



MODERN HISTORY

General course

Year 12 syllabus for teaching from 2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Important information

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) has revised the course rationale and aims, and updated the General Capabilities to create clearer connections with the syllabus content.

This syllabus is effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of this syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

The Modern History General course provides students with an understanding of the driving forces behind present-day local, national and global issues by investigating the past. The course helps students understand why and how groups and/or societies changed or resisted change over time.

The course provides students with opportunities to examine the various forces for continuity and change, how individuals and groups either support or oppose change and the different methods and strategies that are used to achieve significant changes in society. The course promotes the skills of research, hypothesis testing and analysis of information as students engage with investigations. Through inquiries carried out in the course, students learn that historical judgements are provisional and tentative in nature. They are encouraged to question and evaluate historical sources to identify the various representations and versions of history.

Students develop critical thinking skills throughout the course, which encourages them to compare information, detect inconsistencies in details, recognise the manipulation of evidence, identify perspective in the presentation of graphic and textual material, and evaluate the accuracy and reliability of sources. The course gives students opportunities to reflect on the significance of past events, people, beliefs and ideas, while providing insights into the present. They learn how to use evidence from sources to formulate and support their own interpretations and to communicate their findings in a variety of ways.

The course provides students with skills, knowledge and understanding that help them develop insight into their own society and its values, and how this influences their daily lives. By studying history, students gain essential knowledge of the past, its legacy and heritage. It helps them understand why nations and people hold certain values, and why values and belief systems vary from one group to another. This knowledge is crucial for students to become active and informed citizens in any society.

The Modern History General course provides students with skills, knowledge and understanding as a basis for further study at the vocational level and may be used as an alternative entry pathway for university. Critical thinking and analysis, the ability to independently locate information and conduct inquiry, as well as effective written communication skills are transferable and applicable to a variety of future career options in fields such as working in museums and libraries, the legal field, education, journalism or the film industry.

Aims

The Modern History General course aims to develop students’:

- knowledge and understanding of particular events, ideas, people, movements and developments that have shaped the modern world
- ability to undertake historical inquiry, including skills in research, evaluation of sources, synthesis of evidence, analysis of interpretations and representations, and communication of findings
- application of historical concepts, including evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy and perspectives
- capacity to be informed citizens with the skills, including analytical and critical thinking to participate in contemporary debates.

Organisation

This course is organised into a Year 11 syllabus and a Year 12 syllabus. The cognitive complexity of the syllabus content increases from Year 11 to Year 12.

Structure of the syllabus

The Year 12 syllabus is divided into two units which are delivered as a pair. The notional time for the pair of units is 110 class contact hours.

Unit 3 – Societies and change

Students learn about the evolving nature of societies and the various forces for continuity and change that exist.

Unit 4 – Historical trends and movements

Students understand that throughout history there have been events, ideas, beliefs and values that have contributed to historical trends and movements.

Each unit includes:

- a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit
- electives – an elective in which the unit content could be taught
- unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

Organisation of content

The Modern History General course continues to develop student learning in history through the two strands of Historical Knowledge and Understanding and Historical Skills. This strand organisation provides an opportunity to integrate content in flexible and meaningful ways.

Historical Knowledge and Understanding

In order for students to make meaning of the past, they examine a range of historical narratives to develop understandings about the chronology of a time period. They examine the defining characteristics of a society at the start of the period; the key people, ideas and events that were forces for continuity and change during the period; and the consequences of continuity and change on a society at the time, at a later time and/or upon other societies. Through the study of a range of

historical narratives, they learn that historical narratives are set within a defined period of time, reflect a particular view of history that may be similar to, or different from other historical narratives, and that the narratives are supported with evidence.

Historical Skills

This strand presents historical skills, including skills that are used in historical inquiry. There are five skill areas that build on those learned in the Year 7–10 History curriculum and which continue to be developed in the Year 11 and Year 12 Modern History General syllabuses. These are chronology, terms and concepts; historical questions and research; analysis and use of sources; perspectives and interpretations; and explanation and communication. There is an emphasis through this strand on the development of informed and defensible responses to inquiry questions through a critical use of sources.

Relationship between the strands

The two strands are interrelated and the content enables integration of the strands in the development of a teaching and learning program. The Historical Knowledge and Understanding strand provides the contexts through which particular skills are to be developed. The same set of historical skills is included in each of the units to provide a common focus for the teaching and learning content in the Historical Knowledge and Understanding strand.

