2022 ATAR course examination report:
Modern History

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2022	1527	47
2021	1681	38
2020	1731	31
2019	1828	125

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–Written
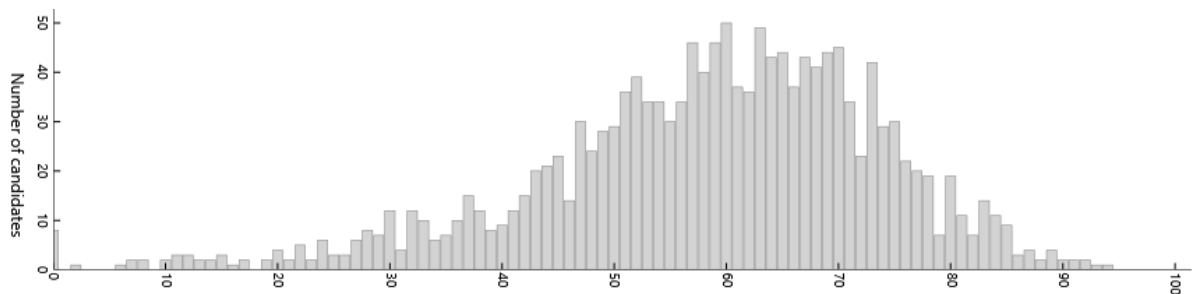
Summary
Attempted by 1527 candidates   Mean 57.93%   Max 94.00%   Min 0.00%

Section means were:
Section One: Source analysis-–Unit 3   Mean 63.40%
Attempted by 1519 candidates   Mean 15.85(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Section Two: Essay--Unit 3   Mean 57.40%
Attempted by 1481 candidates   Mean 14.35(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Section Three: Source analysis-–Unit 4   Mean 56.03%
Attempted by 1506 candidates   Mean 14.01(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Section Four: Essay-–Unit 4   Mean 54.91%
Attempted by 1455 candidates   Mean 13.73(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00

General comments
Overall, the examination was well received and, as in previous years, the standard of responses from candidates indicated it was generally equitable and accessible. 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.

The issue of candidates not completing all sections of the paper in full continues, as has been noted in previous years. A large number of incomplete essays has been a factor in lower essay marks overall.

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- 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. The wording of the Source analysis questions, and the marks allocated to each question might change from year to year.
- Be sure to retain a focus on the specifics of the question at hand. For example, when asked to compare and contrast purpose make sure you are writing about the purpose of a source, the reasons behind its creation, and not reverting to a discussion of message/viewpoint. When discussing usefulness, you are encouraged to pay more attention to the provenance of the source (who produced it, when and where was it produced etc) rather than just its message/content. This allows you to explore more deeply how the source is useful in the context of the question.
- Ensure time management is a focus. Don't over-answer low mark questions. This may be a factor contributing to running out of time in the essay sections which potentially has a greater impact on your final mark.
- When writing in additional pages, state on which pages your answers are continued and label these additions with the question number.

Advice for teachers
- Encourage your students to use a few judicious quotes in key places rather than frequently quoting their text book, which will not add any weight to the response.
- Using content that predates the start of the study period for a chosen elective is worth addressing in class. 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 and will 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. The electives were considered to be comparable both in terms of the similarity of source types and the complexity of the material.

Section One: Source analysis-–Unit 3 – (25 Marks)
Attempted by 1519 candidates   Mean 15.85(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
The wording for Questions 1 parts (b) and (e) were generally well received, with feedback indicating that these questions either allowed more scope for evaluation, or reduced the number of elements that candidates needed to consider when answering the questions.

For Question 1 part (a) across all three electives, there were a number of candidates who tended to focus on the topic of the source/s rather than their message/s. Candidates needed to be aware that discussing the topic or focus of the source is not the same as its message. Instead, they should have identified the creator's viewpoint or position on the given topic. Question 1 part (b) across all electives provided limited reference to the provenance of the source. The origin of the data was an important element when evaluating usefulness and many candidates did not address this.

