

GCSE



WJEC GCSE History

Approved by Qualifications Wales

Delivery Guide

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	Important dates updated.	14

Aims of the Delivery Guide

The aim of the Delivery Guide is to give an overview of the qualification and to help teachers understand how we assess the GCSE. It will offer an introduction to the specification, an assessment overview, and will support teachers in better understanding how to prepare their learners for the assessment of the different units. More information on each unit can be found in the separate unit guides.

Qualification Structure

WJEC GCSE History consists of four units:

	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%

All units are compulsory. 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.**

It would be most appropriate for learners to complete Unit 4 in the final year of the course as they revisit a time period previously studied in one of the earlier units. This would allow learners to implement their understanding of historical concepts and the analysis and evaluation skills they've developed throughout Units 1 and 3. It would also allow learners to build on the approaches and practices developed when undertaking an historical enquiry in Unit 2.

Unit 1

The purpose of this unit is to provide an insight into the development of Wales at a specific point in time.

Unit 2

The purpose of this unit is to provide an understanding of an issue in European and/or world history in depth via the study of historical sources and interpretations.

Unit 3

The purpose of this unit is to provide an overview of an extended historical period enabling learners to explore key concepts.

Unit 4

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 Ireland.

The unit will be based on the following concepts:

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

Summary of assessment

Unit 1: An in-depth study on Welsh history

Written examination: 1 hour

30% of qualification

60 marks

Learners will study one of the following six historical topics to undertake an in-depth study that will provide them with an insight into the development of Wales at a specific point in time.

Medieval

1.1 Rhys ap Gruffudd, Prince of Deheubarth c.1132–1197

1.2 Owain Glyndwr c.1354–1416

Early Modern

1.3 Wales and the early Tudors, c.1485–c.1547

1.4 Wales in the era of the Civil War, 1603–c.1660

Modern

1.5 Rebellions and Protest in Wales c.1831–c.1891

1.6 Wales in the early to mid-twentieth century c.1914–c.1959

Each option will be assessed by compulsory questions. These will focus on historical knowledge of the topic, second-order historical concepts and the analysis and evaluation of historical sources and interpretations.

Unit 2: An in-depth study on European and/or World history

On-screen non-examination assessment: 3 hours

20% of qualification

80 marks

Learners will study one of the following six historical topics to undertake an in-depth study that will provide them with an understanding of an issue in European and/or world history.

Medieval

2.1 Genghis Khan c.1162–c.1227: a case study in medieval imperialism

2.2 The Black Death c.1330–c.1360: a case study in medieval society

Early Modern

2.3 The Spanish Conquest of the Aztecs c.1492–c.1525: a case study in early modern colonialism

2.4 Süleyman I c.1520–c.1566: a case study in early modern imperialism

Modern

2.5 The Third Reich c.1933–c.1945: a case study in modern nationalism

2.6 Afghanistan c.1979–c.2001: a case study in modern international relations

For the non-examination assessment, learners will undertake a historical enquiry, providing a focused response on a specific issue.

Learners will complete the assessment of Unit 2 digitally through WJEC's e-assessment platform.

Unit 3: A study of a period in world history

Written examination: 1 hour

30% of qualification

60 marks

Learners will study one of the following six historical topics to undertake a breadth study of an extended historical period.

Medieval

3.1 The Vikings c.750–c.1066

3.2 The Crusades, c.1095–c.1291

Early Modern

3.3 The Songhai Empire, c.1464–c.1591

3.4 The Mughal Empire, c.1526–c.1707

Modern

3.5 Russia and the Soviet Union c.1861–c.1953

3.6 Changes in US society c.1880–c.1980

Each option will be assessed by compulsory questions. These will focus on historical knowledge of the topic, second-order historical concepts and the analysis and evaluation of historical sources and interpretations.

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.

Assessment Objectives

Unit 1

The distribution of the assessment objectives for this unit is:

AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Total
10%	10%	10%	-	30%

Unit 2

The distribution of the assessment objectives for this unit is:

AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Total
-	5%	5%	10%	20%

Unit 3

The distribution of the assessment objectives for this unit is:

AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Total
10%	10%	10%	-	30%

Unit 4

The distribution of the assessment objectives for this unit is:

AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Total
-	5%	5%	10%	20%

Specification and Assessment Pack

When we develop new qualifications, we produce the following documents:

- Specification – this covers all the information and skills that learners are expected to know by the end of their course
- Assessment Pack – this contains the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) i.e.: sample exam papers and sample NEA tasks, relevant controls for the NEA and mark schemes.

