting language

Centres may need to amend, adapt or abridge an item in order to make the wording more accessible for learners. The location of the original item must be provided within the classroom and assessment pack.

Where to find appropriate items

Centres might find useful items to use in their unit on the following platforms:

- The National Library of Wales [[National Library of Wales - Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru](#)]
- People's Collection Wales [[The Collection | Peoples Collection Wales](#)]
- Archives Wales [[Archives Wales](#)]
- British History Online [[Front | British History Online \(british-history.ac.uk\)](#)]
- The National Archives [[The National Archives](#)]

Example classroom packs

We have created three example teaching packs to demonstrate the way this unit could be designed by teachers. Each of these packs has a historical topic per theme, and four items (two sources and two interpretations) to support each topic.

These packs demonstrate the types of sources and interpretations that would be of appropriate type, length and demand for the teaching of this unit. They can be found on the GCSE History page of the WJEC website.

Medieval The impact of the Norman Conquest on the island of Great Britain
c.1060–c.1153.

Early Modern How the Tudors changed the British Isles.

Modern The Twentieth Century – A Social Revolution?

Other resources

The Open University has a free online course titled *Contemporary Wales*. This could be a valuable resource for teachers who decide on the Modern period for this unit. This course is available in Welsh and in English: [Contemporary Wales: Introduction | OpenLearn - Open University](#) / [Y Gymru Gyfoes: Cyflwyniad | OpenLearn - Open University](#)

Assessment

Learners will be assessed through a five-stage historical enquiry, which will centre around **two** of the nine set themes.

WJEC will set the **two** themes to make up the focus of the enquiry, which will change on an annual basis.

The themes will be published on the WJEC portal during the first week of September for assessment in that academic year.

For the five-stage enquiry, learners will:

Stage 1: Select the question, review the evidence and form a hypothesis

Stage 2: Review and critically analyse the evidence (items)

Stage 3: Plan the response

Stage 4: Develop the response

Stage 5: Critically reflect on the process they have undertaken and the conclusion they have reached.

Assessment preparation

During the course, learners will have engaged with four items per theme in the classroom (two sources and two historical interpretations). From these items (36 in total), 15 will be selected by the centre as the pack of evidence for learners to use in their assessments. These will include four items for each of the two set themes, and 1 item for each of the other 7 themes.

For example, if **Culture** and **Politics** are selected as the set themes one year, the 15 items selected for the assessment pack of evidence would be as follows:

<p>Culture Two sources Two interpretations</p>	<p>Equality and inequality One source OR interpretation</p>	<p>Ethnicity One source OR interpretation</p>
<p>International relations One source OR interpretation</p>	<p>Peace and conflict One source OR interpretation</p>	<p>Politics Two sources Two interpretations</p>
<p>Religion One source OR interpretation</p>	<p>Sex, sexuality and gender One source OR interpretation</p>	<p>Social and economic issues One source OR interpretation</p>

Centres will be able to place these items into an assessment pack template that is available to download from the WJEC website.

Completing the assessment

Learners will have 4 hours and 15 minutes to complete the assessment. There is a suggestion of how much time should be spent on each stage, which can be found along with all other assessment directions in the Sample Assessment Pack for Unit 4 (available on [WJEC GCSE History page](#)).

Learners can present their enquiry response in their preferred format. This could be presented through methods such as paper-based, digitally typing or as an audio recording.

There is an optional blank assessment template available for centres (available on [WJEC GCSE History page](#)). In this document, centres can populate the 15 selected items before sharing it with learners to complete the assessment.

Learning Experiences

Learners should be encouraged to consider the following learning experiences and skills to further develop their understanding, appreciation and awareness of the subject content. Information in the table below provides opportunities for teachers to integrate the learning experiences into delivery.