For Question 1 part (c), candidates in many cases provided only general contextual details, and lacked the specifics needed to achieve full marks. While candidates regularly used the information accompanying the source, they did not always offer specific insight into the ideas/people/events that formed the context of the source.

For Question 1 part (e), a focus on economic change seemed to be an accessible question to many candidates. However, there were many incidences of candidates 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. Stronger answers were clearly able to identify the kinds of economic changes reflected in the sources, and the extent to which the sources collectively provided insight into those changes.

Elective 1: Australia 1918–1955
Question 1 attempted by 122 candidates   Mean 13.50(/25)   Max 23   Min 0
Candidates found Source 3 challenging, as it referred to an element of the syllabus with which many were not overly familiar. Additionally, the message of the perspective of the source on Curtin's policies was difficult to discern.

Russia and the Soviet Union 1914–1945
Question 1 attempted by 1212 candidates   Mean 16.08(/25)   Max 25   Min 0
The sources were generally well-received. One issue arising was that many candidates seemed to miss the key information given about Source 4, that the author was a supporter of the Russian Revolution. They wrote that he was anti-communist because he was an American, when this was clearly not the case. Few mentioned that, as the author had visited the USSR, he was more likely to have been affected by his experiences there. Some good answers pointed out that as he was writing in the USA, his views were less likely to have been censored or otherwise manipulated. More focus on the provenance of the source rather than simply its content was needed to access the highest marks for this question.

China 1935–1989
Question 1 attempted by 185 candidates   Mean 16.01(/25)   Max 24   Min 5.5
No major issues of interpretation were noted that were specific to this elective.

Section Two: Essay – Unit 3 (25 Marks)
Attempted by 1481 candidates   Mean 14.35(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
The essay questions were generally well-received and perceived to be accessible and equitable. The first question of each elective was a recapitulation of the traditional debate question, which provided a contestable historical statement in the form of the quote and asked candidates the extent to which they agreed with the statement. Responses contained a greater instance of first-person language in introductions, but this lent itself to perhaps overly simplistic 'I agree' or 'I disagree' answers, rather than arguments that evaluated in more depth by exploring both sides of the question. The use of first person language, while not necessarily reflecting conventional historical writing, was not penalised in the marking of the essays.

Elective 1: Australia 1918–1955
Question 2 attempted by 27 candidates   Mean 5.17(/25)   Max 22   Min 0
The performance of the relatively smaller number of candidates selecting this question was poor.

Question 3 attempted by 42 candidates   Mean 16.30(/25)   Max 25   Min 0.5
In several answers there was a tendency for candidates to focus mainly on causes for adjustments to national priorities rather than consequences. Not focusing on both key elements of the question meant that candidates could not access the higher marks available for this question. Most candidates who chose this question were able to identify a range of elements, primarily focusing on Soldier Settlement Schemes and the 'Men, Money, Markets' philosophy of the Bruce-Page Government. Some candidates sought to make use of the statistics provided in the source set, although the timing of the Bruce-Page Government compared to those provided by the sources meant that this was generally not used well.

Question 4 attempted by 48 candidates   Mean 15.57(/25)   Max 23.5   Min 6
Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the broad narrative of Australia's international relations in the period, although many answers did not go beyond this narrative to examine the changes in depth.

Elective 2: Russia and the Soviet Union 1914–1945
Question 5 attempted by 403 candidates   Mean 14.11(/25)   Max 23   Min 0
The mean was quite low for this question. Many candidates lost sight of the need to focus on the initial decrees of the Bolsheviks, and instead embarked on a more general discussion of whether they achieved their promise of 'peace, land and bread' in a broad sense, which sometimes extended well into the Stalinist era. While discussions of War Communism and the Civil War were legitimate, they were not always connected to the initial decrees. Additionally, the reference to 'peace, land and bread' led many candidates to embark on a discussion of the Tsar, the February Revolution, and the events between that and the October Revolution – something not required in any depth by the question.

