

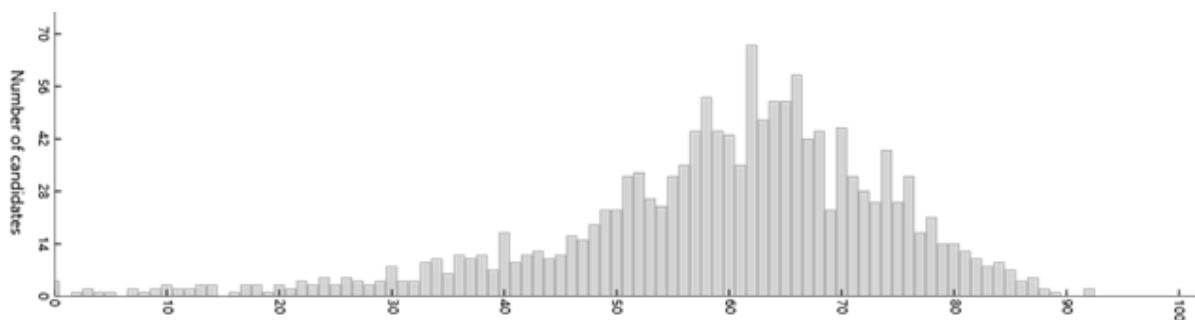


2023 ATAR course examination report: Modern History

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2023	1456	33
2022	1527	47
2021	1681	38
2020	1731	31

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

The examination structure was unchanged from 2022 and consisted of four sections, with candidates being required to attempt all questions in Sections One and Three and choose one of three questions available in Sections Two and Four appropriate to the elective they studied.

Attempted by 1456 candidates Mean 58.82% Max 92.00% Min 0.00%

Section means were:

Section One: Source analysis—Unit 3	Mean 59.56%		
Attempted by 1448 candidates	Mean 14.89(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Essay—Unit 3	Mean 61.06%		
Attempted by 1421 candidates	Mean 15.26(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Source analysis—Unit 4	Mean 59.12%		
Attempted by 1439 candidates	Mean 14.78(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Four: Essay—Unit 4	Mean 55.56%		
Attempted by 1386 candidates	Mean 13.89(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00

General comments

The examination was generally well-received, with the inclusion of unfamiliar sources ensuring the majority of candidates were analysing new content. Candidates performed consistently across the examination paper with similar means for Sections One and Three. However, there was a lower mean for Section Four, most likely due to the high number of incomplete or not attempted essays. Russia and the Soviet Union 1914–1945 was the most popular choice of elective for Unit 3 with 80% of candidates attempting it. For Unit 4, attempted by 60% of candidates, The changing European world since 1945 was the most popular elective.

Advice for candidates

- In the Source analysis sections, read the questions carefully as wording and mark allocations may change from previous years. Make sure you keep focused on the skill being assessed. For example, when considering the purpose of sources, be careful not to write about the message.
- Make sure you read the accompanying text above each source that includes its provenance (who produced it, when and where) as this will often help with your analysis of the purpose, contestability, and perspectives of the sources.
- Try to allocate your time equally across all sections to maximise your results by providing complete answers to all questions. Furthermore, manage your time appropriately in the Source analysis sections.
- When writing introductions to your essays, provide a succinct proposition/answer to the question that highlights the key points of your argument. Introductions should not be taking up a whole page or retelling the broad history/extensive background to the topic.
- Ensure you focus on the key terms of essay questions. For example, if the instruction is 'debate', then you should provide a sufficient counter argument.
- It is not necessary to cite references to facts included in essays, and when including quotes, ensure they are relevant and assist your analysis and evaluation.

Advice for teachers

- Remind students to spend time deconstructing the sources, considering the supporting text, title, and captions, so they fully engage with the sources in order to write specific analysis of perspectives and usefulness, rather than only providing generic comments, such as simply stating that a source 'is biased'.
- Encourage students to respond to the directional/key terms in essay questions, for example, noting the difference between 'impact' and 'transform'. Furthermore, where an examination question requires multiple angles/content to be discussed, candidates should plan and include this in their responses. For example, by referring to 'reasons for' as well as 'consequences of' and by providing a counter argument of reasonable depth in 'debate' questions.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Generally, the Source analysis sections, the topics and question structure were well-received. The electives were considered comparable in terms of the similarity of source and essay types.

