

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Cambridge IGCSE® (9–1) History (0977)

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Subject Content and Assessment

Can't find the information you're looking for?



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FAQs – Support and resources

When are the examinations taken?

Information about when the examinations can be taken can be found in the syllabus. You can download the syllabus from **Teacher Support**.

Examination dates are listed in the **exam timetable** which you can download from our public website, or speak to the Examinations Officer at your centre.

Reference: Syllabus

Location: **Teacher Support**

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What resources are available to support Cambridge syllabuses?

Teaching resources can be found on the **Teacher Support** page for your syllabus.

For syllabuses, specimen papers, past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports look under the *Syllabus Materials* tab.

For support materials, including Coursework Handbook, Scheme of Work and Example Candidate Responses, look under the *Teaching Materials* tab.

The *Resource List* tab directs you to endorsed and suggested resources including textbooks and websites. You can also access these from the **Resource Centre** on our public website.

For more details about the support types available, and how to use them for planning, preparing, teaching, assessing and revision, see our guide *Cambridge teacher support*, which can be downloaded from the **Teacher Support** homepage under Teacher Support Resources.

You can also visit our **Discussion Forums**, where teachers discuss resources and teaching methods, and you can ask questions and receive a response from our subject expert moderator or from other Cambridge teachers in our Community.

Reference: Teacher Support Resources

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What textbooks are available for my subject?

From the *Resource List* tab on the **Teacher Support** page for your syllabus you can search for textbooks for your subject. No particular book is necessary for a course and teachers are advised to choose the textbook that best suits their needs. Many of our syllabuses are supported by a range of different endorsed textbooks to ensure that schools have choice. There is information on the back of endorsed textbooks about which examination series it was first produced for.

Endorsed resources go through a rigorous quality-assurance process to make sure they closely reflect the syllabus and are appropriate for Cambridge schools worldwide. Resources may be 'endorsed for full syllabus coverage' or endorsed to cover specific sections, topics or approaches. Look for the specific 'endorsed for...' logo on the resource.

Reference: Syllabus page

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What training and professional development is available for my subject?

Cambridge online and face-to-face training courses are designed to support you by providing you with the knowledge and skills required to deliver our syllabuses. These can be booked through the **Events and training calendar** on our public website.

Reference: **Events and training calendar**

Location: **Public Website**

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FAQs – Support and resources

How can I find out about any changes to the syllabus?

This information can be found on the inside cover of the syllabus, which can be downloaded from **Teacher Support**. Changes are described in detail within this section. Throughout the syllabus, any significant changes are indicated by black vertical lines either side of the text.

If a syllabus update document is listed next to a syllabus this is notification that the syllabus has been updated to reflect a change. The changes that have been made will be clearly indicated in the syllabus update.

Reference: Syllabus

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What can students take into their exams?

Guidance for use of equipment in examinations, including use of dictionaries and calculators, is provided in the **Cambridge Handbook** from our public website. A list of unauthorised materials is also included.

For help or information about administering qualifications it is often useful to speak to the Examinations Officer at your centre.

Reference: [Cambridge Handbook](#)

Location: [Public Website](#)

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How can I find more information about the IGCSE (9–1) grading system?

The grading process for 9–1 IGCSEs will be the same process we use to grade all our syllabuses.

- The standards at the thresholds of grades 7, 4 and 1 are the same as the standards at the thresholds of grades A, C and G.
- Grade boundaries for grades 8, 6, 5, 3 and 2 are set using arithmetic rules that space the grade boundaries at regular intervals between the boundaries for grades 9, 7, 4 and 1. The use of arithmetic grade boundaries is common to Cambridge and all other UK exam boards.

Reference: [Grading information](#)

Location: [Public Website](#)

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FAQs – Subject Content and Assessment

Can learners mix 19th and 20th century Core Content?

