

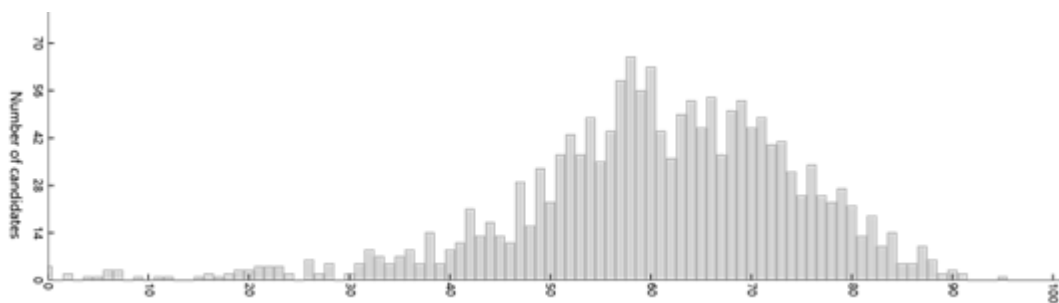


Summary report of the 2021 ATAR course examination report: Modern History

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2021	1681	38
2020	1731	31
2019	1828	125
2018	2004	28

The number of candidates sitting and the number attempting each section of the examination can differ as a result of non-attempts across sections of the examination.

Examination score distribution



Summary

Attempted by 1681 candidates Mean 60.17% Max 94.50 Min 0.00
Overall, the examination was well received by stakeholders and, as in previous years, the standard of responses from candidates indicated it was generally equitable and accessible, and that the Modern History syllabus is, in the most part, being effectively delivered across the state.

Russia and the Soviet Union 1914–1945 and the changing European world since 1945 remain by far the most popular electives studied in Units 3 and 4 respectively.

Section means were:

Section One: Source analysis – Unit 3	Mean 62.90%		
Attempted by 1676 candidates	Mean 15.72(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Essay – Unit 3	Mean 61.70%		
Attempted by 1654 candidates	Mean 15.43(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Source analysis – Unit 4	Mean 57.08%		
Attempted by 1663 candidates	Mean 14.27(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Four: Essay – Unit 4	Mean 59.00%		
Attempted by 1631 candidates	Mean 14.75(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00

General Comments

Most candidates attempted all questions. However, the continued lower performance for the Unit 4 Source analysis and Unit 4 Essay in comparison for Unit 3 indicates that time management across all four sections of the paper remains an issue. In the Source analysis sections, the small changes in marks allocation and question order were negotiated well by most candidates.

Feedback from all stakeholders indicated that the essay questions in both Units 3 and 4 were generally equitable and accessible, and this is supported by the individual question means and by the healthy spread of candidates choosing different essay questions within each context, with some exceptions discussed below.

Advice for candidates

- In the Source analysis sections, you need to look carefully at the wording and marks allocations for each question, rather than simply assuming they are unchanged from previous years.
- Ensure that you answer the specific requirements of each of the Source analysis questions. For example, discussing the topic or focus of a source does not meet the requirement of discussing its message. You must identify the creator's viewpoint or position on that topic or focus. For example, when discussing usefulness, you are encouraged to pay more attention to the provenance of the source itself, rather than just its message/content, in order to explore more deeply how the source is useful in the context of the question.
- Ensure time management is a focus. If you run out of time in the last section, it may adversely affect your overall mark.
- When writing in additional pages, state on which pages your answers are continued and label these additions with the question number.
- The order and weighting of questions in the source analyses is not set in stone. This year there were changes to the allocation of marks for the questions on historical context and purpose. Be prepared for changes from year to year.

