

# **HISTORY**

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING SYLLABUS**

### **Pre-University**

### **H3**

Implementation starting with  
2024 Pre-University Two Cohort



Ministry of Education  
SINGAPORE

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This section provides an overview of the A-Level History curriculum and how it supports the development of the Desired Outcomes of Education (DOE) and 21st Century Competencies (21CC).

## 1.1 Value of History

History education in Singapore prepares students to thrive as responsible and confident citizens in a fast-changing world by developing their:

- identity as Singaporeans**, as they gain an understanding of how Singapore and our communities have evolved over time, and of Singapore's place in the world;
- ability to participate actively and competently in a globalised world**, as they learn to make sense of ambiguous and complex global developments, appreciate local contexts and engage with different cultures and societies sensitively; and
- critical thinking and ability to make informed judgements especially in a digital age**, as they inquire into the past and understand the nature of historical knowledge, examine various sources for veracity, validity and intent, analyse multiple perspectives and weigh evidence to construct historical accounts.

### 1.1.1 Qualities of a History Learner

Figure 1.1a shows the qualities that the History curriculum aims to develop.

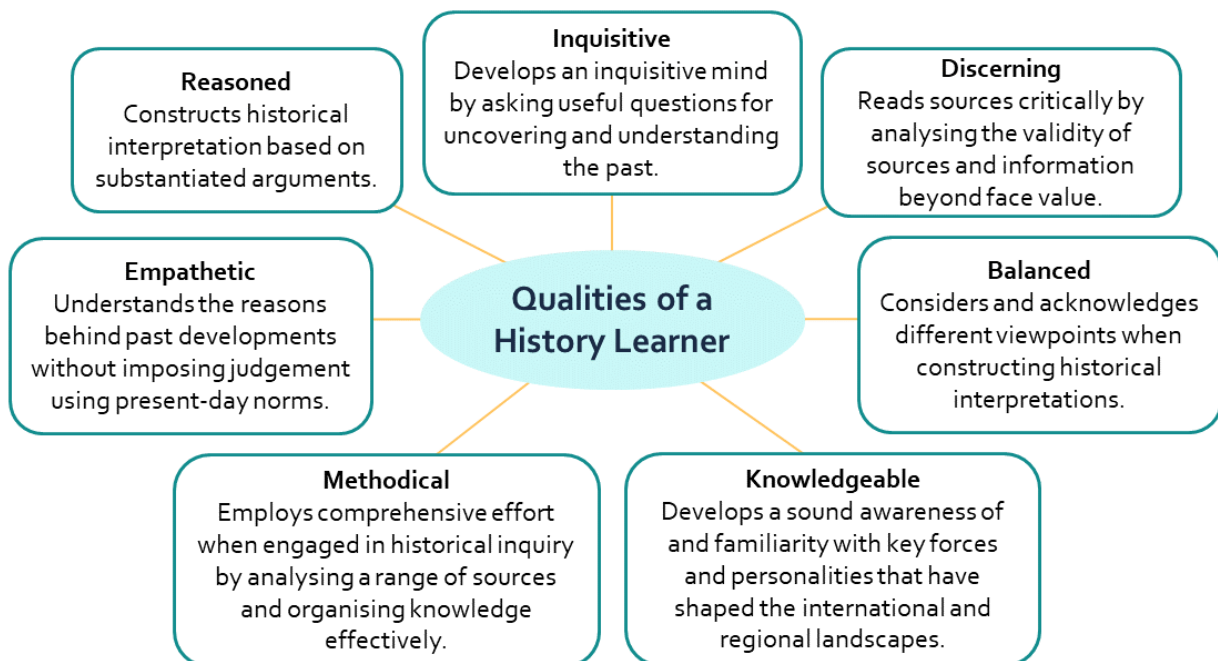


Figure 1.1a: Qualities of a History learner

## 1.2 The A-Level History Curriculum

### 1.2.1 Curricular Aims

A-Level History develops students' depth in historical understanding. Disciplinary understanding is the foundation on which new knowledge is built and enables inter-disciplinary thinking. The curriculum focuses on developments and issues that are important for Singapore students to know, preparing them to navigate and respond to these developments as informed, concerned and participatory citizens.

The A-Level History curriculum aligns the learning of History with the DOE and prepares students for the future by:

- developing the dispositions to be curious about the past and open to multiple perspectives;
- engaging them in historical inquiry to develop confident, self-directed, critical and reflective thinkers;
- equipping them with an understanding of historical concepts, methods and processes to make informed judgements of the past and to better understand the present;
- equipping them with historical knowledge and understanding to develop local, regional and global awareness and cross-cultural skills; and
- enhancing their appreciation of the past to develop their sense of identity and cultivate confident, responsible and concerned citizens.