Question 6 attempted by 570 candidates   Mean 14.54(/25)   Max 25   Min 0
This was a very popular question with most candidates demonstrating a sound knowledge of the various factors that lay behind Stalin's ascent to power by 1929. Stronger answers were able to effectively evaluate these factors in terms of how they facilitated Stalin's ascent to power, how they interacted with each other, and/or their relative importance.

Question 7 attempted by 207 candidates   Mean 15.15(/25)   Max 23   Min 0
A relatively small number of candidates chose this question. There was not always a balance between the events of the purges, and their consequences. Additonally, discussion was not always limited to the 1934–39 period, with perhaps an excessive focus on events such as Collectivisation and earlier purges limiting the impact and focus of some responses.

Elective 3: China 1935–1989 (25 Marks)
Question 8 attempted by 67 candidates   Mean 15.75(/25)   Max 23   Min 4
There were some very strong responses to this question that were able to provide high-level analysis of the extent to which the Long March represented a defeat, usually by comparing shorter-term disasters with the longer-term impact of the March. Weaker responses tended to provide a simplified narrative of the March, followed by broad statements on success or failure.

Question 9 attempted by 90 candidates   Mean 16.62(/25)   Max 23   Min 3.5
This question was generally tackled soundly, although some candidates, in discussing causes, focused excessively on the Great Leap Forward, suggesting the use of a prepared answer.

Question 10 attempted by 27 candidates   Mean 16.04(/25)   Max 23.5   Min 2.5
Given the small number of responses, there were no specific observations or issues encountered. For those who did select this question, the inevitable focus on the policies of Deng did mean that some responses were generic discussions of his policies and actions, rather than a specific focus on international relations.

Section Three: Source analysis – Unit 4 (25 Marks)
Attempted by 1506 candidates   Mean 14.01(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Several issues were identified with questions in Section Three that cut across all electives. As with Section One, candidates often struggled to provide specific contextual details for Question 11 part (a), instead providing general overviews. For Question 11 part (b), many candidates struggled to avoid simplistic articulations of purpose and lapsed into comparing and contrasting messages rather than purpose. Stronger answers considered both the likely creator and audience of the sources in order to draw out detailed comparisons and contrasts.

For Question 11 part (c) there was often excessive description of the cartoon itself, rather than reference to key elements as part of an explanation of the message of the source. It is also to be noted that the irony implicit in the message of all three cartoons was missed by a larger number of candidates than expected. For Question 11 part (d), a greater number of candidates structured their responses in ways that enabled them to achieve high marks, which was encouraging.

For Question 11 part (e), candidates, instead of identifying the leaders and/or leadership elements that are represented in the sources, and then evaluating their importance, either described what is shown in each source, or commented on how well the source depicted the leader/s. There was also a lack of consideration of the period as a whole when evaluating the leaders/leadership represented in the sources.

Elective 1: The changing European world since 1945
Question 11 attempted by 913 candidates   Mean 13.47(/25)   Max 25   Min 0
Generally the section was well-received. Many candidates struggled to effectively interpret the message of the cartoon (Source 3). Many candidates were not able to identify the irony of Kohl's size juxtaposed against the caption, instead taking the caption as the literal message of the cartoon. Stronger answers were able to connect the message with historical French fears of a resurgent (and, post-Wall, reunified) West Germany.

Elective 2: Australia's engagement with Asia
Question 11 attempted by 257 candidates   Mean 13.87(/25)   Max 24   Min 0
Similarly to the European elective, many candidates misinterpreted the cartoon, and instead saw its message being that Bob Hawke was defending East Timor by standing in the barrel of the Indonesian tank gun. It appeared as if the positioning of the caption title ('Moved') in the notes meant that candidates did not link that title with the caption/Hawke quote underneath it.

Elective 3: The struggle for peace in the Middle East
Question 11 attempted by 336 candidates   Mean 15.61(/25)   Max 24.5   Min 2.5
For Source 3, some candidates misintepreted the role of either the umpire or the Rest of the World, incorrectly arguing that they were supportive of Israel.