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

Attempted by 1448 candidates Mean 14.89/(25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

For Question 1 part (a) across all three electives, candidates generally answered well, although there were still a number of responses that compared topics/content of the sources rather than the messages. There was also often excessive description of elements within the sources, resulting in unnecessarily long responses, thus adversely affecting the time left to complete subsequent question parts. Many candidates were relying on 'bias' as their assessment of the usefulness of sources for Question 1 part (b), or they produced lists of what the sources did not show. Across all electives, candidates failed to explore the sources in greater depth, for example, the propaganda element of speeches from Lenin and Mao, and Billy Hughes' speech being driven by his desire for re-election. The majority of responses considered both elements of Question 1 part (d). However, there were some candidates not accounting for the perspectives of the sources. For part (e), a focus on leadership seemed to be accessible to many candidates. However, numerous responses referred only to the leader evident in each source and then provided a list of leaders who were omitted. Stronger answers engaged specifically with the question by considering the insight of the leaders provided by the source set.

Elective 1: Australia 1918–1955

Question 1 attempted by 127 candidates Mean 14.86(/25) Max 23 Min 0

The sources were generally well interpreted. Many candidates analysed Source 2 both from Hughes' perspective and from the viewpoints of the other world leaders present in the cartoon, with both interpretations deemed valid.

Elective 2: Russia and the Soviet Union 1914–1945

Question 1 attempted by 1125 candidates Mean 14.72(/25) Max 25 Min 0

Overall, the sources were well received for this elective. Candidates found Source 3 part (c) challenging, as it referred to an element of content with which many were not familiar: 'Stalin's Constitution'. However, this issue did not impact part (d), with candidates focusing more widely on the perspective of Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union.

Elective 3: China 1935–1989

Question 1 attempted by 196 candidates Mean 15.88(/25) Max 23.5 Min 0.5

The sources were generally well received for this elective, although candidates found Source 3 problematic regarding part (c), as it required specific knowledge of the exact date of Mao's death, and the re-emergence of Deng. This issue did impact part (d) for some candidates, who incorrectly focused on the source being pro-Deng following the death of Mao.

Section Two: Essay – Unit 3 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1421 candidates Mean 15.26(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

The responses for Russia and the Soviet Union elective were evenly distributed over all three questions. The Australia and China electives saw the majority of candidates answer the 'Examine the impact' question.

Elective 1: Australia 1918–1955

Question 2 attempted by 70 candidates Mean 10.74(/25) Max 23 Min 0

Despite being the most popular of the Australia essays, this question produced the lowest mean, due mainly to candidates struggling to identify and write in depth about different groups. Many responses focused only on one group or too generally on the political responses to the Great Depression and its economic impact. Most candidates focused on women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and migrants. However, the inclusion of working-class men, rural dwellers, unemployed or business owners would all be valid societal groups to examine here.

Question 3 attempted by 35 candidates Mean 16.17(/25) Max 25 Min 10

Overall, this question was answered well, producing the highest mean for the Australia elective. The reasons for the Labor Split were explored very well by most candidates. However, numerous responses did not focus on the second element of the question, 'the consequences', only providing a limited analysis of this content.

Question 4 attempted by 16 candidates Mean 13.47(/25) Max 20.5 Min 0

This question was answered by a small number of candidates suggesting that few felt confident answering a question about 'post-war reconstruction'. Those who did attempt the question often did not display the knowledge and/or depth of argument required to achieve higher marks. Candidates were required to consider those who benefitted during 'post-war reconstruction' during the economic boom and creation of national projects, such as the Snowy River Scheme, along with presenting a counter argument about members of Australian society who did not benefit such as women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and striking workers.