### 1.2.2 Curriculum Shape

The A-Level History Curriculum Shape (see **Figure 1.2a**) encapsulates the key features of the A-Level History syllabuses and guides curriculum implementation. The shape:

- emphasises the importance of developing historical understanding;
- highlights the elements necessary to achieve historical understanding;
- describes the focus of the syllabus content; and
- outlines the intended teaching and learning experiences.



**Figure 1.2a: A-Level History curriculum shape**

**Historical understanding** (core) is the key goal of learning history. It is achieved through the development of **historical thinking** and **historical knowledge** (innermost ring). Historical thinking comprises the disciplinary processes of constructing history, while historical knowledge refers to the substantive knowledge of history.

The development of historical thinking and knowledge is undertaken through the learning of **historical and content concepts** and the acquisition of **historical inquiry and skills** (middle ring). Historical and content concepts provide the conceptual lens for thinking and knowing, while historical inquiry and skills are the disciplinary tools.

The development of these concepts and skills is contextualised in the study of **local, regional and global developments and their interconnections**, and the role of **historical agency** in these developments (outermost ring). The curriculum provides students with sufficient breadth and depth of content to facilitate their development of historical understanding.

## 1.3 H3 History Syllabus Aims and Key Learning Outcomes

### 1.3.1 Syllabus Aims

To support the attainment of the curricular aims, the H3 History syllabus encourages students to:

- develop a lasting interest in history;
- develop an appreciation of history as a discipline through
  - examining how and why history is studied
  - engaging in independent historical inquiry
  - recognising that historical interpretations and judgements are based on available evidence and are provisional in nature
  - critically appraising how the past is interpreted, portrayed and represented;
- reach informed conclusions about historical issues and developments through the study of fields of history and the methods and processes of the discipline;
- communicate substantiated arguments on historical issues and events in a clear and well-structured manner;
- develop empathy with people living in diverse places and at different times; and
- enhance their sense of identity and be confident, responsible and concerned citizens.

### 1.3.2 Key Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes outline the goals that students are expected to attain at the completion of their H3 History learning experience.

#### ***Knowledge and Understanding***

Students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the following:

- **Nature of historical knowledge.** History is constructed from evidence. Interpretations of the past differ based on the questions historians ask about the past, their interpretation of sources and their approaches in reaching interpretations.
- **Historical concepts.** These concepts problematise the study of historical developments and issues, providing the basis for critical thinking and historical inquiry.
- **Key characteristics of the period or issues studied** based on their topic of research.
- **Connections between the past and present.** An appreciation of the relationship between the past and present surfaces trends and patterns that allow for an understanding of present-day developments in context and develop their ability to navigate the future.

## ***Skills***

Students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by employing the following skills:

- Asking meaningful questions about the past
- Unpacking the requirements of the research question they have chosen to respond to independently, including determining the relevant historical concept(s) and the approach to responding to it
- Assessing the current state of research and knowledge in their chosen area of study
- Acquiring and interpreting information and evidence derived from relevant sources of information to address the research question
- Analysing sources as evidence by engaging in sourcing, contextualisation and corroboration
- Identifying and synthesising evidence and multiple perspectives to make informed judgements and construct a balanced and persuasive argument in response to the research question
- Communicating historical interpretations and an argument that addresses the research question in a clear and well-structured manner
- Reflecting on the strategies and methods used in historical inquiry, including their own approach to answering the research question

## ***Values***

In developing historical understanding, students demonstrate 21CC core values as they:

- demonstrate **respect** by showing sensitivity to how people's views and perspectives shape their interpretations of events, issues or developments in any specific time and space, and empathising with people from different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds;
- demonstrate **resilience** by tolerating ambiguity, asking useful questions to uncover and understand the past and persevering in the face of challenges encountered during the independent research process;
- show **integrity** by modifying and adapting their thinking according to multiple sources of information, perspectives and different circumstances, underpinned by sound moral values; and
- value **harmony** by embracing the connections between themselves and the larger community, realising that their actions impact others.

## 1.4 Understanding the H3 History Syllabus Design

H3 History is designed to stretch students' cognitive abilities and give them opportunities to be engaged in a wider range of learning and assessment modes. H2 History students who are strong in and passionate about the subject may offer H3 History.