This guide builds upon the information in the specification and assessment pack to help further your understanding of said documents.

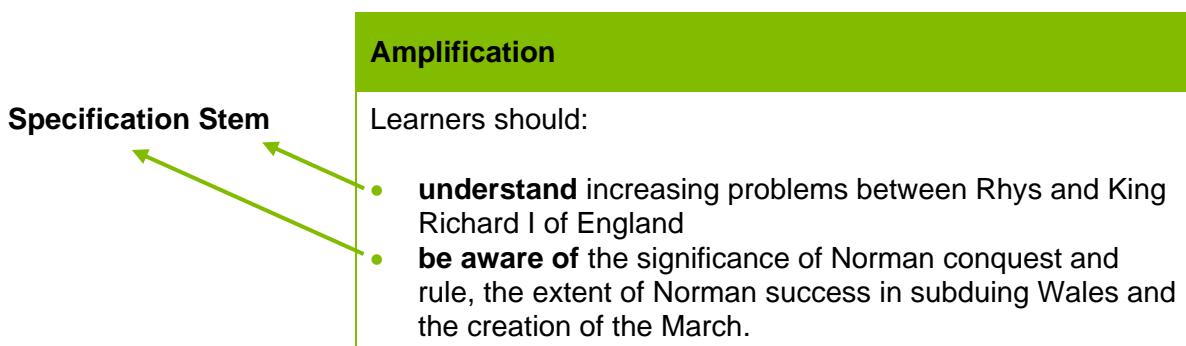
Understanding the specification amplification

Learners should be made aware of:

- the specification stems
- what the specification stems mean.

Specification Stems

When you look through the specification you will notice in the amplification column, we use a variety of wording before the list of content learners need to know; we call this a stem:



Each stem is used for a slightly different reason:

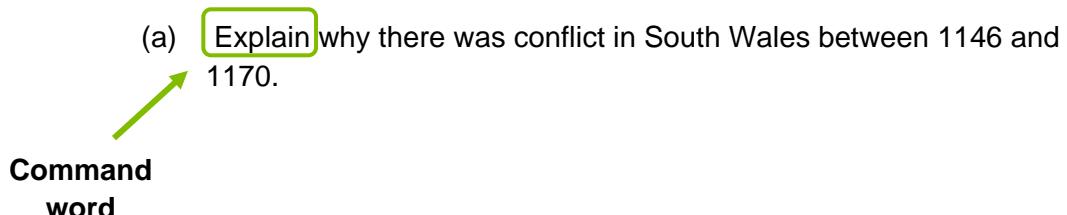
Specification Stem	When it is used
Learners should be aware of	When learners do not need to understand all aspects of the specified content in detail. Teachers should refer to Guidance for Teaching documents for further guidance on the depth and breadth to which this content should be taught.
Learners should understand	When learners are required to demonstrate and apply knowledge to familiar or unfamiliar contexts and can synthesise and evaluate information for a given purpose.
Learners should be able to	When learners need to apply their knowledge and understanding to source material or demonstrate application of practical skills and techniques.

Command words

Learners should be made aware of:

- what command words are
- what each command word means
- what each command word assesses.

Command words are the words and phrases used in assessments that indicate to learners the expectations of the question or task.



The following tables are not exhaustive, but will give you a good idea of the command words we typically use:

Command words for direct recall	
Command Word	Requirements of response
Define	Give the precise meaning of a term.
Describe	Identify distinctive features and give descriptive, factual detail. This is one of the most widely used command words. If an explanation is required then use two command words: 'describe and explain'.
Drag and drop	Move to another part of a screen using a mouse or similar device.
Give	Produce an answer from recall.
Circle/Identify>Select	Point out and name from a number of possibilities.
Label	To designate with a name.
List	State the factors (with no explanation or elaboration).
Name	Identify or make a list.
Outline	Set out the main characteristics.
Sort/Order	Arrange systematically.
State	Express in clear terms.

Command words for application/demonstration of skills	
Command Word	Requirements of response
Clarify	Make (an idea or situation) clear by describing it in more detail.
Complete	Add necessary items/information.
Compose	Write or create.