Elective 2: Russia and the Soviet Union 1914–1945

Question 5 attempted by 397 candidates Mean 14.42(/25) Max 23 Min 0

There were some strong responses to this question where candidates focused on how Stalin's Five Year Plans transformed society, considering a range of groups such as peasants, workers, youth, and women. However, many candidates focused too much on the economic impacts of the Plans, citing numerous production figures or focusing upon Stalin's purges with no real connections made to the Five Year Plans.

Question 6 attempted by 376 candidates Mean 16.89(/25) Max 25 Min 0

Strong performances on this question reflected a good understanding of the various reasons that enabled the USSR to secure victory in World War II. Stronger responses explored Soviet advantages and successful methods, along with Nazi errors, geographical elements such as climate and Allied support received, for example via Lend Lease.

Question 7 attempted by 333 candidates Mean 14.78(/25) Max 25 Min 0

There were a number of strong responses where candidates explored both sides of the debate, the weaknesses of the Provisional Government and the strength of the Bolsheviks. However, the relatively low mean was the result of candidates providing a narrative account of 1917, not engaging in both sides of the debate, or not directly analysing if the Provisional Government's failure was inevitable.

Elective 3: China 1935–1989

Question 8 attempted by 134 candidates Mean 16.81(/25) Max 23 Min 0

This question was generally tackled well with most candidates exploring a range of impacts of the Great Leap Forward, both short- and long-term. Candidates who focused on the elements rather than the impacts of the Great Leap Forward received fewer marks.

Question 9 attempted by 47 candidates Mean 17.36(/25) Max 24 Min 2

This question produced the highest mean for the elective with many candidates being able to demonstrate a high level of analysis and content knowledge of this topic. The strongest responses not only considered both long- and short-term factors of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, but also explored the roles played by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Guomindang (GMD) and the aftermath of World War II.

Question 10 attempted by 13 candidates Mean 16.81(/25) Max 25 Min 11

Answers illustrated a good understanding and knowledge of the subject content. The candidates who received lower marks made narrative their focus on the lead-up to Tiananmen Square Massacre or made limited links to the importance of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'.

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

Attempted by 1439 candidates Mean 14.78(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00

Several issues were identified with questions in Section Three, that were common to all three electives. For Question 11 part (a), many answers provided general rather than specific information on the context of the sources with too much focus on events, people and ideas that occurred after the time of the source, rather than more exploration of the period before and/or during the time of the source. For Question 11 part (b), candidates often compared and contrasted what the sources 'showed' or 'depicted', discussing the message rather than the purpose of the sources. For part (d), there was often a reliance on identifying contestability by merely stating the source was biased, with no argument explaining what the bias was and why this made the argument contestable. Candidates often restricted their comments to new leadership, government or a new policy direction when analysing

the sources for Question 11 part (e), rather than 'political changes' in general. Many candidates did not secure higher marks due to answers describing what was shown in each source or commenting on how well the source depicted political changes, as per the Question 1 part (e) question structure. Higher marks were awarded to candidates who identified political changes represented in the sources and then evaluated their importance across the whole period of study.

Elective 1: The changing European World since 1945

Question 11 attempted by 825 candidates Mean 14.11(/25) Max 24.5 Min 0
Generally, this section was well-received. Some candidates interpreted Source 3's character of 'Europa' as representing West Germany rather than Western Europe, which at times limited the sophistication of their analysis for part (c) and made it harder to provide an argument for contestability and counter arguments for part (d).

Elective 2: Australia's engagement with Asia

Question 11 attempted by 223 candidates Mean 15.88(/25) Max 25 Min 2.5
For Source 3, some candidates did not identify Uncle Sam as representing the USA, which sometimes impacted the quality of their answers for parts (c) and (d).

Elective 3: The struggle for peace in the Middle East

Question 11 attempted by 391 candidates Mean 15.60(/25) Max 24 Min 1
For Source 3, some candidates misinterpreted the next 'historic handshake' as a positive comment on the peace process, rather than as a cynical viewpoint. Many answers to part (d) did not identify the nationality of the author of Source 4 as something that could create contestability.