To facilitate the exploration of the discipline in greater depth and breadth, the H3 History syllabus comprises a taught element, *Investigating History*, and a research element, *Historical Inquiry*:

- *Investigating History* deepens students' understanding of historical concepts, methods and processes by equipping students with a theoretical understanding of the nature of history and guiding them in applying in the research essay their understanding of how the past is constructed. It explores issues such as the relationship between history and truth, how and why history is constructed, the perspectives from which history is written and the nature of historical knowledge. Through this focus, the taught element builds students' capacity to undertake a critical approach to examining their chosen history research question.
- *Historical Inquiry* further engages students in applying their understanding of how the past is constructed to conduct an individual inquiry into their chosen history research question. Students will identify an area of historical interest, examine a variety of evidence, and interpret and evaluate the evidence to reach informed conclusions. At the end of the independent research process, they will submit a 3000–3500 word research essay based on a topic of their choice, which had been approved in advance by Cambridge International Examinations. The Research Essay should commence in November of the first academic year and be ready for submission to Cambridge by September of the second academic year.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.5 Nurturing the Desired Outcomes of Education Through H3 History

H3 History seeks to further nurture in students the attributes outlined in the DOE by the time they complete their formal education. They should possess:

- a good sense of self-awareness;
- a sound moral compass; and
- the necessary skills and knowledge to take on challenges of the future.

They should also be:

- **confident persons** who have a zest for life, have a strong sense of right and wrong, are adaptable and resilient, know themselves, are discerning in judgement, think independently and critically, and communicate effectively;

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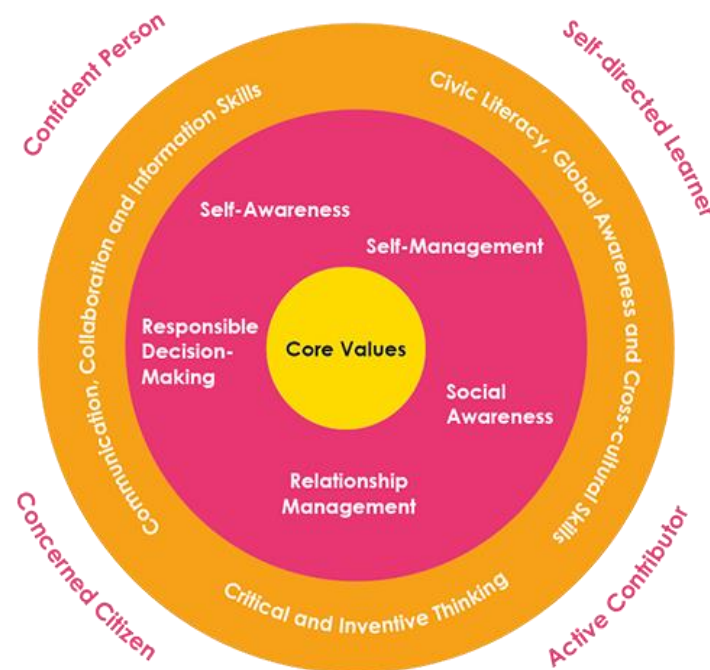
<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the H3 History Examination Syllabus on the SEAB website for the latest updates on A-Level assessment.



- **self-directed learners** who take responsibility for their own learning and question, reflect and persevere in the lifelong pursuit of learning;
- **active contributors** who are able to work effectively in teams, exercise initiative, take calculated risks, are innovative and strive for excellence; and
- **concerned citizens** who are rooted to Singapore, have a strong civic consciousness, are responsible to their family, community and nation, and take active roles in improving the lives of others.

## 1.6 Developing 21st Century Competencies Through H3 History

The Framework for 21CC (see **Figure 1.6a**) outlines the core values and competencies that help students thrive in a fast-changing world by equipping them to face challenges and seize new and exciting opportunities.



**Figure 1.6a: Framework for 21CC and student outcomes**

## 2. PEDAGOGY

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This section provides guidance on the use of inquiry-based learning in the A-Level History classroom and what historical inquiry will look like in H3 History.

### 2.1 Inquiry-based Learning in the A-Level History Classroom

As reflected in the curriculum shape, historical understanding is achieved through the development of historical thinking and historical knowledge. To develop students' historical thinking and historical knowledge, historical inquiry and conceptual understanding are crucial to providing students with insights into how historians organise and make meaning of the past.