Demonstrate	Exemplify, describe with reference to examples.
Discuss	Present key points.
Explain	Give reasons or causes. Show an understanding of how or why something has occurred.
Explore	Investigate without preconceptions about the outcome.
Investigate	Carry out research or study into a subject or problem.
Select/Choose	Make an appropriate choice from a range of options.
Suggest	Put forward an idea, reason or course of action.
Summarise	Give a shortened version of something, stating its main points without detail.
Use	Apply the information provided to a particular theory or concept. Employ, take or hold something for a purpose.

Command words for synthesis and evaluation

Command Word	Requirements of response
Analyse	Separate information into components identify their characteristics.
Argue	Present a reasoned case.
Assess	This is an evaluative question, meaning that there are a number of possible explanations/arguments/outcomes. Make an informed judgement. Make a judgement about the quality or value of something.
Compare	Identify similarities .
Consider	Review and respond to given info.
Contrast	Identify differences only .
Discuss	Examine an issue in detail in a structured way, taking into account different ideas.
Evaluate	Judge from available evidence.
Examine	Investigate closely.
Judge	To form an opinion/decide upon critically.
Justify	Support case with evidence.
Reflect	To consider thoughts, experiences, situation or issue.
Review	To consider something with the intention making changes if necessary.
Suggest	State a possible reason or course of action.
Support	To maintain or advocate.
Synthesise	Combine information, objects or ideas.

Items, Sources and Interpretations

Term	Definition
Items	Items will then be the term used in assessments to label specific pieces of content, covering both contemporary sources and historical interpretations.
Sources	Source material is contemporary to the period.
Interpretations	Interpretation material is created after the period.

Mark Schemes

Mark schemes and/or assessment criteria test the intended learning outcomes for a unit. They describe the knowledge and skills (and possibly attitude) that a candidate is expected to demonstrate in their responses and they are then used in marking the work.

Objective based mark scheme:

For very short answer questions requiring one correct response.

Question		Answer	AO1	AO2	AO3	Total Mark
1	(a)	Which castle was captured by Deheubarth in 1145?				
		Award one mark for: • Carmarthen.	1			1

Levels based mark schemes:

For questions requiring extended responses

Question 2		
Explain why there was conflict in South Wales between 1146 and 1170.		[10]
Indicative Content		
Candidates may respond to the question by offering the following suggestions. The list is not exhaustive and other responses may be acceptable.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Normans had taken Deheubarth from Rhys ap Tewdwr in 1093 and his family had been fighting for its return since 1116 • On the death of Gruffudd ap Rhys his children, including Rhys ap Gruffudd, had continued to fight for the return of this territory • The Norman lords lacked the support of a strong monarch in England to support them as the throne of England was contested until 1154 • There was ongoing competition with Gwynedd for territory as Owain Gwynedd was also taking advantage of Norman weakness to expand his territory • The accession of Henry II to the throne in England in 1154 led to renewed attacks on the territories of Welsh rulers, including the invasion of Deheubarth in 1163 • In 1163 Rhys ap Gruffudd made an alliance against the English with Owain Gwynedd as part of a Welsh revolt against English invasions which resulted in successful campaigns for the Welsh and peace with Henry II by 1170. 		
Band	AO1	AO2
5	<p>5 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive level of relevant knowledge • Comprehensive understanding of the issue in the question. 	<p>5 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive application of knowledge and understanding to answer the set question • Comprehensively addresses the relevant historical concept.

4	<p>4 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good level of relevant knowledge • Good understanding of the issue in the question. 	<p>4 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good application of knowledge and understanding to answer the set question • Addresses the relevant historical concept well.
3	<p>3 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A satisfactory level of relevant knowledge • Satisfactory understanding of the issue in the question. 	<p>3 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory application of knowledge and understanding to answer the set question • Addresses the relevant historical concept satisfactorily.
2	<p>2 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited relevant knowledge • Limited understanding of the issue in the question. 	<p>2 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited application of knowledge and understanding to answer the set question • Limited attempt to address the relevant historical concept.
1	<p>1 mark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal relevant knowledge • Minimal understanding of the issue in the question. 	<p>1 mark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal application of knowledge and understanding to answer the set question.
0 marks No response attempted or nothing worthy of credit.		

Important Dates

First Teaching of WJEC GCSE History	September 2026
First release of Unit 2	January 2027 (Assessment items pre-released in June 2026)
First assessment for Unit 1	Summer 2027
First assessment for Unit 3	Summer 2027
First submission of Unit 2	January-March 2027
First release of Unit 4	September 2027
First submission of Unit 4	Summer 2028
First Certification	Summer 2028