Learning Experience	Exemplification of Learning Experience
make appropriate use of digital technology when completing the qualification, for example through accessing historical source material digitally	<p>Learners should have the opportunity to access online archives from around the world. This will enable them to access a range of source materials such as letters, diaries or government documents.</p> <p>Learners may also make use of digital technology to research the topic of study and to further their understanding of the historical context.</p> <p>Learners should also be encouraged to make use of a range of digital formats completing the assessment itself.</p>
participate in educational visits in person or digitally	<p>Centres should consider whether any of the topics studied could be enhanced through educational visits. This might be in person, should centres have selected local historical topics, or digitally.</p> <p>For example, Cadw has a range of Virtual Visits accessible from its website: Virtual Visits - Cadw</p>
develop empathy, tolerance, compassion and curiosity through studying different historical contexts	When designing the unit, centres should consider how the topics selected provide opportunities for learners to reflect on events and develop empathy, tolerance, compassion and curiosity.
engage in collaborative working	Students will develop their understanding of viewpoints and content through debate and discussion.

Opportunities for embedding the Curriculum for Wales' cross-curricular skills and cross-cutting themes

Cross-curricular Skills – Literacy

There are many opportunities to include Literacy in GCSE History. These opportunities include the analysis of source material, extended writing opportunities, vocabulary development, debating and discussion. These opportunities are important to learners because they will develop cross-curricular skills which underpin the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, as well as communication skills which can be used across subjects and prepare them for future education or employment.

Below are some examples of how Literacy can be embedded into teaching and learning for GCSE History.

Listening	Learners will have the opportunity to assess the accuracy and reliability of source material and share views through discussion and verbal questioning techniques when being taught the specification content.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are encouraged to debate and respond to the views of others. Learners will have opportunities to listen to podcasts and recordings in order to develop their vocabulary and listening skills. Use of oral history and interviews develop listening skills and the ability to respond to others appropriately. Learners have the opportunity to share and respond to peer presentations.
Reading	Learners will have the opportunity to read contemporary source material as well as a variety of historical interpretations, before critically evaluating the sources, analysing their content, and comparing and contrasting sources focusing on the interpretation they give on events.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners can use a range of reading techniques such as skimming and scanning or reading for a purpose. Reading extracts from a wide range of sources such as speeches, articles, diary extracts, historians and newspapers. Comparing and contrasting the content of historical sources. Assessing the reliability and accuracy of the text to develop the skill of critical reading.

Speaking	Learners will have the opportunity to develop their understanding of viewpoints and content through debate, discussion, presentations and group work.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debating the most important reason why an event happened • Asking questions for clarification and development of understanding. • Learners can develop speaking skills through group and pair work.
Writing	Learners will have the opportunity to use a range of subject-specific vocabulary, idiomatic language and be able to present their work digitally. They will also have opportunities to reflect on the structure and content of their writing.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role modelling of answers through teacher, peer and self-assessment activities. • Learners have the opportunity to use a wide range of writing styles such as formal, informal and first person.

Cross-curricular Skills – Numeracy

There are many opportunities to include Numeracy in GCSE History, for example analysing population change, interpreting statistics in primary and secondary sources, analysing graphs and timelines and engaging with concepts such as chronological awareness. These opportunities are important to learners because it allows them to contextualise events and quantify change. Learners can draw evidence-based conclusions based on statistics and numerical data.

Below are some examples of how Numeracy can be embedded into teaching and learning for GCSE History.

<p>Learning about geometry helps us understand shape, space and position and learning about measurement helps us quantify in the real world</p>	<p>Learners will have opportunities to analyse maps in order to understand the growth and development of empires or the geographical representation of wars.</p>
	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners can analyse maps, structures and artifacts. • Learners can then analyse land division and urban planning. • There are opportunities to analyse military strategies and fortifications.
<p>Learning that statistics represent data and that probability models chance help us make informed inferences and decisions</p>	<p>Learners will have the opportunities to examine or interpret data and graphs through source analysis.</p>
	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners can analyse data to draw conclusions on statistics such as population growth, costs and land expansion. • Secondary material such as graphs and charts can be interpreted. • There are opportunities for learners to create their own numerical representations of data gathered.