Learners should study all the Core Content in either Option A, The 19th century, or Option B, The 20th century. However, learners can study a mixture of 19th and 20th century questions in Section A of Paper 1. Learners can also answer 20th century questions on Paper 2 or vice versa. The most common way of mixing coverage is for those teaching the 20th century to also cover Key Question 6 from the 19th century (what caused the First World War) so that learners have a background to the Treaty of Versailles and post-war developments.

Reference: Syllabus

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Do we need to cover all of the Core Content?

You should cover all the Core Content in either Option A, The 19th century, or Option B, The 20th century. If you don't have enough teaching time to do this, for example if you are teaching the course in one year, you could cover some topics in depth and leave out other topics. However, this will reduce the choice of questions learners have in the examination.

Section A of Paper 1 offers four questions each on both the 19th century and the 20th century Core Content. Learners must answer two questions in total, so you could cover just three of the four Key Questions, which will still give learners some question choice in the examination. We do not recommend only studying two Key Questions.

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Is there any advantage in doing more than one Depth Study?

No, there is no advantage in doing more than one Depth Study. However, you can choose to cover two Depth Studies if you wish. This will give your learners a broader course and a greater choice of questions in Papers 1 and 4.

Learners taking Paper 1 and Component 3: Coursework can answer a coursework question on the Depth Study they have studied for Paper 1.

Learners taking Paper 1 and Component 4: Alternative to Coursework can answer questions on the same Depth Study in both papers.

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Can I leave out some of the content of a Depth Study?

No, you should cover all the content of a Depth Study.

In both Paper 1 and Component 4 learners can only choose one question from the two questions available. Leaving out some of the content from a Depth Study will reduce the choice of questions and might even leave learners without any questions they can answer.

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What is the difference between a description and an explanation?

When an answer moves from description (or identification) to explanation (in parts (b) and (c) of Paper 1), it will move towards a higher band in the mark scheme.

For example, if a question asks learners to explain why Germans hated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the answer 'Because of the reduction in the size of the German army to 100 000 men' only identifies a reason. It does not explain it. To give further details about the reduction in the size of Germany's navy and air force would only add more description, it would not turn the answer into an explanation. To turn this answer into an explanation the learner must also give a historical reason for why the reduction in the size of the army really mattered to the Germans. For example, the learner could explain that the reduction left Germany open to possible attack from their traditional enemy, France.

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Will the wording of the issue on Paper 2 always be exactly the same as the prescribed topic in the syllabus?

No, the issue on Paper 2 could go across a Key Question or it could be an investigation into one of the Focus Points (and accompanying Specified Content) listed under the Key Question in the syllabus.

For example, if the prescribed topic is 'Why did events in the Gulf matter, c.1970-2000?' the issue could be related to Saddam Hussein's rise to power, the nature of his rule in Iraq, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 or the First Gulf War. If a paper is on one of these Focus Points, the issue used will not necessarily be identical to the way the Focus Point is worded in the syllabus, but it will be related to it.

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Do I have to make a special study of the prescribed topic in the syllabus for Paper 2?

No, and it would be counterproductive to do so. Learners need no more knowledge of a prescribed topic for Paper 2 than they need for the same topic for Paper 1.

To teach the Paper 2 prescribed topic in more detail than other topics could mislead learners into thinking that Paper 2 is about detailed knowledge of the content, when it is primarily about interpreting, analysing, evaluating and using historical sources (although for this, learners do of course need some knowledge and understanding of the historical context, and the Paper 2 prescribed topic must still be covered).

To prepare learners for Paper 2 you should integrate source skills into the teaching and learning of the Paper 1 content. Giving learners regular opportunities to use historical sources during the whole course will enable them to gradually improve their source skills.

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What exactly do learners have to do for Paper 2 Question 6?

Question 6 carries the highest mark on Paper 2. It is the only question type on Paper 2 that stays the same every year (although, of course, the issue changes from year to year). Learners must know how to approach this question.

Question 6 includes a statement closely related to the Paper 2 issue. There are always some sources that agree with the statement, and others that disagree with it. Learners are asked to explain how some of the sources support the statement and other sources disagree with the statement. They do not have to use all the sources but they should use most of them.

