Government of **Western Australia**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority

Summary report of the 2017 ATAR course examination:
Modern History

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2017	2178	23
2016	2295	36

Examination score distribution – Written
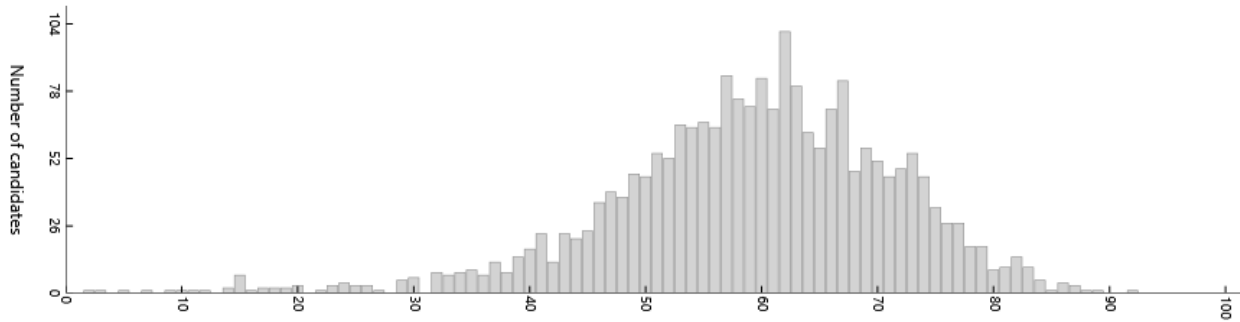
Summary

Attempted by 2178 candidates   Mean 58.87%   Max 91.50% Min 1.50%

The examination structure was unchanged from 2016 and consisted of four sections with candidates being required to attempt all questions in Sections One and Three and to choose one of three questions available in both Sections Two and Four appropriate to the elective they studied. There was a wide range of answer quality across all sections and question types, so the paper seemed to work well in discriminating candidate ability and challenging candidates to demonstrate their historical knowledge and skills. The spread of marks ranged from 1.50% to 91.50% and the overall mean was 58.87%.

Section means were:
Section One: Source analysis–Unit 3   Mean 62.58%
Attempted by 2174 candidates   Mean 15.65(/25)   Max 24.00   Min 0.00
Section Two: Essay–Unit 3   Mean 57.75%
Attempted by 2154 candidates   Mean 14.44(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Section Three: Source analysis–Unit 4   Mean 59.79%
Attempted by 2161 candidates   Mean 14.95(/25)   Max 24.50   Min 0.00
Section Four: Essay–Unit 4   Mean 57.66%
Attempted by 2137 candidates   Mean 14.42(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00

General comments

The candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the narrative for each elective and this is an area that has improved significantly over time which is very pleasing to see. The evident lack of depth of debate in the majority of responses remains an issue which needs to be addressed. Historical skills have not been consolidated for many candidates, their knowledge and understanding has got better and better each year, but further work is needed on the skills of constructing a clear debate.

Advice for candidates
- Ensure that you read and examine the sources for your elective closely.
- Consider the wording of essay questions carefully in order to determine what is being signalled as the focus for your response.
- Ensure that you maintain this focus in your essay and do not get drawn into merely 'telling a story.'

Advice for teachers
- Prepare students to interpret essay questions, to highlight the key content that the question addresses and to write essays that focus on the expectations signalled in the question.
- Emphasise to students that they need to avoid being drawn into writing a narrative.

Comments on specific sections and questions
Section One: Source analysis – Unit 3 (25 Marks)
Attempted by 2174 candidates   Mean 15.65(/25)   Max 24.00   Min 0.00
Overall, candidates in all three contexts continue to confuse the terms 'purpose' and 'message' or ignore, or don't understand the term 'evaluate'.

Section Two: Essay – Unit 3 (25 Marks)
Attempted by 2153   Mean 14.44(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Overall there is a tendency for candidates to use quotes 'come hell or high water' that they have pre-learnt even when they are contextually irrelevant for a specific question. The biggest issue is the lack of depth of debate that was given in the majority of the scripts. The knowledge of the narrative in each elective has improved significantly over time. However, the fact that many candidates give one statement in an introduction and then write to prove that statement is not debate, it is analysis. It is the skills that have not been consolidated for many candidates, their knowledge and understanding has improved each year but there needs to be further work on the skills of putting a clear debate down on paper. This hampers candidates' opportunities for achieving higher marks in the essay sections of the paper. Not enough candidates engage with the different perspectives that are required for higher-scoring responses. All candidates need to be aware that History questions require looking at a topic from more than one perspective, whether it be to evaluate, assess or analyse the topic.

Section Three: Source analysis – Unit 4 (25 Marks)
Attempted by 2161 candidates   Mean 14.95(/25)   Max 24.50   Min 0.00
Overall, candidates in all three contexts continue to confuse the terms 'purpose' and 'message' and don't understand the term contestability and ignore or don't understand the term 'evaluate'.

The wording of Question 11(e) was perhaps misleading for candidates as it spoke of leadership as if it was an idea, rather than a force as set out by the syllabus. This had the unintentional flow on effect of candidates choosing leadership as a key idea to write about in Questions 13, 16 and 19.

Section Four: Essay – Unit 4 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 2137   Mean 14.42(/25)   Max 25.00 Min 0.00

As for Section Two, the biggest issue remains the lack of depth of debate that was given in the majority of the papers. The knowledge of the narrative in each elective has improved significantly over time and this has been great to see. However, the fact that many candidates give one statement in an introduction and then write to prove that statement is not debate; it is analysis, but not debate (as required by the question itself). For many candidates it is the skills that have not been consolidated. Not enough candidates engage with the different perspectives that are required for higher-scoring responses. All candidates need to be aware that History questions require looking at a topic from more than one perspective, whether it be to evaluate, assess or analyse the topic.