Cross-curricular Skills – Digital Competence

There are many opportunities to include Digital Competence in GCSE History. Learners can make use of digital technology to access a broad range of historical sources and to undertake research of a historical topic. Learners will also have the opportunity to develop their digital skills in preparing and completing their non-examination assessments. These opportunities will allow learners to develop cross-curricular skills which underpin the four purposes of the curriculum, as well as allowing further access to historical information while fostering current and future critical thinking and ethical awareness.

Below are some examples of how Digital Competence can be embedded into teaching and learning for GCSE History.

Citizenship	Learners will develop an understanding of the importance of attributions, including the use of resources in digital formats such as e-books and online articles. Learners will be required to address attributions when analysing items for their historical enquiry and to think critically about the authors of digital evidence.
	Example
	Learners should be made aware of copyright and plagiarism when looking at historical evidence and when developing and presenting their own arguments in relation to a topic.
Interacting and Collaborating	Learners can work collaboratively (digitally) on tasks in preparation for the exam. These could include peer assessment, responding to teacher feedback or work creation.
	Example
	In groups, learners could research and present a topic to introduce an area of study.
Producing	Learners will have opportunities to research a variety of sources digitally and could develop digital skills when producing non-examinations assessments should they decide to complete the enquiry in a digital format.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of national and international archives to find source materials that link to the area of study. • Complete stages of the assessment using digital technology.

Integral Skills	
Creativity and Innovation	There are many opportunities to include Creativity and Innovation in GCSE History. These opportunities are important to learners to become more engaged in lessons and enjoy learning through stimulating tasks. Deeper understanding is developed through the encouragement for learners to take an active role in their learning.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will demonstrate creativity when developing responses, expressing their opinions about relevant historical issues and critically evaluating sources and evidence within assessments. Learners have opportunities to be creative and innovative when presenting information and findings.
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	There are many opportunities to include Critical Thinking and Problem Solving in GCSE History. These opportunities are important to learners because they develop the ability to think analytically, and to collect, reflect and critically evaluate evidence in order to make informed judgements on a range of topics. This skill can be applied to real-life scenarios.
	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will have opportunities to ask meaningful questions of source material and historical interpretations, as well as to evaluate them as part of their process of developing relevant critical arguments. Learners will develop their ability to see issues from multiple viewpoints. Studying continuity and change over time allows learners to develop their problem-solving skills that can be applied in their future lives. Learners will evaluate sources and historical interpretations in terms of reliability, bias and purpose. Critical thinking and problem solving encourages independent learning and promotes the ability to come to reasoned and informed decisions in other aspects of life such as further education or work.

<p>Planning and Organisation</p>	<p>There are many opportunities to include Planning and Organisation in GCSE History. These opportunities are important to Learners because these integral skills allow Learners to engage with the past, analyse information and communicate their findings which allow Learners to enhance their academic understanding and prepare them to apply historical knowledge in modern contexts.</p> <p>Below are some examples of how Planning and Organisation can be embedded into teaching and learning of GCSE History.</p> <p>Example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will have opportunities to plan and then complete their response to an enquiry question.
<p>Personal Effectiveness</p>	<p>There are many opportunities to include Personal Effectiveness in GCSE History. These opportunities are important to learners because it develops resilience and the ability to work effectively. This helps to develop learners' time management skills and the ability to prioritise tasks, enhancing learners' ability to become adaptable individuals.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about potentially sensitive topics will allow learners to develop their emotional intelligence and historical awareness. Opportunities for peer, self and teacher assessment encourage learners to develop effective strategies to improve their work. Collaborating on a research task or presentation. Developing resilience through the revision and remodelling of answers. There are opportunities for learners to express their opinions about relevant historical issues, contemporary source materials and historical interpretations.