Section Four: Essay – Unit 4 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1455 candidates   Mean 13.73(/25)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00

Question 13 in The changing European world since 1945 elective was attempted by 64% of candidates, but other than that there was a pleasing spread of candidates attempting the various questions in each section which suggested the essay questions were largely accessible and equitable.

Elective 1: The changing European world since 1945

Question 12 attempted by 115 candidates   Mean 8.30(/25)   Max 22   Min 0

Candidates who chose this question often struggled to write in depth about the reasons for both the uprising and Soviet response, but also the consequences for Europe. This suggested that while candidates knew about the event, they did not have enough knowledge to base an entire essay on the topic.

Question 13 attempted by 564 candidates   Mean 14.10(/25)   Max 24   Min 0

By far the most popular question for this elective, candidates were generally able to consider both the achievements and limitations of the period of Détente, with stronger answers able to effectively explore the motivations of each side, and the re-emergence of tensions in the 1980s, to consider the extent to which Détente was successful in reducing tensions.

Question 14 attempted by 201 candidates   Mean 12.69(/25)   Max 22   Min 0

Candidates who chose Yugoslavia tended to provide more detailed and stronger answers than those who chose Germany. Where Germany was discussed, there was often a greater focus on the lead-up to the collapse of Communism and the fall of the Wall, rather than its consequences.

Elective 2: Australia's engagement with Asia

Question 15 attempted by 92 candidates   Mean 14.74(/25)   Max 22.5   Min 6

Candidates who chose this question demonstrated a good understanding of the reasons for Australian involvement in the Korean War although references to 'Forward Defence' as a reason did miss the fact that this policy approach did not acquire such a name until after the war. However, many candidates were less strong on the consequences, with some lapsing into a narrative of future conflicts and interventions without making connections to the Korean War.

Question 16 attempted by 62 candidates   Mean 13.37(/25)   Max 22   Min 0

While many candidates approached this question well, there were issues with the choices of decolonisation movements made by some candidates. Reference to Australia's response to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the 1970s was problematic given that the relevant decolonisation movement was against the French, and had achieved its aim in 1954. Stronger answers tended to reference Indonesian independence in the 1940s, and Australian involvement in Malaya in the 1950s.

Question 17 attempted by 95 candidates   Mean 16.07(/25)   Max 25   Min 1

This question was generally handled well, reflected in it having the highest mean for this elective, with candidates being well-prepared with specific detail on the nature and volume of Australian trade with their chosen country.

Elective 3: The struggle for peace in the Middle East

Question 18 attempted by 140 candidates   Mean 15.09(/25)   Max 25   Min 0

This question was handled well overall, with candidates demonstrating a strong knowledge of the background causes of the Suez Crisis in particular, as well as an understanding of the political consequences in particular. Some candidates did not fully connect later events, such as the Six Day War, to the Suez Crisis, instead simply providing a narrative of key events that occurred after the crisis.

Question 19 attempted by 86 candidates   Mean 15.79(/25)   Max 24   Min 2

Some candidates did not fully articulate the nature of Zionism as an idea, nor fully connect their points of discussion to that idea – instead providing a narrative of conflicts in which Israel was involved, followed by cursory connections to how they represented the influence of Zionism. Stronger answers were able to link Zionism to the emergence of opposing ideas such as Pan-Arabism or Palestinian independence.

Question 20 attempted by 100 candidates   Mean 17.20(/25)   Max 25   Min 0

This question was often done very well, as evidenced in the extremely high mean, with candidates demonstrating good knowledge of the reasons for the conflict, and its consequences for both the countries involved, and the region more broadly. Some candidates did seem to use the question as a vehicle to launch into a narrative either on the Iranian Revolution itself, or on the First Gulf War – perhaps suggesting that they had prepared for a question on either of those events, and couldn't help but write about them.