Constructivism refers to the theory that describes learners as actively constructing knowledge rather than just passively taking in information. As learners experience the world and reflect on those experiences, they build their own representations and incorporate new information into their pre-existing knowledge. Constructivist theory has the following implications for how we view student learning:

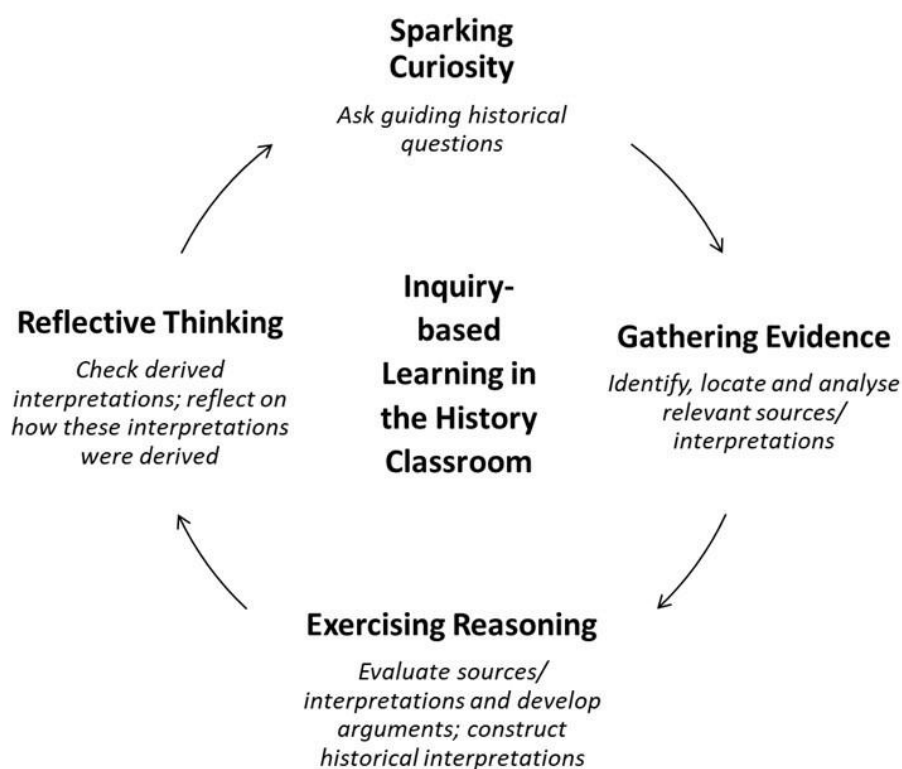
- Students learn best when engaged in learning experiences rather than passively receiving information.
- Learning is inherently a social process because it is embedded within a social context as students and teachers work together to build knowledge.
- Because knowledge cannot be directly imparted to students, the goal of teaching is to provide experiences that facilitate the construction of knowledge.

Historical inquiry, a form of constructivist inquiry-based pedagogy, is the recommended pedagogy for the A-Level History curriculum. It reflects the process of “doing history”, providing an authentic way to inquire into, organise and explain historical developments that happened in a period. This approach to learning History, through applying historical skills and processes reflected in the historian’s craft, can strengthen students’ historical understanding. To engage students in historical thinking and develop historical understanding, **how students learn is as important as what they learn.**

Historical inquiry is a cyclical and iterative process that contains several stages of inquiry (see **Figure 2.1a**).

- **Sparking curiosity.** Students begin the process by identifying and posing historical questions about a historical issue or development. These questions are usually anchored in historical concepts such as cause and effect, change and continuity, significance and accounts.
- **Gathering evidence.** To address the historical questions identified, students gather evidence from a range of primary and secondary sources that reflect multiple perspectives of the historical questions being inquired into.

- **Exercising reasoning.** To make sense of the evidence gathered, students analyse and evaluate sources vis-à-vis the historical questions to be answered. Here, they exercise historical skills in placing sources in their historical context and evaluating their reliability and utility as historical evidence, and evaluate the validity of different interpretations. They then select and synthesise relevant sources to form evidence-based historical explanations and interpretations, in response to the historical question.
- **Reflective Thinking.** Students reflect on the cognitive process through which their historical explanations and interpretations are derived. This builds their metacognition of how knowledge is constructed, and sensitises them to the assumptions and biases they may have carried through the inquiry process.



*\* Stages in the inquiry cycle can be seen as iterative. For example, Exercising Reasoning could surface the need to identify other sources (Gathering Evidence) or result in further refinements to the historical question.*

**Figure 2.1a: Inquiry-based Learning in the History classroom**

Historical inquiry is central to the H3 History learning experience. The product of H3 History is a research essay constructed through the process of open inquiry. This form of inquiry extends students' learning experiences in H2 History, which is likely to comprise structured and guided inquiries.