Representation of the General Capabilities

The General Capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will support students to live and work successfully now and into the future. They are not assessed unless identified within the specified unit content. Teachers should find opportunities to incorporate the following General Capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Modern History General course.

Critical and creative thinking

Students use critical and creative thinking to engage in the historical inquiry process by developing questions to investigate complex issues and topics. They have opportunities to delve deeply and broadly into the implications of missing or questionable information in their investigation of historical topics. Students develop the ability to pose thoughtful questions, interrogate, select and cross-reference significant information from a range of sources, and develop interpretations based on an assessment of the evidence and reasoning. They identify possible weaknesses in their own positions, and analyse, evaluate and synthesise alternative interpretations and representations of the past.

Ethical understanding

Students develop ethical understanding by exploring, understanding and analysing the diverse perspectives and circumstances that shaped the actions and possible motivations of people in the past, compared with those of today. They have opportunities, both independently and collaboratively, to examine the values, beliefs and principles that were the basis for judgements and actions of people in the past, and to explore examples of tensions between conflicting positions of personal, social and global importance.

Intercultural understanding

Students develop their intercultural understanding by exploring and appreciating the diverse beliefs, values and experiences of cultural groups throughout history. By examining the causes and consequences of intercultural conflict, cooperation and dispossession, students develop empathy and insight into how cultural perspectives have shaped societies and global relationships. They critically reflect on how historical contexts influence contemporary views and actions, fostering a deeper awareness of the complexities of identity, power and cultural interaction in the modern world.

Literacy

Students develop literacy skills by accessing historical content through a variety of print, oral, visual, spatial and electronic forms, including letters, speeches, biographies, photographs, films, artefacts and archived material. They learn to interpret and extrapolate meaning from a variety of sources to identify evidence. Students analyse and evaluate texts for authority, reliability, relevance and accuracy. They have opportunities to create a wide range of texts to communicate, explore, discuss, explain and argue a point of view, selecting and employing text structure and language knowledge to express their thoughts and ideas logically and fluently, supported by evidence. Students learn to monitor their own language for accuracy in the use of historical terms, clarity of ideas and explanations, and conciseness of expression. They learn to use language effectively to articulate a position.

Addressing the other General Capabilities

Although the following General Capabilities have not been identified as a focus in the Modern History General Year 12 syllabus, teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program.

- Digital literacy
- Numeracy
- Personal and social capability

Such opportunities may occur through the application of different contexts, pedagogical practices and/or assessment strategies that relate to the syllabus as part of the teaching and learning program.

Summary representation of the General Capabilities in the Modern History General course

The unit content and assessment types for this course provide students with the opportunity to develop the General Capabilities summarised in the table below.

Year	Course	Course type	General Capabilities						
			CCT	DL	EU	IU	L	N	PSC
Year 11	Modern History (GEHIM)	General	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Year 12	Modern History (GTHIM)	General	✓		✓	✓	✓		

Key

CCT: Critical and creative thinking, DL: Digital literacy, EU: Ethical understanding, IU: Intercultural understanding, L: Literacy, N: Numeracy, PSC: Personal and social capability

Representation of the Cross-curriculum Priorities

The Cross-curriculum Priorities address the contemporary issues which students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program for the Modern History General course. The Cross-curriculum Priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures includes study of the ideas that have influenced movements for change, the impact of government policies, the progress towards recognition and equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and the focus of continued efforts.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia includes the paths of development taken by Asian nations, the distinctive and changing character of Asia, and the growing influence of Asia in the world.

Sustainability

Sustainability provides opportunities to study the effects of developments, such as the Industrial Revolution on the environment, the anti-nuclear movement, and movements for environmental sustainability in the modern period.

Unit 3 – Societies and change

Unit description

Students learn about the evolving nature of societies and the various forces for continuity and change that exist. Students learn that some values, beliefs and traditions are linked to the identity of a society. They also learn that, in any period of change, there are those individuals and institutions that support change, but others that oppose it, and that there are different interpretations of the resultant society.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Historical Skills

The following skills will be developed during this unit.