Advice for teachers

- Use of quotations: it was raised again by several markers that there is an increasing tendency of candidates to frequently cite or quote their textbook for straightforward facts, which did not necessarily add any weight to their response. Anecdotal evidence suggests that candidates are being trained to include quotes in the belief that regular quotes are necessary to achieve high marks. A 'less is more' approach might work better. A few judicious quotes used in key places is encouraged in order to enhance their impact.
- The issue of using content that predates the start of the study period for a chosen elective also is worth addressing in class. It was an issue for several questions and sections of the examination (such as Question 6, Questions 11 (c) and (d) for the Europe since 1945 elective, and Question 18.) At each of these questions, knowledge of content from prior to the period of study was often used by candidates to frame responses to the questions. Such content is acceptable if used effectively to construct an argument in response to the question. If it simply forms part of an extended narrative, then it is not considered valid. Clarify this use of content with your students. They are not obliged to refer to content outside the study period designated for an elective but may do so if referenced effectively in relation to the given question.
- Give your students essay writing practice under timed conditions with a focus on formulating sustained arguments throughout an extended piece of writing.
- Remind students that the order and allocation of marks for the Source analysis questions can vary year on year. The question types, however, will remain the same as per the examination design brief.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Generally, in the Source analysis sections, the topics and question structure were well received, and they were considered to have an appropriate degree of difficulty. Electives were considered to be comparable, particularly the way in which Sources 3 and 4 across all electives focused on the role and experience of women during wartime. The issue of

candidates not completing all sections of the paper in full continues, as has been noted in previous years, with markers commenting on the sometimes very short Unit 4 essays.

Section One: Source analysis – Unit 3 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1676 candidates Mean 15.72(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

For Question 1 part (b) across all three electives, there continued to be a number of candidates who focused on the topic of the source/s rather than their message/s. It perhaps needs to be emphasised that discussing the topic or focus of the source is not the same as its message. Instead, they should identify the creator's viewpoint or position on that topic or focus. It was widely noted for Question 1 part (c) that there was a return by many candidates to a more simplistic exploration of usefulness: that the source is strong because it shows x, but limited because it does not show y or z. Many candidates made little connection to the topic of the question – the significance of war/conflict. Many candidates approached Question 1 part (e) by discussing the insight provided by each source individually, rather than considering them as a set, which often resulted in a recapitulation of what each source showed. Some candidates focused too much on what was omitted from the sources. However, stronger answers were clearly able to identify the kinds of impacts reflected in the sources, and the extent to which that provided insight into the overall impact of war/conflict on their nation.

Section Two: Essay – Unit 3 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1654 candidates Mean 15.43(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

Overall the Unit 3 Essay section was well received and seen as equitable and accessible with a good range of the syllabus covered by the questions. It was noted that the first essay for each elective, which required the articulation of an idea, and an exploration of the extent to which that idea was evident in the society studied was the least popular option in each section. However stronger candidates were able to score very heavily on this question as it provided real scope to demonstrate sophisticated historical knowledge and understanding.

Section Three: Source analysis – Unit 4 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1663 candidates Mean 14.27(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

While the focus and content of the sources in Section Three was well received, several issues were identified that cut across all electives. For Question 11 part (b), issues of approach to purpose were evident. Candidates generally spent more time describing the purpose of each source, and less on comparing and contrasting the purposes, which therefore limited their achieved marks. Additionally, those comparisons and contrasts often either just restated what they had written earlier or lapsed into a discussion of the message of each source. Engaging with purpose beyond just to show or to get across a message continued to be a challenge for some candidates. Stronger answers engaged with the creator and likely audience of the source in order to draw out detailed comparisons and contrasts. Further, for Question 11 part (d), several of the text sources proved challenging for candidates to effectively discuss contestability. Markers highlighted the problematic approach to Question 11 part (e), where candidates, instead of identifying what economic changes were represented in the sources and then evaluating their importance, continued to either describe what was shown in each source or commented on how well the source depicted the change, essentially mirroring the structure adopted for Question 1 part (e).

Section Four: Essay – Unit 4 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1631 candidates Mean 14.75(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

It was pleasing to see a significantly improved performance indicating both better time management from many candidates and an equitable and accessible range of essay questions.