If they do this well, they can gain 10 marks out of the 12 allocated to this question. There are two further marks for any developed evaluation of any of the sources. Learners are not asked to discuss whether or not they agree with the statement.

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Is there an advantage in opting for Component 3 Coursework rather than Component 4 Alternative to Coursework?

There is no advantage in opting for Coursework rather than Alternative to Coursework. This is a matter of choice for individual schools and teachers.

Both components require learners to assess the significance of an event, person or development and will demonstrate the same skills and understanding. The same generic mark scheme is used for marking both components.

Coursework allows you to be involved in the assessment process, to set your own tasks and to devise your own schemes of work, and it gives your learners an opportunity to show their achievements outside the examination room. However, coursework increases the amount of work you have to do, and may be more stressful for learners who have coursework to be completed in other subjects at the same time.

Reference: Syllabus

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How can I be sure my learners' coursework will be acceptable to the external moderator?

Cambridge makes every effort to ensure that coursework tasks are acceptable. Once coursework tasks have been set, we urge you to send in the proposed tasks for vetting before the work is done by your learners. We forward the proposed tasks to coursework consultants who provide comments on them and, if necessary, give advice on how they could be improved.

We also offer online Coursework Training Programmes, which give you the opportunity to practice your skills within different aspects of the coursework marking process. These can be booked through the **Events and training calendar** on our public website.

However, we cannot guarantee that the level of marks awarded in any individual school will be exactly in line with the marks awarded in another school. Therefore, each year the coursework marks of some schools have to be adjusted, up or down, as a result of external moderation. If this happens, reasons are given by the moderator in a report sent to the school.

The Coursework Handbook explains this in more detail. All teachers should read the handbook carefully before starting on coursework.

Reference: Syllabus

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If I include the word 'significant' in a coursework question will it be enough to ensure the question is appropriate?

By itself it will not ensure the question is appropriate. Although it is a good idea to reference significance directly in the question, the question must require learners to assess significance, rather than simply describe it. Coursework questions that begin 'Assess the significance of...' , or 'How significant was...?' are better than a question that begins 'What was the significance of...?'

The question must not turn into a causation question such as 'Was the Depression the most significant reason why Hitler was able to come to power?' This question tests the ability of learners to explain the relative importance of different reasons why Hitler came to power, rather than the significance of the Depression - which was significant in different ways.

The Coursework Handbook explains this in more detail. All teachers should read the handbook carefully before starting on coursework.

Reference: Coursework Handbook

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FAQs – Subject Content and Assessment

Can I adapt the mark scheme for coursework?

No, the generic mark scheme must be used exactly as it is in the syllabus.

Exactly the same mark scheme is used for marking Component 3: Coursework and Component 4: Alternative to Coursework.

The generic mark scheme is also in the Coursework Handbook where there is guidance on how to use it and sample coursework assignments with annotations and marks. All teachers should read the handbook carefully before starting on coursework.

Reference: Syllabus

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Most of my learners are not First Language English speakers, and their written English is not fluent. Does this disadvantage them?

No, learners are assessed on the History content they produce, not on their English.

The majority of IGCSE History learners are not First Language English speakers, so examiners are very experienced in assessing the work of learners whose English is in some way deficient. They are instructed to be sensitive in the interpretation of what has been written, and to give the benefit of the doubt to the learner. No marks are given for spelling, grammar, expression or any other non-historical criterion. In fact, most learners have no trouble making themselves understood.

For a small minority, however, weaknesses in their English prevent them from being able to express their answers as effectively as possible. They may not understand the questions with the necessary precision. The History they produce may be weakened by their inability to express what it is they have to say, and this may have an impact on their overall performance.

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If you have a syllabus or teaching related question which has not been answered here, and you've read the syllabus and supporting resources on **Teacher Support**, have a look at the information on our **Help** pages.

For individual assessment queries or centre-specific enquiries, contact our Customer Services team either by email at info@cie.org.uk, by **web form** or by calling us on +44 1223 553554.