Chronology, terms and concepts

- identify links between events to understand the nature and significance of causation, continuity and change over time
- use historical terms and concepts in appropriate contexts to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding

Historical questions and research

- formulate, test and modify propositions to investigate historical issues
- frame questions to guide inquiry and develop a coherent research plan for inquiry
- identify, locate and organise relevant information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- practise ethical scholarship when conducting research

Analysis and use of sources

- identify the origin, purpose and context of historical sources
- analyse, interpret and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop and sustain an historical argument
- evaluate the reliability, usefulness and contestable nature of sources to develop informed judgements that support an historical argument

Perspectives and interpretations

- analyse and account for the different perspectives of individuals and groups in the past
- evaluate critically different historical interpretations of the past, how they evolved, and how they are shaped by the historian's perspective
- evaluate contested views about the past to understand the provisional nature of historical knowledge and to arrive at reasoned and supported conclusions

Explanation and communication

- develop texts that integrate appropriate evidence from a range of sources to explain the past and to support and refute arguments
- communicate historical understanding by selecting and using text forms appropriate to the purpose and audience
- apply appropriate referencing techniques accurately and consistently

Historical Knowledge and Understanding

Students study **one** of the following electives which is to be taught with the requisite historical skills described as part of this unit.

- The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain 1750–1890s
- Australia 1914–1949
- The Meiji Restoration 1853–1911
- The USA between the wars 1918–1941
- India 1919–1948 – a study of the end of the British Empire

The impact of the following forces should be considered, where appropriate, throughout the elective:

- political
- economic
- leadership
- international relations/conflicts
- social/cultural.

Students study the chosen elective using the following framework.

Elements of a society at the start of the period

- key political, social and economic structures of a society at the start of the period
- values, beliefs and traditions that have become integral to the society
- individuals and groups who hold power and those who do not
- relative importance of events, issues, people and other factors in shaping the nature of society at that particular time

Key people, ideas and events over the period

- relationship between events, ideas and people throughout the period
- methods and strategies used by leaders, individuals and groups seeking change
- extent of support for opposing leaders, individuals, groups or organisations and alternative ideas throughout the period

Consequences of continuity and change over the period

- impact of historical forces on individuals and groups
- various forms of continuity and change throughout the period of study
- extent of economic, political and social change compared to the start of the period

Unit 4 – Historical trends and movements

Unit description

Students learn that, throughout history, there have been events, ideas, beliefs and values that have contributed to underlying historical trends and movements. Students learn that historical trends and movements have particular underlying ideas, that different methods and strategies are used to achieve change, and that there are consequences for continuity and change. Some perspectives are omitted and others emphasised, both during the period of the trend or movement and subsequent to the trend or movement.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Historical Skills

The following skills will be developed during this unit.

Chronology, terms and concepts

- identify links between events to understand the nature and significance of causation, continuity and change over time
- use historical terms and concepts in appropriate contexts to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding

Historical questions and research

- formulate, test and modify propositions to investigate historical issues
- frame questions to guide inquiry and develop a coherent research plan for inquiry
- identify, locate and organise relevant information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- practise ethical scholarship when conducting research

Analysis and use of sources

- identify the origin, purpose and context of historical sources
- analyse, interpret and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop and sustain an historical argument
- evaluate the reliability, usefulness and contestable nature of sources to develop informed judgements that support an historical argument

Perspectives and interpretations

- analyse and account for the different perspectives of individuals and groups in the past
- evaluate critically different historical interpretations of the past, how they evolved, and how they are shaped by the historian's perspective
- evaluate contested views about the past to understand the provisional nature of historical knowledge and to arrive at reasoned and supported conclusions

Explanation and communication

- develop texts that integrate appropriate evidence from a range of sources to explain the past and to support and refute arguments
- communicate historical understanding by selecting and using text forms appropriate to the purpose and audience
- apply appropriate referencing techniques accurately and consistently

Historical Knowledge and Understanding

Students study **one** of the following electives which is to be taught with the requisite historical skills described as part of this unit:

- Post-war decolonisation movements in Algeria or Congo or Vietnam or Indonesia or East Timor
- Women's movements in the 20th century
- Nazism in Germany 1918–1945
- The civil rights movement in the USA 1941–1971
- Terrorism and peace movements 1946–2001

The impact of the following forces should be considered where appropriate throughout the elective:

- political
- economic
- leadership
- international relations/conflicts
- social/cultural.

Students study the chosen elective using the following framework.

Elements of a society at the start of the period

- key political, social and economic structures of a society at the start of the period
- values, beliefs and traditions that have changed or remained the same
- means by which individuals and groups have gained power and authority
- the relationship between events, ideas, people and other factors underlying the nature of the society to that point

Key people, ideas and events over the period

- events that contributed to the development of particular movements or trends throughout the period
- key ideas underlying movements or trends, what they were, and how they were articulated by groups and their leaders
- methods and strategies used by leaders, individuals and groups to achieve their aims

Consequences of continuity and change over the period

- the impact of special circumstances or situations on various forms of continuity and change
- consequences of historical movements or trends on political, cultural, social, military and legal structures within a society throughout the period of study
- the effectiveness of individuals and groups in achieving their aims
- evidence of continuity and/or change to the values, beliefs and attitudes of a society as a result of historical movements or trends

School-based assessment

The *Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual* contains essential information on principles, policies and procedures for school-based assessment that needs to be read in conjunction with this syllabus.