Section Four: Essay – Unit 4 (25 Marks)

Attempted by 1386 candidates Mean 13.89(/25) Max 25.00 Min 0.00
Question 13 was by far the most popular choice of essay with 60% of The changing European world since 1945 elective candidates attempting it. There was a reasonable distribution of candidates attempting all other questions suggesting all questions were deemed accessible, apart from Question 15, attempted by just 4% of the Australia's engagement with Asia elective candidates.

Elective 1: The changing European World since 1945

Question 12 attempted by 177 candidates Mean 10.37(/25) Max 24 Min 0
Candidates who chose this question often struggled to write in depth on President Reagan's significance during the Cold War in Europe. The low mean for this question was primarily due to answers concentrating disproportionately on Gorbachev's role during this time period, which, while relevant, should not have formed the basis/majority of the essay.

Question 13 attempted by 416 candidates Mean 13.40(/25) Max 25 Min 0
By far the most popular question for this elective, most likely due to the open nature of the question wording, that allowed candidates to take many different approaches to the role of communism. Stronger answers made connections between chosen events, such as uprisings in Eastern Europe or the changing interpretations of communism towards the end of the Cold War. However, some candidates were too global in their focus, referring to events outside Europe, for example the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, making it difficult to then link this content back to impacting Europe.

Question 14 attempted by 200 candidates Mean 14.85(/25) Max 25 Min 0

Candidates who provided detailed examples of how the development of European governance brought unity and also explored limits to that unity scored highly here. Some candidates did not refer to the content covered in the syllabus point on European governance such as the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Union (EU), but instead wrote broadly on the nature of the Cold War in Eastern European countries, thus limiting their marks.

Elective 2: Australia's engagement with Asia

Question 15 attempted by 9 candidates Mean 18.89(/25) Max 25 Min 13

While only a small number of candidates felt confident to answer a question on former Prime Ministers Hawke and Keating, those who did displayed a high level of understanding and analysis as demonstrated in the highest mean score not just for this elective but for all of Section Four.

Question 16 attempted by 87 candidates Mean 15.40(/25) Max 21 Min 6

This question was handled well by many candidates, exploring both the nature of multiculturalism in Australia and its impacts upon international relations. However, some answers focused disproportionately instead upon the emergence of multiculturalism within Australia.

Question 17 attempted by 122 candidates Mean 15.60(/25) Max 23 Min 0

Some candidates provided a narrative on events during World War II, such as the Fall of Singapore, rather than exploring how these events impacted Australia's engagement, for example, with the growing relationship with the USA, which restricted their marks. Stronger answers effectively connected events, policies and actions involving Australia and Asia to the aftermath of World War II.

Elective 3: The struggle for peace in the Middle East

Question 18 attempted by 232 candidates Mean 15.53(/25) Max 25 Min 1

This was the most popular question in the elective, also producing the highest mean for The struggle for peace in the Middle East. Candidates were generally well-prepared, demonstrating a good knowledge of the role of the United Nations in the region. Stronger answers went beyond a narrative of United Nations resolutions and analysed both the successes of the United Nations involvement along with providing examples where its role was limited, for example in the Camp David and Oslo peace talks.

Question 19 attempted by 102 candidates Mean 14.58(/25) Max 22 Min 2

Stronger answers defined imperialism and gave multiple examples of its role in the region. However, many candidates devoted too much time to events prior to 1945, with little or no exploration as to how this impacted the region post 1945. Some responses attempted to broaden the definition of imperialism to include Zionism and Arab nationalism, with most candidates being unable to present a convincing argument.

Question 20 attempted by 41 candidates Mean 14.50(/25) Max 20 Min 2.5

This question was selected by the fewest candidates in the elective, suggesting most were not comfortable exploring the Soviet Union's impact upon peace in the region. It produced both the lowest mean and lowest maximum score in all of Unit 4 essays. Candidates who scored higher marks considered how the Soviet Union worked for peace in the region, for example, co-sponsoring the Madrid Conference in 1991, while also exploring the counter argument that Soviet involvement could be viewed as opposing peace such as providing arms and training for the Palestine Liberation Organisation.