## 3. CONTENT

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This section provides guidance on the taught element, *Investigating History*, its syllabus content and its scope and sequence.

### 3.1 Overview of *Investigating History*

The taught element of the H3 History syllabus, *Investigating History*, builds students' capacity to undertake a critical approach to examining their chosen history research question by equipping students with a theoretical understanding of the nature of history and guiding them in applying in the research essay their understanding of how the past is constructed.

Students will examine the following issues which shape the historian's craft:

- Different views on the relationship between history and truth
- How and why history is constructed
- From whose perspective history is written
- The nature and limitations of historical knowledge

It is recommended that teachers allocate about 24 hours to the taught element. The taught element can be taught in alignment with students' progress in their independent research to provide just-in-time support.

### 3.2 *Investigating History* Learning Outcomes and Content

Students will:

- discuss the nature of history;
- critically appraise how the past is interpreted, portrayed and represented;
- acquire an awareness of the methods and processes of historical research, and apply relevant methods and processes to answer the research question; and
- understand the principles of good historical writing and apply these principles in the writing of the H3 History research essay.

**Table 3.2a** indicates the topics, learning outcomes and content for *Investigating History*.

Table 3.2a: Topics, learning outcomes and content for *Investigating History*

| Topic                                    | Content  | Learning Outcomes<br>(Students are able to:)   |
|--|--|--|
| What is history?                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>History as accounts of the past:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Changing ideas about the nature of history: from empiricist to post-modernist paradigms</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss the relationship between history and truth.</li> </ul>  |
| What makes a good history question?      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How and why different historical accounts are constructed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understanding how history is constructed and contested in different fields of history</li> <li>– Assessing existing narratives in history: from whose perspective history is written; challenges to dominant narratives</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss how history is constructed and contested.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The nature of evidence in history:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Using sources to construct historical knowledge</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss how historians use sources to construct interpretations about the past.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Asking good questions for research in history:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conceptualising a history research question that is historically significant and feasible for exploration</li> <li>– Developing a literature scan and understanding its relationship with a good research question</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply their understanding of accounts and evidence to identify possible topics for the research essay;</li> <li>• develop a literature scan that critically assesses the existing state of knowledge on the topic; and</li> <li>• craft an effective history research question based on the literature scan.</li> </ul> |
| How is historical knowledge constructed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Understanding research methodology in history through historical inquiry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Gathering sources</li> <li>– Exercising reasoning</li> <li>– Presentation</li> <li>– Reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply their understanding of evidence and research methodology to answer the research question;</li> <li>• reflect on the contributions and limitations of sources in constituting historical evidence; and</li> <li>• reflect on the contributions and limitations of the research.</li> </ul>                         |

## **4. ASSESSMENT**

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This section provides guidance on assessment in the A-Level History curriculum and explains the role of formative and summative assessment in the H3 History syllabus.

### **4.1 Learner-centred and Balanced Assessment**

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process and must be closely aligned with curricular objectives, content and pedagogy. Assessment is learner-centred when it uses assessment information to support learning and gives students opportunities to be involved in their own assessment so that they develop as self-directed learners. To check if learning is taking place as intended, assessment serves the central function of getting the best possible evidence of what students have learnt. For learning to be effective and developmentally appropriate, teachers use such evidence to adapt their teaching pace, approaches and assessment practices. Teachers also use assessment to help students understand that by thinking about their own thinking, they can monitor, assess and improve their learning. Assessment should thus be designed with clarity of purpose and to provide learners and teachers with feedback to address learning gaps and improve teaching practices.

A balanced assessment system comprises both formative and summative assessment. Whether implemented in the classroom or as national examinations, all assessment should support and lead to meaningful learning.

Similar to H1 and H2 History, effective formative assessment hinges on the provision of timely, relevant and specific qualitative feedback from teachers or peers so that students will be able to self-monitor, self-regulate and improve their own learning. While H3 History involves independent research, teachers should create opportunities to assess students' understanding of historical inquiry and their research topic, and the quality of their research essay as part of monitoring students' work in progress. This will enable teachers to support students during the research process and make H3 History more manageable.

The research essay submitted to Cambridge International Examinations constitutes the summative assessment for H3 History. The research essay should summarise the learning that students have achieved in H3 History. Please refer to the A-Level H3 (9823) History Examination Syllabus on the SEAB website for details on the A-Level History assessment.