

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

**History Department
Assessment Criteria – Essays and
Dissertations**

First (70 and above) NB: the criteria in italics included in this category describe work that falls in the upper end of the first class band (80+)	Upper Second (60-69)	Lower Second (50 - 59)	Third (40 - 49)	Fail (39 and below)
ARGUMENT and STRUCTURE				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student engages closely with question; shows sophisticated appreciation of its wider implications. <i>Student challenges or extends the terms of the question.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student displays understanding of question, shows appreciation of some of its wider implications, and makes serious attempt to engage with question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student displays some understanding of question, but may lack sustained focus or may show only modest understanding of the question's wider implications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student displays little understanding of question, and tends to write indiscriminately around the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student fails to engage with question in any meaningful way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structure of answer facilitates clear, coherent, compelling development of student's argument. <i>A sustained effort to develop an innovative structure that supports the argument.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structure of answer facilitates clear development of student's argument. Towards lower end of mark band, analytical approach not sustained throughout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structure of answer may be heavily influenced by material at student's disposal rather than requirements of question. Ideas may be stated rather than developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structure of answer underdeveloped; argument may be incomplete and unfold in haphazard or undisciplined manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structure of answer unclear or absent.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student moves between generalization and detailed analysis; student able to synthesize as well as particularize. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student moves between generalization and detailed analysis, although may be a tendency towards either an over-generalized or an over-particularized response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student prone to excessive narrative or mere description; may display knowledge without reference to the precise requirements of the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student prone to excessive narrative, and argument signposted by bald assertion rather than informed generalizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student fails to present an argument.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer develops the student's own ideas and presents independent lines of thought. <i>Intellectual independence, grounded in a mature consideration of available evidence.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student has not fully developed their own ideas, but presents ideas with a degree of intellectual independence. Demonstrates the ability to reflect on the past and its interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer unlikely to show any originality in approach or argument, and may tend towards assertion of essentially derivative ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows no intentional originality of approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows no sign of originality of approach.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer goes well beyond paraphrasing of other historians' ideas. Demonstrates conceptual command of the historical/historiographical issues at stake. <i>Essay presents the student's own historiographical interventions.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer deploys other historians' ideas and seeks to move beyond them. Answer also shows appreciation of the extent to which historical explanations are contested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows some understanding of historians' ideas, but may not reflect critically upon them. Problematic nature of historical explanations may be imperfectly understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows little appreciation of either historians' ideas or the problematic or contested nature of historical explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows no awareness of problematic or contested nature of historical explanations.
WRITING and STYLE				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Writing and referencing clear, fluent, and accurate. Range of vocabulary and linguistic idioms appropriate to the case being developed. <i>A personal style that enhances the clarity and effectiveness of the argument.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Writing and referencing clear and generally accurate: will demonstrate appreciation of technical and advanced vocabulary used by historians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Writing sufficiently accurate to convey meaning clearly, but may lack fluency and command of scholarly idioms used by historians. Clumsy expression in places. Referencing may be imprecise at times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Writing generally grammatical, but lacks sophistication of vocabulary or construction to sustain complex historical argument. In places, the writing may lack clarity/felicity of expression. Referencing insufficient or imprecise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Writing characterised by poor grammar and syntax; writing lacks appropriate vocabulary for historical argument; writing lacks clarity. Lack of referencing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Writing exhibits excellent grammar, syntax and spelling, with a rich and advanced vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student's command of grammar, syntax and spelling is competent, and allows them to express their meaning clearly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student's command of basic grammar, syntax and spelling is sufficient to make their meaning clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student's command of basic grammar, syntax and spelling is not sufficient to make their meaning clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contains frequent and serious errors in basic grammar, syntax and spelling.

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KNOWLEDGE and RESEARCH				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge relevant, both broad and deep, including knowledge of contemporary sources, historiography, secondary literature. Extensive range of reading. <i>Innovative and autonomous research.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge extensive, but might be uneven. Demonstrated knowledge includes reference to relevant contemporary and historiographical sources. Considerable range of reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge significant, but may be limited and patchy. Some inaccuracy, but sound basic knowledge. Limited range of reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge sufficient to frame basic answer to question, but limited and patchy. Some inaccuracy. Slight if relevant reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge insufficient to frame answer to question. Slight or non-existent reading.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates clear sense of the nature and complexity of historical causality. <i>Student offers their own causal account of the question.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates sense of the nature of historical causality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows some limited awareness of historical causality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows some understanding of historical causality but underdeveloped; ideas of historians and other students muddled or misrepresented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer shows no understanding of historical causality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student shows ability to evaluate nature and status of information at disposal. Where necessary identifies contradiction and attempts resolution. <i>Student successfully develops their own critical analysis of the information at their disposal.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student reflects on nature and status of information at disposal, and seeks to use it critically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student uses information rather uncritically, without serious attempts to evaluate its status and significance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student provides sufficient information to launch answer, but not to sustain complete response. Information used uncritically as if self-explanatory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student provides insufficient information to launch answer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates informed and secure understanding of historical period(s) under discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates secure understanding of the historical period(s) under discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates some appreciation of historical period(s) under discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates only rudimentary appreciation of historical period(s) under discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Answer demonstrates no appreciation of historical period(s) under discussion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Descriptive material and factual evidence deployed in order to support and develop argument; vigorous sense of relevance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Descriptive material and factual evidence deployed relevantly. Towards lower end of mark band, full implications of evidence not always brought out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Descriptive material and factual evidence deployed, but not necessarily with critical reflections characteristic of answers in higher mark bands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some descriptive material and factual evidence deployed, but without critical reflection on its significance and relevance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Descriptive or factual material used is irrelevant, or deployed without critical reflection.