Teachers design school-based assessment tasks to meet the needs of students. The table below provides details of the assessment types for the Modern History General Year 12 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 12

Type of assessment	Weighting
Historical inquiry Students use the relevant historical skills to plan, conduct and communicate an inquiry related to the elective they are studying. The inquiry proposition is devised by the teacher. The final presentation can be: a written report that includes timelines, flow diagrams, photographs; an analysis of sources used in the inquiry; a multimodal presentation that can include posters, museum displays, re-enactments, PowerPoints, video, websites and which can be presented individually or in a group.	20%
Explanation A response in the form of: a short answer or set of short answers; an extended answer which can be scaffolded or sectionalised essay questions and can contain timelines, flow diagrams; oral presentations that can be in the form of a debate, hypothetical, group presentation and/or re-enactment for one or more closed or open questions. An explanation can involve: responding to propositions or points of debate; explanations or evaluations of historical evidence; and interpretations and/or representations.	25%
Source analysis A number of sources are interpreted, analysed, evaluated and/or synthesized. Questions typically uses evidence from the sources when commenting on: message; origin, purpose and context; reliability, usefulness and contestability of the evidence; perspective; and relevance to the context. The teacher can select the sources and provide the questions, or a student, or group of students, can select a range of sources to respond to questions provided by the teacher. Source materials can include: photographs, cartoons, paintings, graphs, government papers, extracts from newspaper articles, letters, and diaries.	25%
Test Can be conducted at the end of each semester and/or unit. Typically, a combination of closed or open questions that are elective specific.	15%
Externally set task A written task or item or set of items of 50 minutes duration developed by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and administered by the school.	15%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units.

The assessment outline must:

- include a set of assessment tasks
- include a general description of each task
- indicate the unit content to be assessed
- indicate a weighting for each task and each assessment type
- include the approximate timing of each task (for example, the week the task is conducted, or the issue and submission dates for an extended task).

In the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least once over the year/pair of units. The externally set task occurs in Term 2.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes. For example, student performance for an historical inquiry could be validated by, for example, a student/teacher interview, a declaration that all reference material is cited according to the school protocols, a learning journal or a research organiser.

Externally set task

All students enrolled in the Modern History General Year 12 course will complete the externally set task developed by the Authority. Schools are required to administer this task in Term 2 at a time prescribed by the Authority.

Externally set task design brief – Year 12

Time	50 minutes
Format	Written
	Conducted under invigilated conditions
	Typically between four and five questions
	All questions require students to refer to the material provided in a source booklet
Content	The Authority informs schools during Term 3 of the previous year of the Unit 3 syllabus content on which the task will be based

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information.

Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Excellent achievement
B	High achievement
C	Satisfactory achievement
D	Limited achievement
E	Very low achievement

The teacher prepares a ranked list and assigns the student a grade for the pair of units. The grade is based on the student's overall performance as judged by reference to a set of pre-determined standards. These standards are defined by grade descriptions and annotated work samples. The grade descriptions for the Modern History General Year 12 syllabus are provided in Appendix 1. They can also be accessed, together with annotated work samples, through the Guide to Grades link on the course page of the Authority website at www.scsa.wa.edu.au.

To be assigned a grade, a student must have had the opportunity to complete the education program, including the assessment program (unless the school accepts that there are exceptional and justifiable circumstances).

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information about the use of a ranked list in the process of assigning grades.

Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 12

A	Historical Skills Selects a wide range of appropriate sources and analyses these for: message; origin, purpose and context; reliability and usefulness; perspective; contestability. Responds to key words in research or essay questions, accurately applying evidence and historical understandings from appropriately acknowledged sources. Identifies and explains why historical perspectives and interpretations change. Uses appropriate historical terms and concepts to develop cohesive arguments that are analytical, logical and coherent. Historical Knowledge and Understanding Assesses the extent to which one or more of the following: people, events, ideas and/or structures, have direct and indirect consequences within and/or between societies. Evaluates the significance/impact of forces on continuity and change.
B	Historical Skills Selects a range of sources and begins to analyse these for: message; origin, purpose and context; reliability and usefulness; perspective; contestability. Responds to key words in research or essay questions, applying some evidence and historical understandings from appropriately acknowledged sources. Explains why various perspectives and interpretations of history exist. Uses appropriate historical terms and concepts and develops an argument which is logical, coherent and largely narrative. Historical Knowledge and Understanding Describes how one or more of the following: people, events, ideas and/or structures, have direct consequences in different societies. Discusses the significance/impact of forces on continuity and change.
C	Historical Skills Selects some sources and makes an assessment: of message; origin, purpose and context; reliability and usefulness; perspective. Responds to some aspects of the research or essay question; selects and acknowledges sources and begins to use supporting evidence. Identifies some different perspectives and/or interpretations of history. Recounts the major features of the narrative and provides a simple structure for the argument/discussion. Historical Knowledge and Understanding Identifies some interactions between people, events, ideas and/or structures. Outlines the impact of forces on continuity and change.

D	Historical Skills Selects sources from a narrow range that may or may not be relevant, and makes limited statements about message; origin, purpose and context; reliability; perspectives. Responds to one or two aspects of the question. Shows limited range and depth in selecting sources and evidence to support statements, and limited interpretation and acknowledgement of the sources. Identifies one perspective of an historical event. Demonstrates a limited knowledge of the historical narrative and the structural conventions.
	Historical Knowledge and Understanding Identifies that there are people/events/ideas and/or structures that characterise a time period. Demonstrates a limited understanding of the impact of forces on continuity and change.
E	Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.

Appendix 2 – Glossary

This glossary is provided to enable a common understanding of the key terms in this syllabus.

Cause and effect

Used by historians to identify chains of events and developments over time, short-term and long-term.

Contestability

Occurs when particular interpretations about the past are open to debate (for example, as a result of a lack of evidence or different perspectives).

Continuity and change

Aspects of the past that remained the same over certain periods of time are referred to as continuities. Continuity and change are evident in any given period of time and concepts, such as progress and decline may be used to evaluate continuity and change.

Concepts

In the study of history, a concept refers to any general notion or idea that is used to develop an understanding of the past, such as concepts related to the process of historical inquiry (for example, evidence, continuity and change, perspectives, significance).

Contemporary world

As defined in this syllabus, the period of modern world history from 1945 to 2001.

Empathy

Empathy is an understanding of the past from the point of view of a particular individual or group, including an appreciation of the circumstances they faced, and the motivations, values and attitudes behind their actions.

Evidence

In the study of history, evidence is the information obtained from sources that is valuable for a particular inquiry. Evidence can be used to help construct an historical narrative, to support a hypothesis or to prove or disprove a conclusion.

Historical inquiry

Historical inquiry is the process of investigation undertaken in order to understand the past. Steps in the inquiry process include posing questions, locating and analysing sources and using evidence from sources to develop an informed explanation about the past.

Interpretation

An interpretation is an explanation of the past, for example, about a specific person, event or development. There may be more than one interpretation of a particular aspect of the past because historians may have used different sources, asked different questions and held different points of view about the topic.

Modern world

As defined in this syllabus, the period of time in the modern world between 1750 and 2001.

Perspective

A person's perspective is their point of view, the position from which they see and understand events going on around them. People in the past may have had different points of view about a particular event, depending on their age, gender, social position and their beliefs and values. Historians also have perspectives and this can influence their interpretation of the past.

Primary sources

In the study of history, primary sources are objects and documents created or written during the time being investigated, for example, during an event or very soon after. Examples of primary sources include official documents, such as laws and treaties; personal documents, such as diaries and letters; photographs; film and documentaries. These original, first-hand accounts are analysed by the historian to answer questions about the past.

Representation

A picture or image of the past that may be a popular portrayal within society (past or present) or that may be created by historians.

Secondary sources

In the study of history, secondary sources are accounts about the past that were created after the time being investigated and which often use or refer to primary sources and present a particular interpretation. Examples of secondary sources include writings of historians, encyclopaedia, documentaries, history textbooks, and websites.

Significance

The importance that is assigned to particular aspects of the past (for example, events, developments, and historical sites). Significance includes an examination of the principles behind the selection of what should be investigated and remembered and involves consideration of questions, such as: How did people in the past view the significance of an event? How important were the consequences of an event? What was the duration of the event? How relevant is it to the contemporary world?

Source

Any written or non-written materials that can be used to investigate the past (for example, newspaper articles, photos, and journal entries). A source becomes 'evidence' if it is of value to a particular inquiry.

