

GCSE



WJEC GCSE HISTORY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Made for Wales.
Ready for the world.

Q. What is the structure and focus of the revised GCSE History course?

A. The revised GCSE History course provides a structured study of medieval, early modern, and modern history, ensuring a broad understanding of different periods. It emphasises "cynefin," encouraging students to explore Welsh history in a global context. The course focuses on developing analytical and critical thinking skills through a combination of examinations and Non-Examination Assessments (NEA), with an increased NEA weighting to offer a more inclusive assessment experience.

Q. What are the weightings and time requirements for each unit?

A. Units 1 and 3 are externally assessed and together account for 60% of the overall qualification. Each of these units requires approximately 36–40 guided learning hours. The remaining 40% of the qualification is based on Non-Examination Assessments (NEA). Of this, one NEA unit (Unit 2), worth 20% of the qualification, is marked by WJEC, while the other NEA unit (Unit 4), also worth 20%, is assessed by teachers. Units 2 and 4 require approximately 24–30 guided learning hours each, including time for completing the NEA tasks. The course is designed to be delivered over 120–140 guided learning hours across two years.

Q. What teaching sequence is recommended for the specification?

A. While the sequence is flexible, it is recommended that Unit 4 be taught in the final year. This allows learners to revisit a previously studied period, applying their advanced skills in historical analysis and evaluation. By this stage, learners will have developed their AO2 and AO3 skills through Units 1, 2, and 3, ensuring a solid foundation for tackling the complexities of Unit 4. It is important to note that the **first Unit 4 submission** will be available in **Summer 2028**.

Q. What teaching resources and support will be available?

A. The **Guidance for Teaching** will be available from **January 2025**, this guidance is more detailed than currently available. It incorporates Schemes of Work to support teachers in each option. A range of bilingual digital resources, available in both Welsh and English, will be released simultaneously, starting in late Autumn 2024. **All materials will be fully accessible by August 2025**. These resources will include interactive Blended Learning units, Knowledge Organisers, and editable activities to support teaching.

While new textbooks are not planned, existing textbooks will be mapped to the new specification to highlight relevant content. Enrichment activities, such as links to podcasts, readings, and museum resources, will also be available in both Welsh and English to enhance the learning experience.

Q. Do I have to teach all historical periods?

A. Yes, you are required to teach one medieval, one early modern, and one modern unit across Units 1 to 3. While Unit 4 can repeat a historical period, **you must ensure that no content is replicated across the units**.

For example, students could study Owain Glyndwr c.1354–1416 (**medieval**) for Unit 1, The Spanish Conquest of the Aztecs c.1492–c.1525: a case study in early modern colonialism (**early modern**) for Unit 2, and Russia and the Soviet Union c.1861–c.1953 (**modern**) for Unit 3, with a medieval, early modern, or modern period chosen for Unit 4.

Alternatively, they could study the Vikings c.750–c.1066 (**medieval**) for Unit 3, Süleyman I c.1520–c.1566: a case study in early modern imperialism (**early modern**) for Unit 2, Wales in the early to mid-twentieth century c.1914–c.1959 (**modern**) for Unit 1, and, again select a medieval, early modern, or modern period for Unit 4 (although the material could be taught in unit order if preferred).

Q. Will exemplar assessments or sample questions be provided?

A. Yes, **Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs)** for all course options were **released in December 2024**. These include examples for the digital NEA, enabling learners to prepare for on-screen assessments. WJEC will also provide walkthroughs to guide students and teachers in understanding question expectations and preparation strategies.

Q. When will learners be able to sit the exams and submit the NEA?

A. The first assessments will be available as follows: **Units 1 and 3 exams and the Unit 2 submission will take place in Summer 2027**, while the **Unit 4 submission will be available in Summer 2028**. After that, all assessments will be offered in every summer series.

Q. What types of questions will be asked in the exams?

A. Units 1 and 3 will include a mix of short-answer questions and essay-style questions. These assess both factual knowledge and analytical skills, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of students' understanding.

Q. What format will the Unit 2 NEA take, and are there specific technical requirements?

A. The Unit 2 NEA will be a 3-hour e-assessment, conducted during a **12-week window from January to March**. It can be completed in one session or split into multiple shorter sessions. The assessment will be delivered via the Surpass platform, with practice e-assessments available from **December 2025**. Further guidance and item packs for the NEA will be provided.

For more details, a separate FAQ guide for Unit 2 is available [here](#).

Q. What content is permitted for Unit 4?

A. For Unit 4, centres can choose to revisit a time period already studied in Units 1, 2, or 3 (e.g., medieval, early modern, or modern). However, the **topics chosen must not overlap or replicate the content of any other selected unit**.

Learners are required to conduct a historical enquiry based on a thematic study spanning a continuous period of c. 75–c.100 years. The focus is on understanding societal change through exploration of historical topics related to nine distinct themes. These topics are not required to cover the entire period but should instead examine episodes of change within the selected timeframe.

This unit is centred on the geographical region of the islands of Great Britain and/or Ireland, which may include the entire area or focus on specific locations.

Q. How can higher-performing students be challenged within this course?

A. Higher-performing students can explore thematic links between topics, such as societal changes and continuities over time. They are encouraged to analyse the roles of social structures, geography, and religion, deepening their understanding of historical themes.

Q. Are there enrichment opportunities for learners?

A. Yes, students can access optional activities such as podcasts, further readings, and online resources. Amgueddfa Cymru is developing school trip itineraries and virtual activities to complement Unit 1's focus on Welsh history, providing additional learning experiences outside the classroom. The Guidance for Teaching will offer optional advanced activities for deeper exploration of the topics.

Q. Will the content labelled as 'background' be assessed?

No. Background content provides historical context but is not directly assessed. It helps students understand broader themes and events relevant to their studies. For example, in Unit 1.3: Wales and the Early Tudors, c.1485–c.1547, understanding the status of the Welsh language in the mid-fifteenth century is essential for grasping the impact of the language clauses in the Acts of Union, even though the status of the language during this period will not be directly tested.

Q. Will item packs or writing frames be provided?

A. Item packs will be included with the Unit 2 NEA, ensuring students have access to the required materials for their assessment. However, writing frames or scaffolds will not be provided, as the course focuses on developing independent historical skills. Teachers can use mark schemes to guide lower-performing learners.

Q. What support will WJEC provide for teachers?

A. WJEC will offer extensive support through professional learning sessions, sample assessments, and guidance documents. Resources will include exam and NEA walkthroughs, blended learning materials, and face-to-face conferences, particularly for Unit 4.

Q. What administrative tasks and deadlines should teachers be aware of?

A. **Unit 2 NEA assessments must be completed between January and March**, with no additional administrative tasks required. **Unit 4 marks must be submitted by 5 May each year**. To help teachers manage deadlines for Made-for-Wales qualifications, WJEC will provide an infographic outlining key dates.